

The Berea Baptist Banner

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

An Open Letter to Barack Obama

By Paul Stepp
of Indore, West Virginia

Dear President-Elect Obama,

Please accept my congratulations on your victory to the recent Presidential Elections. Though I did not vote for you, I must admit that you and your campaign did the things that were necessary to achieve the highest political office in the land. In the New Testament Scriptures, we read about a parable that the Lord Jesus Christ delivered, which is commonly referred to as the Parable of the Unjust Steward. In this parable the lord of the unjust Steward addresses him this way: **"And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light"** (Luke 16:8). I believe that in the past few generations of Americans, the **"children of this world"** have been **"wiser than the children of light"**---especially when it comes to politics. For this reason the values and the



righteousnesses of the Bible are not as widely held as they once were. And now, it seems that even as a nation as a whole, we are willing to elect men and women to local, state, and national offices,

who do not have any regard for the Bible or for the **"children of light"** at all.

Nevertheless, let me congratulate you on the ways in which you and your supporters have actively out-worked and out-smarted those that might have stood in your way.

MAY GOD BLESS YOU

To begin with, I want you to know that we will be praying for you. I, and many other Christians throughout this nation, will ask for the Lord's blessings upon you. Now, this does not mean that we approve of your past actions

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What's Wrong with "Gay" Marriage

By Doug Newell IV
of Wake Forest, North Carolina

Biblical Answers to Liberal Questions
"Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge" (Heb. 13:4).

Marriage is honorable in all, and in every way it is a praiseworthy institution. Meditate about that for a moment. In all, marriage is honorable, respectable, and admirable and it would behoove us all to contemplate the fact God is telling us in His Word that marriage is worthy of esteem, and respect. One primary reason that marriage is honorable is because it is a divine institution. God is good, and everything that God does is good, and since marriage is God's institution, marriage is good. One of the great blessings of God to mankind is marriage. It was not good that man should be alone, and by God's mercy, out of man He made woman and began one of the greatest blessings that mankind has known.



Marriage is one of the blessings that remained from the Garden of Eden. Though we lost much through the fall, God lovingly and mercifully allowed us to retain the blessed

union of husband and wife. There are problems with marriage in our nation; namely that it is, for some, reputed as nothing. Rather than seeing it as a divine gift to mankind, it is often looked upon as a scourge; a source of all problems and unhappiness. I overheard a couple of men discussing the supposed horrors of marriage to a man who was thinking about getting married, and they wrongly advised him to stay away from the divine institution. They praised the single life, and lamented over the vows they themselves had taken. Part of the

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The Church Distinguished From Israel

By Milburn R. Cockrell
(1941 - 2002)

Amillennial covenant theologians make no distinction between Israel and the church in their teaching and preaching. They believe in the essential unity of the elect of all dispensations, and they see neither need nor place for a distinction. As the death of Christ is the ground for the salvation of all the elect, they assume the church in the wilderness in the Old Testament is the same as the New Testament church. They put the saints in both Testaments in the universal, invisible church. Often they speak of Christ dying for His church, meaning the elect of all ages.

Amillennialists maintain the terms of admission into the church before the first advent of Christ were the same that are required for admission to the Christian church. Those terms were a



credible profession of faith in true religion, a promise of obedience, and submission to the appointed rite of initiation. They say all of this is true with reference to the church that now is. Pedobaptist

amillennialists hold that since infants were members of the church under the Old Testament economy, they should be members of the New Testament church. Hence they teach infant sprinkling and infant church membership. Amillennial Baptists will not go this far as they deny infant baptism.

Dispensational pre-millennialists make a clear distinction between Israel and the church. They hold all believers

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Jesus Called Them Fools

By Roy Mason
(1894 - 1978)

"O fools, and slow of heart to believe--" (Luke 24:25).

The greatest enemies of true Christianity today are preachers and theologians of the Modernistic and Liberalistic kind. More and more churches have liberalistic pastors because the seminaries are turning out men who are inoculated with the virus of liberalism. When students for the ministry find that they no longer believe the fundamental tenets of the Christian faith, if they had any honesty, they would give up the ministry. But no, they stay and undermine the faith of others. It will be recalled that some years ago the fundamentalist leader Dr. John Roach Stratin, who was pastor of the Calvary Baptist Church of New York City, had a debate with Charles Frances Potter,



who was pastor of a Unitarian church. They debated the Virgin birth of Christ, and other questions. In the course of a personal conversation, Dr. Stratin said to Potter,

"How did you get this way? How did you come to hold these liberal views?" Potter answered, "I got this way by attending one of your Baptist seminaries." Then he told of how he graduated from a Northern Baptist seminary, and of how on graduation night the class that had graduated met in his room at the dormitory. In discussing their beliefs, most of the class admitted that they had come to hold Unitarian beliefs. One graduate spoke and said, "What are we going to do about

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*When Christians face persecution daily and might die,
A fire to share the gospel with the lost burns inside.
"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the
kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:10).*

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The purpose of the *Berea Baptist Banner* is as follows:

1. To honor God and to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. To preach the gospel to lost sinners.
3. To spread the whole counsel of God's Word.
4. To encourage God's preachers and to strengthen His churches in the most holy faith.
5. To motivate God's children to a closer fellowship around His Word.
6. To inform people of world events in light of Bible prophecy.
7. To condemn and expose error wherever it may rear its ugly head.
8. To stimulate Christian growth in grace.
9. To make the Devil and his demons as mad as possible.

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Please let us know your
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office charges us \$.50
for each returned wrong
address.

An Open Letter

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and ideologies; nor does this mean that we approve of the will and purpose of the people of America, who have (in many cases, I believe, without a proper understanding of your truly abominable social agenda) voted to set you in office as our next President of these United States. But, since the public has been swayed by your charismatic persona; and, since the public has been swept away by the unceasing barrage of adoring media in your support; we must now acknowledge you as the President-Elect of this country. The Apostle Paul told the Romans, "**Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God**" (Rom. 13:1). So, though we may not understand the purpose of God, we must acknowledge that your victory in the recent election is "**ordained of God.**"

Since you have been given this high honor in our nation, we must, as the people of God, pray for you and for your administration. The Apostle Paul told Timothy, "**I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour**" (I Tim. 2:1-3). Surely, this Scripture alone ought to be enough to motivate the children of God to pray for the leaders of which ever nation they might inhabit. And, certainly, we will not forsake our duty to pray for you, the President-Elect of our great nation. In fact, my prayers are encouraged as I consider what the wise preacher once said: "**The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth in whithersoever he will**" (Prov. 21:1). I would to God, that He would turn your heart into the strait and narrow way; and unto the good and right! I pray that you would heed these words of God: "**Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things**" (Phil. 4:8). I pray that God would direct your thoughts and your heart in these things that have just been mentioned.

Once upon a time, when the children of Israel sinned against God in seeking an earthly king to rule over them, the prophet Samuel told the people of Israel, and all those that were over them, "**Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach**

you the good and the right way" (I Sam. 12:23). Therefore, considering what Samuel had to say to the nation of Israel, we, too, the children of God in this day and in this nation, ought to continually pray unto God on behalf of this people; and we ought to do our best to show the citizens of our communities, the "**good and the right way.**" In fact, we would be committing a sin against the Lord God if we did not pray for you and for this people, and if we did not teach and show others what is the "**good and the right way.**"

So, since it is our duty and responsibility to pray for you and for this nation; and since it is our duty and responsibility to show unto the people the "**good and the right way**"; let me mention to you now, some very grave sins that you are involved in, and in which you seem to be encouraging the citizens of this great nation to indulge in.

ABORTION

First of all, let me bring to your attention a very abominable sin which is so common and so accepted in our nation today---and that is the sin of abortion. Now, I know that you accept the fact that many Republicans will voice some measure of support for those folks that preach and teach the sanctity of life in the womb. And, I know that you accept the fact that many in your own party will vehemently support the murderous idea that women have the right to kill their own babies. But, I don't believe that this is a political issue at all; rather, I believe that this is a moral issue, and an issue of liberty and protection of the innocent. Therefore, I want to encourage you to step away from the evil practices and platforms of your own party, and I encourage you to recognize the rights of the unborn. And, not only recognize those rights, but announce your own opposition to anyone that would seek to do harm to those innocent babies.

In fact, I believe that this is an inherent problem in our political system in general---too many folks are willing to announce what their own beliefs and practices are, but they are loath and/or hesitant and/or fearful to announce their opposition to sin. In other words, even those political servants that might have moral and noble aspirations are content to just let others practice their sinful ways. This shouldn't be the case! Those of us who know the Lord, and those of us who have a fear of God, and those of us who have a knowledge of the right and the wrong---we all ought to cry out against sin! It is not enough to just be "for good"; we must also be "against evil."

But, if you are still hesitant to agree with me concerning the terrible nature of the sin of abortion, let me refer you to some verses from the Holy Bible that might cause you to stop and consider this terrible and awful sin: "**Moreover thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters,**

whom thou hast borne unto me, and these hast thou sacrificed unto them to be devoured. Is this of thy whoredoms a small matter, That thou hast slain my children, and delivered them to cause them to pass through the fire from them?" (Ezek. 16:20-21). The disdain that Jerusalem had for her children, in that she sacrificed them in the fires of idolatry to their false gods, is no different than the disdain that America has for her children, in that we offer up our children on the altar of inconvenience, or career, or shame. Who are we to kill these children for our own gain or because of our own desires?

The Lord told the city of Jerusalem that they would be destroyed because of their sins, and among the most despicable of their crimes against their God, was their willing destruction and willing sacrifice of their own children. "**For this city hath been to me as a provocation of mine anger and of my fury from the day that they built it even unto this day; that I should remove it from before my face, Because of all the evil of the children of Israel and of the children of Judah, which they have done to provoke me to anger, they, their kings, their princes, their priests, and their prophets, and the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And they have turned unto me the back, and not the face: though I taught them, rising up early and teaching them, yet they have not hearkened to receive instruction. But they set their abominations in the house, which is called by my name, to defile it. And they built the high places of Baal, which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire unto Molech; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin**" (Jer. 32:31-35). I think that we can safely say that it never entered into the mind of God that entire societies would condone, legalize, accommodate, and even finance the destruction of babies in the wombs of their mothers! I don't mean that these things come as a surprise to God (God knows all things, and He knows how wicked mankind is); but, I believe that the Lord is making it plain to Jeremiah and the others, that the mind of God could never conceive such atrocities.

Won't you, Mr. Obama, stand up with us against the destruction of our babies? Won't you join your voice to ours, in condemning the seeming wholesale slaughter of the next generation? Again, I don't know your heart or your mind; and I don't know if you fear God in reality, or if you just occasionally make reference to "God" or "Christianity" when you think that it will benefit your agenda; but, I believe that if you would cry out against abortion, and if you would bring

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your efforts to bear against the abortion movement, that God would bless your presidency. And, who knows? Maybe He will even forgive this nation, and afford unto us some of the blessings that He has been withholding from us because of our sins!

THE GAY AGENDA

I would certainly be very remiss in my duties and responsibilities if I did not also confront you concerning the very heinous and lewd sin of sodomy, or homosexuality. This terrible sin has gone from a hidden and shameful practice, to an open and glorified "lifestyle." How awful this is! How dare we flaunt ourselves and our sins in the sight of a Thrice Holy God! And, do not be deceived---sodomy is a terrible sin in the sight of our God. We read what the Apostle Paul had to say concerning this in Romans 1:18-32, **"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, the glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers,**

backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." Can there be any doubt, that what Paul is condemning here in the middle part of this passage, is the sin of homosexuality---both in the case of the men, and in the case of the women? Sodomy is so plainly a sin that it is really ridiculous when sinners of this generation try to make it seem as if God condones their homosexuality.

Though the world does not like to admit it, sodomy (homosexuality) is a sin in the sight of God. The fate of Sodom and Gomorrah should bear this out. And, even nature itself will prove this. As a point of fact, sodomy is not natural. The human race cannot propagate through sodomy and acts of homosexuality. And, in fact, the human race would die out in a single generation, if all of mankind rebelled against this most basic premise of procreation. Therefore, how can we condone such (obviously) open sin?

Who would have imagined, 50 years ago, 30 years ago, or even 20 years ago---that portions of our great nation would be seeking to legalize same-sex marriages! And, that in the last few years, righteous folks in many states have felt the need to amend their state constitutions or add to their laws, their belief that marriage must be defined as a bond between "man and woman." How preposterous it is, that we have to "define" marriage to be between one man and one woman! This is shameful! This callousness and disregard towards the Law and Word of God will bring the wrath of God upon us, as a people, if we do not mend our ways.

I hope and pray that God will give you the wisdom and the courage to cry out against this terrible sin---the sin that we are, even now, foisting and forcing on our young people, by telling them that homosexuality is simply a "Life Choice" that one must make. A sin that our young people see practiced openly on television

and in the movies; and a sin that is taught and even promoted in our education system. How I pray that God will give us some leaders in this land that will not be afraid to stand up against the Gay Agenda. I believe that the Gay Agenda is promoted by a very small percentage of Americans; but, it finds its strength in the larger percentage of Americans that either just don't care about right and wrong, or that rejoice to see other folks participate in something that they know is wrong. In reality, it is the apathy on the part of the majority of American citizens that has allowed the homosexuals to find such great success in recent years. Truly, we have lost so much ground already, due to the fact that we are just not willing to stand strong for what we know is right.

THE OUTLAWED BIBLE

Though I could spend much more time, and many more words in warning concerning the many sins that this nation and its leaders have sponsored and made so very prevalent in the last few years, let me mention only one more---the outlawing of the Word of God. Sadly, the people and leaders of this nation have set the Word of God on the "back burner" for many years---only to call upon the Word of God in some time of trial or tribulation. But, still, it always seemed that the common man and woman had some respect for the Word of God, and it seemed that most folks had a genuine fear of God. However, in these last few years, the Bible has not only been relegated to obscurity, it has also been ridiculed and scorned. I suppose that every societal sin that this nation is mired in, could have been prevented (and could be curbed, even now), if only the Word of God were once again to be held in high esteem in this nation, and in the hearts and minds of the people and the leaders.

I encourage you to read the Old Testament book of Joshua. This book of Joshua relates to us the account of the children of Israel, and the man that succeeded Moses as the leader of the nation---Joshua. In the beginning of Joshua's ministry as the leader of the people, the Lord came to him and told him, **"There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of**

thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I swear unto their fathers to give them. Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success. Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest" (Josh. 1:5-9). In this Scripture passage, the Lord God certainly speaks some comforting words to His man, Joshua. However, notice that the Lord also laid upon Joshua the responsibility of fearing, obeying, and propagating the Law of God. As long as Joshua would not forsake the Word, the Lord would not forsake him! And, as long as Joshua would obey the Words of God, he and the nation of Israel would have **"good success."**

I fear that it may already be too late for our people and our land. I fear that we, as a people, have already angered God, and forgotten and forsaken Him and His Word! But, if you, and the nation which you lead, will only turn unto Him again, and obey and fear and respect His Holy Word, who knows if the Lord may not grant you and this nation a respite from the evil to come?

CONCLUSION

Remember, in the beginning of this letter I quoted to you a verse, taken from the Parable of the Unjust Steward. Remember how the earthly lord of that unjust steward commended him? Well, do not think too highly of that commendation. When the Lord Jesus goes on to make application to this parable---in other words, when He goes on to apply the teachings of the parable to His disciples---He says this: **"He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own? No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon"** (Luke 16:10-

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DXDS, Digos City, Philippines...	Sunday 12:00 - 12:30 p.m.	1161 Khz	1,000 AM

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13). You, dear sir, have been, essentially, elected as a steward of this great nation. I fear that since you have been largely unfaithful and unjust in your past duties--at least in comparison to the Word of God---that you will be just as unfaithful and unjust in your present duties. I pray that it will not be so! I pray that God will work a miracle in your life, and show you your need for Jesus Christ as your One and True Saviour! Examine your life, and consider your ways! Surely, just like every man, you are a sinner and in need of a Saviour. Do not be proud or imagine in your heart that you are above sin! Sin will destroy you, and will work death in you, and will, eventually, plunge you into Hell and the Lake of Fire. This is true in every man's life---without Jesus Christ, we are all bound for Hell. Your situation is no different, dear sir. You, too, must repent of your sins, and turn to Jesus Christ as your Saviour.

However, if you do claim to fear God, and if you do claim to love Jesus Christ, then I encourage you to consider, again, one of the verses that I have just read which instructs us that **"No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other."** Mr. Obama, you cannot please the gays, and please God; you cannot please the abortionists, and please God; you cannot please the Bible haters, and please God; you cannot please the adulterers and fornicators, and please God; you cannot please the lying, stealing, immoral, cheating, power-hungry lobbyists and politicians, and still please God.

I hope that God will give you repentance, and a change of heart. I hope and pray that God will put not just the fear, but also the love of God in your heart. I hope and pray that you will remember these words of Jesus Christ: **"Ye cannot serve God and mammon."**

May God bless you, may God bless me, and may God bless America!



What's Wrong with

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dilemma with the 50% (if not more) divorce rate in our country is how little we, as a people, think of it. Whatever one thinks of gay marriage, it is evident our nation as a whole, does not view marriage as honorable in all. When you think lightly of something, you will not value it, as much. When I hear some teenager doing burnouts in their car, squealing their tires at a red light or when I see the black marks on the road, the evidence they have "peeled out," I always think,

"there is someone who doesn't buy their own tires." Someone who has to work to buy their own tires, value them more than to foolishly abuse and waste them. A marriage that is considered honorable isn't put down, mocked, or taken lightly. The bonds of matrimony are more often than not, joked about and put down, rather than defended and spoken of as the honorable institution it is. I am certain you could turn the television on any day of the week and you would come across some show making a mockery of marriage. Husband and wife being made to look like mortal enemies instead of one flesh, and instead of showing God made man and woman for each other, they portray that we were made to pick at each other. The husband is an imbecile and the wife an overbearing grouch. The typical television show about family and marriage portrays a battle of wills, instead of a family and home. The secular view of the effeminate man and the feminist woman have replaced the biblical example of marriage found in Ephesians chapter five. On the other hand, the promiscuous single life is shown to be "cool" and full of happiness and satisfaction. How long does it take for this flood of media to change the hearts and minds of a people? How much propaganda can the average American withstand, when it comes to the family?

Perhaps if marriage was looked upon as God intended, the issue of homosexual marriage would never have arisen, for I believe people would not stand for such an attack on the home if we truly viewed marriage as honorable. Sadly, even in some Christian homes marriage is not treated honorably, but with contempt and disdain. Can we be surprised that the secular humanists have no respect for marriage if Christians do not? I believe that perhaps we have only seen the beginning of this push for gay marriage, and this very loud minority will not stop until they get their way, despite the will of the people. I have seen and heard many well intentioned people debate this issue, and they are almost embarrassed to give an answer to why gay marriage is wrong. I do not believe that we need to be apologetic in our apologetics and for having a biblical point of view. Praying that we as a Christian people will stand firm in our biblical view of the honorable institution of marriage, we must answer the calculated questions that arise from proponents of gay marriage. Make no mistake, these carefully crafted and oft repeated questions and mantras come by no accident, but are all part of a propaganda campaign to change the minds of the American people. These catchy phrases and tricky questions come from the father of lies himself, and are used to cause the weak to question their moral beliefs. He tried the same with our Lord, as the Pharisees oft asked questioned designed to be pitfalls, but we

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must follow our Lord's example and not let Satan get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices (II Cor. 2:11). We must be ready to see these questions for what they are, and pray God give us the strength and vigor to answer them biblically.

First of all, "gay" marriage is a misnomer. Two men can't marry each other, it is impossible. They could go to the court house, say vows, and with all the power vested in every jot and title of the constitution of any state of Union, combined with all the power vested in the United States constitution, pooled with all the power of every elected politician, and every unelected judge behind the bench, all of this power and authority cannot make two men be married. Two women can send out invitations, rent a hall, and hire musicians to play Paschel's "Cannon in D" as they walk the aisle, there could be vows and smiles, rings and tears, nevertheless, at their receptions, they would not be married, because they CANNOT be married. God's purpose for His institution was from the beginning, and always will be, the union of man and woman. That is marriage, and man and woman are the only two parties that can be married. From the beginning God made them male and female, for the purpose of marriage. **"For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder"** (Mark 10:7-9). Nothing can be so clear. Whatever union they believe to have, they are not married because they do not meet the qualifications of two persons desiring matrimony (Matrimony - Marriage; wedlock; the union of man and woman for life; the nuptial state. Webster's). We must never let ourselves be framed in their debate, but remain strong in our biblical worldview. Once we give way, just an inch, to the possibility that homosexuals could be married, we have already started down the wrong path. Plain and simple, no two men ever have, nor ever will marry.

An argument that is often brought up by the liberals who push for gay marriage is that it is a civil rights issue, but marriage is a moral issue, not a civil issue. Indeed, marriage is recognized by the government, and sanctioned by the government, but not created and

maintained by the government. Marriage predated the US constitution, and the bounds of matrimony are not decided by mortal lawmakers, but the Supreme Lawgiver. Since God is the founder of marriage, and God commanded that marriage not be put asunder, and God clearly defined marriage for all of humanity, no group of people have the authority to change what God has put together. Man has no more ability or right to change the definition of marriage than he has to change the definition of church, or change God's Word. You may say "that is discrimination!"; and you would be correct. That is discrimination, but what is wrong with discernment? To discriminate means to make a difference, to distinguish, to treat differently, and again, what is wrong with that when it comes to gay marriage? We must distinguish between right and wrong, we should treat two men, who falsely claim to unite in marriage, differently than a man and a woman. It is wrong to treat someone poorly because of the way they look, or the way they speak, but we must discriminate between right and wrong. God clearly discriminates between who can and can't be married. I do not discriminate against people getting married, every person in the world can get married, as God defined marriage. The suggestion that gay marriage can be related to racism and the civil rights issue is absurd. The homosexual can get married, if they repent of their sins and find a spouse of the opposite sex. How can speaking out and taking a stand against immorality be immoral? How can standing against immoral behavior be a moral crime? They say that this issue is, for our time, what slavery was over a century ago, and that just because marriage always has been, in the past, between a man and a woman, doesn't make it right. They use the example of the centuries of slavery, and simply because there always was slavery, did not make it right. But time never changes the truth. What was true 1,000 years ago is true today. Slavery that existed 200 years ago, when a man was taken from his home by menstealers and forced to labor against his will was morally wrong, as the slave had no choice in the matter, he was stolen. Homosexual marriage is a conscience choice to sin against the God of creation, and gay marriage is an attempt to change an existing institution's boundaries that they have no right nor authority to change, which is also morally wrong.

Another argument given by homosexual marriage proponents is love. "Here are two people who love each other, and want to become married, what is wrong with that, they aren't hurting anyone, and they love each other", or they say "two people in a committed relationship, desire to make a lifelong

♦ (Continued on page 105)

What's Wrong with

(Continued from page 104) ♦

commitment, why won't you allow that?" or something along those lines. "Two people who love each other, and want nothing but to express their love just like you did, what is wrong with that?" Well, what is our answer? What do we say to people who say they love someone and want to get married? Does the love for a particular sin ever make it right? A love for a particular evil never excuses the practice. Our hearts are **"deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked"** (Jer. 17:9) and thus not a very good gauge for right and wrong. Morality based solely on feelings springs from a desperately wicked, very fickle source. Some people love to be drunk, does that excuse that behavior? Not only do they love to be drunk, but if it were possible, they would live drunk, and forever shun sobriety. They love to talk about strong drink, love the taste, love how it makes them feel. Every fiber of their being enjoys the sin of drunkenness, but does that make it right? Science tells us that some people inherited the propensity of alcoholism, and within their DNA resides a natural longing for drunkenness, but does that excuse the behavior? Some people love to murder, some love to steal. Some love to commit adultery, does their love for those crimes excuse them? Of course it doesn't, and neither will love for any other sin excuse the execution of that sin.

Usually following suite is the excuse that they were born that way, and they can't help it, and simply desire to have what everyone else has. Does that logic prove that homosexuality is acceptable behavior? We are all born sinners, and all have a natural yearning and desire to sin against God. Our minds are **"enmity against God,"** yet we are still responsible to God for our actions. A natural proclivity to covetousness doesn't excuse coveting. That sin, like all other sin, must be fled, not fed. Giving in to sin will never make it right. That is only blaming God for their sins and proves the need of a Saviour. All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men says the Lord Jesus, and this sin is no different. What is needed is repentance, turning from sin and trusting in Jesus Christ for salvation, believing in the Lamb of God, who taketh away sin, rather than excusing and diving deeper into lusts on the broad way that leads to destruction.

The ever popular "you're a Christian, you're not supposed to judge me" line attempts to disqualify you from even discussing the issue, that we are somehow supposed to remain silent and put our stamp of approval on all activity in the name of Christian charity. In some cases, liberal pundits will attempt to say that Jesus would have approved

gay marriage. We found in our text a condition **"but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge"** (Heb. 13:4). The fornicator and adulterers or those that commit sexual sin, God will judge. Yes, we as Christians can and should judge and discern what is right and wrong according to God's Word. The idea that truth is relative to the situation or the individual is not a biblical worldview. Given that God instituted marriage and since marriage is good, and has been clearly defined by the founder Himself, any and all sexual activity apart from the marriage bed is sinful and immoral. God said that homosexuality is sinful, thus we can rightly and boldly declare that it is sinful behavior. Indeed, it is, for some, a behavior that they feel is natural, but only because of the sinfulness of their hearts. **"Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet"** (Rom. 1:21-27). Homosexuality is not natural or normal, but a curse and plague for idolatry. God doesn't not condone, nor bless, and certainly does not bless the union of unnatural lusts and vile affections. God gave the people in Romans, chapter one, over to the lusts of their own heart, and this feeling they had, this love or lust they shared was to the dishonor of their own bodies. Notice in I Timothy 1:9-10, **"Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine."** Homosexuals are contrary to sound doctrine. God says that marriage is honorable, and that homosexuals defile themselves. Marriage is a picture

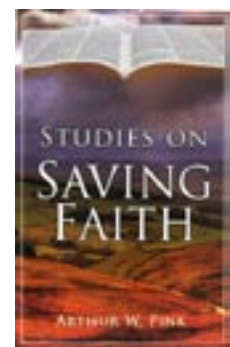
of Christ's love for His church, and homosexuality is classified with murders of mom's and dad's. It is a sinful, unholy and profane activity, and in no wise sanctioned in marriage. Jesus did not, does not, nor will not condone or make way for gay marriage because it is an abomination. Leviticus 18:22, **"Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination."** Some liberal 'theologians' will say that is Old Testament and no longer applies to us today, because we live in grace and mercy. An abomination is something that God hates and whether Old Testament or New, He will always hate it, always. Study the Old Testaments use of the word abomination. I'll give two examples of the usage, first in Leviticus 11:10, **"And all that have not fins and scales in the seas, and in the rivers, of all that move in the waters, and of any living thing which is in the waters, they shall be an abomination unto you."** Next in Deut. 7:25 **"The graven images of their gods shall ye burn with fire: thou shalt not desire the silver or gold that is on them, nor take it unto thee, lest thou be snared therein: for it is an abomination to the LORD thy God."** Some things God said were an abomination to Him, others were to be an abomination to Israel, thus Peter's reaction to eating unclean animals, it was an abomination unto him, not God, so that is how we can live now without the restrictive dietary laws of the Old Testament, had they been an abomination to God, He would still not allow that diet. What is an abomination to God today, was an abomination 5,000 years ago. God is clear, in His Word, concerning sexual activity, and the bounds of marriage. The seventh commandment condemns gay marriage. I believe that G.D. Boardman well said, "It is the divine Lawgiver's ordinance, guarding the chastity of marriage, the sanctity of home, the blessedness of the household, the preservation of society, the up building of mankind."

God will not allow them to inherit the kingdom of God, but will sanction their marriage? I Corinthians 6:9-10, **"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God."** God can and has saved sinners from this life, it is not, after all, the unpardonable sin as verse 11 makes abundantly clear, **"And such were [past tense] some of you [members of the church in Corinth]: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."** God delivered some from this sinful activity; He did not wink at it nor condone, nor

allow marriage. Marriage could not be between two persons of the same sex because marriage is honorable, and homosexuality is an abomination.

Need we even bring up the question of taxes and hospitalization? This logical fallacy is used to appeal to pity rather than the facts and merits of the case. In a land where people can leave millions of dollars to their pet, I know it is not a problem to create a living will for the case of hospitalization if that is a great concern. As for taxes, the United States government recognizes the benefits and blessings of the family, and gives tax benefits to the building blocks of a decent and well functioning citizenry, the family. Again, any benefits that come with marriage are applicable for all who will desire to unite in matrimony, the union of a man and woman for life, but is that any reason to get married, a tax break?

Homosexual marriage will not destroy marriage because it is still God's institution. No matter how man may try to pervert it, marriage will not be destroyed by homosexual advocates. My marriage will not be changed one way or the other by what others do, or what the government may say. It does, however change what people think about marriage, and how matrimony and the family will be viewed by future generations. The continual praise of ungodly and satanic policies by our leaders and from the media will and has begun to change the hearts and minds of the American people. With pulpit profiteers in so-called churches, ignoring or condoning the practice of gay marriage as not to upset the apple cart of book sales, we have, even in professing Christianity some who do not see anything wrong with gay marriage. God help us to stand strong and may God forgive the United States of America.



Studies on Saving Faith by A. W. Pink has been reprinted. This is the same as the old Reiner Publications version *Saving Faith*, but has appended three extra sermons: The Christian in Romans 7, Vile, and Is Christ Your Lord?

It's good to see this book available again. Paperback binding with 213 pages.

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CELLBLOCK TO CELLBLOCK

By David G. Hoffman

Encouragement and thoughts from a prisoner to other prisoners and readers.

“Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried” (Rev. 2:10).



The “Lace Up”

Greetings, grace, and peace to you, dear reader. I pray this finds you doing well and in the highest spirits.

No, I didn't fall off the edge of the earth, and I apologize for my absence. But I've been battling a slight case of depression and didn't want my dismal mood to come through in my writing.

However, the Lord has led me through the sullen period and put in my heart the desire to continue writing this column. A lot of people think Christians have a magical life where nothing gets them down and everyday is like Alice in Wonderland. But I'm here to tell you it ain't so.

It is true that believers endure adversity better than non-believers because we have the Lord on our side. But nowhere will you find in the Scriptures that believers will live stress, depression, and trouble free lives. You can't find one Biblical character who did so. So don't deceive yourselves when you feel depressed, when you feel stressed, when you want to pull your hair out: **“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need”** (Heb. 4:16).

Those of you who have read this column for any length of time know I want to become a chef when I'm released, and that I've been working in the unit kitchen as a prelude to such a career. Well, I've had to terminate my kitchen job and move to another because of problems with some of the food service guards. It got to the point where I was stressed out and angry everyday when I got off work. I put up with it for months and the longer I endured, the worse it got.

Then one day I and one of the kitchen guards went over to the maintenance shop to borrow a ladder. While I was waiting for the guard to sign it out, the shop supervisor from the garment factory came over and told me he had some openings for sewing machine mechanics if I wanted to come work for him.

Two days later I worked in the garment factory. I'm learning to repair commercial sewing machines. It's not my ideal job--I'd really rather be cooking, and that's where the depression came in. I had to get out of the kitchen because of the problem guards, but cooking is my passion. My brain was telling me one thing, but my heart was telling me something else.

I was very conflicted within myself, and a week later almost went back to the kitchen. Then I realized it doesn't matter which work assignment I hold in here. I'm not getting paid a wage, so no matter what job I have it's all the same in the long run. I'm basically just marking time until I come up for parole next February.

Until then, I'll continue studying cookbooks and cooking textbooks by night and learning to repair sewing machines by day. It's not like they were letting me cook Le Grand Cuisine anyway. [smile]

One last thing before I get to the message. This tidbit is part of a feature article in the May 2009 issue of Texas Monthly titled: “82 Various & Visionary Ideas For How To Make Texas A Better Place”---

“How about not judging a man based on a mistake in his past? As an employer, when you see that a man has a felony on his record, don't automatically disqualify him--bring him in for an interview and hear him out on how he's changed. Chances are, that man has overcome more trials and tribulations than you can imagine. One in fifteen Americans will be incarcerated in his or her lifetime. About 95 percent will be released back to society. Let's all realize that they have served their time and offer them the greatest of human gifts: grace.”

--Cathrine Rohr, co-founder
Prison Entrepreneurship Program,
Houston, Texas

I was surprised to see this opinion in a publication like Texas Monthly, dear reader, and just had to share it with you.

Please continue to pray for me as I persevere along this path they call prison. The end of my journey within the razor-wire and steel bars is near, dear reader, and I need your prayers now more than ever.

[The next few columns will be dedicated to some Biblical facts and practical experiences in an effort to “lace up” the Christian prisoner. In prison parlance to ‘lace up’ means to inform or let one know what's going on or expected.]

CHRISTIAN PRISONERS & AUTHORITY

One of the hardest things we, as prisoners, do on a daily basis is submit to authority. Most prisoners see the guards as enemies and regard them with disdain, and most guards don't do much to reverse

this view. Both sides have an “us verses them” mentality. But Christian prisoners are admonished to **“be subject unto the higher powers”** [or authority] (Rom. 13:1). So what are we to do?

First, of all, let's define ‘authority’: “The power or right to perform certain acts without impediment. It is based upon some form of law, whether divine, civil, or moral. Supreme authority is God's alone (Rom. 12:1), hence all human authority is derived.

“The general purpose of authority is to promote order in human society. . .”*

Now that we know what authority is and where it comes from we can better answer the question of what we, as Christian prisoners, are to do.

It doesn't matter that the guards over us don't follow their own rules, or that other prisoners don't follow the institutional rules, nor does it matter that the rule makers design illogical and ridiculous regulations. What does matter is that we are commanded by Scripture to submit ourselves to these rules as long as they're not contrary to God's Word.

I've been doing prison for twelve years flat---eight of those as a believer---and I can't remember one instance where I was ordered to disobey Scripture. However, if it happens to you: **“We ought to obey God rather than men”** (Acts 5:29). But please, dear reader, be absolutely sure you're on Biblical ground before bucking authority.

“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God” (Rom. 13:1).

The words ‘power’ and ‘powers’ in this verse are translations of the Greek word, exousia, which means: “authority, power, the right to control or govern; dominion, the area or sphere of jurisdiction; a ruler, human or supernatural.”*

The verse itself is telling us to submit to the authorities ruling over us. For the Christian prisoner that authority includes every employee of the department of correction (DOC) we happen to be in. This verse also tells us the DOC's authority is derived from God. This doesn't mean those in power are necessarily godly, but as the next verse declares, it does mean that disobeying them is equal with disobeying God.

“Whoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation” (Rom. 13:2).

I know a lot of prison rules are illogical. But some are necessary for proper order of the institution and safety for both prisoners and DOC staff. And some are merely in place to push prisoner's buttons.

So, recognize them for what they are, hold your breath, count to ten---and FOLLOW THEM. Like the old Marine Corps hymn says, “It's not ours to reason why, it's just ours to do and die. . .” I don't

think you'll die from following the rules but you get my drift.

However, the consequences of not following the rules could be severe: **“. . .they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.”**

Some of you may see the word “damnation” and think, “Man, God is going to strike me down and kick me to the curb!” But let me tell you, dear reader, if you're truly His He'll never kick you to the curb. He may take you to the wood shed, but He'll never disown you---but that's another message.

The word ‘damnation’ in this verse is the translation of the Greek word, krima, which means: “judgment, condemnation; sentence, punishment.”²

Resisting the regulations set forth by the DOC will surely bring swift judgment. The punishments can range from a “Don't do it again!” to loss of privileges and/or property, to a set-off on your parole, to a new sentence. Why risk any of the above? It ain't worth it---no matter what “it” is. But most of all, it ain't Scriptural and that is our Guiding Light.

I know, submitting to authority hurts our pride. We're grown men and having grown men with authority over us irks us to no end.

But---selah (think about it!)---**“Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall”** (Prov. 16:18).

Therefore put away your pride and submit to the powers that be whereas they are not contrary to God's Word. **“For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake”** (Rom. 13:3-5).

Breathe in, breathe out, and know that this is God's command for us---be subject unto the higher powers. It's for our own good, it makes doing our time easier, and it shows our obedience to the Highest Power.

Seek God's assistance daily through prayer for help with your obedience.

Until next time, dear reader, may the grace of God be with you. . .

{* This is a partial definition from The New Unger's Bible Dictionary.

² These definitions are from The Strongest Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible, 21st Century Edition.}

Bro. Jeff and Bro. Louis: thank you for all y'all are doing on my behalf. I love you guys and can't wait to be out there with y'all. It won't be long now. . .





Lizzie Blake

PART III

“And learn the luxury of doing good” (Goldsmith).

Five years more had passed away, and Willie Parker, now a young man of three-and-twenty, was still in Scotland with his uncle, who, being a man of good education, had taken great pains with his nephew. Under his instruction, Willie had made great progress, and bade fair to become a first-rate farmer.

There were many well-filled bookshelves in old Gilbert Parker’s parlor, and the long winter evenings were well and profitably employed, by uncle and nephew, in reading the best works upon agriculture. To be a good farmer, a great deal of what is called “book-learning” is desirable. So many improvements have been made of late years in the different branches of agriculture---in the system of crops, drainage, farming implements, and other matters---and valuable works are frequently being written on all these subjects. The many hours, therefore, in the winter, when outdoor operations are impossible, may be profitably spent in taking advantage of the experience of others as set forth in books. All such knowledge will be useful to the farmer.

In olden times, among the Romans, agriculture was deemed the most honorable of occupations, and its operations were directed by men of wealth and learning. Cato, a learned Roman, who lived one hundred and fifty years before Christ, wrote many valuable agricultural works, and has given us the minutest details as to the management of his farm, from the ploughing of the fallow ground to the reaping of the crops. Agriculture is, in fact, the most ancient of sciences, and the practice of it may be traced to the period immediately succeeding the deluge. In the early period of the history of the Hebrews they led a wandering sort of life, depending chiefly on their flocks and herds, and having no fixed habitation, but moving about from place to place for convenience of pasture. Such a state of society is not at all favorable to settled habits and institutions; and it has been proved that even the most fertile land cannot maintain many of the human family so long as they depend only upon the natural vegetation.

It is only after those plants which yield man an abundant supply of food are made the objects of cultivation, that population

increases, and civilization takes its rise. To select such plants, therefore, as are best suited to the climate and soil, and to bring them by careful cultivation to the greatest degree of perfection, is the business of the agriculturist. Let it be always remembered, however, that it is God alone “**who giveth the increase**,” and who causes the labors of the husbandman to prosper. We once knew a farmer who had the latter part of the sixty-fifth Psalm written out, framed and glazed, and hung up in his bedroom. It was a wise thing to do. Poor, weak, sinful human nature is so ready to take unto itself the merit and the success of any enterprise. Have our young readers ever studied or thought of David’s testimony to the overruling care of our merciful Creator, without whose protecting love “**seed-time and harvest**” would not be ours?

“Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it; thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water: thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it.

“Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly: thou settlest the furrows thereof: thou makest it soft with showers: thou blessest the springing thereof.

“Thou crownest the year with Thy goodness; and thy paths drop fatness.

“They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness: and the little hills rejoice on every side.

“The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing” (Ps. 65:9-13).

The system of agriculture varies greatly according to the peculiarities of the countries where it is practiced. In order to understand many allusions to it in the Bible, we must know something respecting the different countries there spoken of. Without some such knowledge we could not, for instance, understand such a text as the following: “**Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days**” (Eccl. 11:1). But when we have learned something of the customs of those countries where, as in Egypt, scarcely any rain falls, and where the melting of the snows on the high mountains causes the rivers to overflow and inundate the land on either side, we shall soon have a clear understanding on the subject. The river Nile in Egypt annually overflows the valley through which it runs, and rice and other grains

are sown or “**cast**” upon the land while it is still under water. The Egyptian farmer sows in faith, knowing that as the waters retire the corn will spring up luxuriantly in the rich soil, which has been rendered so by the inundation of the river; and the lesson Solomon would have us learn is, that in every circumstance of our lives, although the way may not seem quite clear to us, we are still to do the right deed. Do it in faith and in prayer commend it to the care of God. Miss no opportunity of doing a kind action; spread God’s Word wherever you may have the opportunity of so doing; and be assured it will never return void. It may not return until after many days---it may even be after your own day altogether; but if it be God’s own truth, and if all your heart be in it, it is living truth, and will blossom and bear fruit some day.

But we must now proceed with our story.

William Parker was sitting in his uncle’s breakfast parlor, reading a letter from home---that distant home, which not all the kindness he had received from his uncle had made him forget. It was evident that there was important news in the letter, for the young man’s cheeks were flushed, and his eyes sparkled as he read. At length he exclaimed,

“If I had but two hundred pounds!”

“What would you be doing with it, if you had, lad?” said his uncle, who had entered the room unperceived.

William colored deeply, but made no answer.

“Speak out, Willie; it can be nothing very wrong you would wish to do, or I am much mistaken in you,” said the old man kindly.

“Oh, no, indeed, uncle, but---”

“But what, lad? Come, out with it.”

“I have just heard from my sister, sir, and she tells me that old David Smith, who rents a small farm at Hillsley, is about to leave the neighborhood and go to Australia, to his son who has made his fortune there.”

“And do you want to go to Australia likewise?”

“No, uncle.”

“Then what is it, Willie?”

“He will give up his farm, uncle, and, of course, it will be to let; and Alice tells me she heard father say that any one with two hundred pounds might get possession of it.”

“And you are tired of Scotland, then?” said the old man, and there was something of bitterness in his tone.

“Oh, no, sir!” said young Parker, with earnestness; “do not think that, or that I can ever cease to remember with deep gratitude all you have done for me. It was but a passing thought, uncle. You know mother is not as young as she once was, and she is very dear to me, and I sometimes think---” and as William stopped short, the tears were in his eyes.

“Do you think it necessary to make

excuses to me for being fond of your mother, boy?” said Gilbert Parker, almost angrily. “There, there!” he continued, “it was I who have been wrong ever to expect to take her place in your affection. It is I who have been to blame.” And the old man left the room as he spoke.

“I have pained my good kind uncle,” thought Willie; “and what should I have been but for him? He shall see, however, that I have dismissed the subject from my thoughts.”

It was easier to talk about than do, and many times during the day Willie caught himself again recurring to the subject of his sister’s letter. But not a word more about the matter passed between him and his uncle for several days, until one morning, Gilbert Parker received a letter with the Hillsley post-mark on it, and when he had read the contents, he said to his nephew, “I see you have been acting wisely, Willie, and trying to think no more about that Hillsley project. Have you succeeded in so doing?”

Willie was thoroughly honest; he could not say he had quite succeeded, but he could with truth say that he had tried to do so.

“I believe you, lad. Now listen to me. When I lost my dear wife, and my only child, now some twelve years since, I wrote to your mother, offering to take you off her hands. I knew how many mouths there were to fill at Hillsley. She gladly accepted my offer, and you came to me. I looked upon you that day as my son, Willie; and often have I thought of the time when I should be past work, and you would take my position here, for which your education would in every way suit you. In all this, I only thought of what I should like, forgetting that your feelings might not agree with mine. When I found my mistake the other morning, I, at first, felt half angry with you, whereas you were not at all to blame in the matter. A little calm reflection has shown me that you were, after all, actuated by feelings which did you honor, and that I should be doing you a wrong did I attempt to make you do violence to them. I had left you two hundred pounds in my will; what if I give it now instead of your having to wait for my death? And then you can take the farm.”

Willie’s countenance expressed his delighted surprise, but he could not speak.

“I wrote to Hillsley two or three days since,” continued his uncle, “to know if it was really anything worth your having, and I have just heard that it is really a good concern, and offers a fair opportunity to a steady young man of getting on in life. You shall have the farm, then, Willie, and---”

“Nay, uncle; but, indeed, I should not like leaving you.”

“You will get over that, lad,” said the old man, with a smile. Then he added,

◊ (Continued on page 108)

Lizzie Blake

(Continued from page 107) ♦

"When I am no longer fit for work here, why, I must come and settle down at Hillsley, that's all; perhaps you'll be able to find me a chimney corner, eh?"

Gilbert Parker had put in practice the "golden rule," and we question whether in the whole of his life the old man had ever felt more truly happy than on the day which had thus witnessed the overturning of his plans for the future as regarded his nephew. But, as a great poet says, speaking of the performance of deeds of mercy and kindness.

"It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes," and they do not know what true happiness is, who have lived for themselves alone, and have never learned the "luxury of doing good."

(Final conclusion in next issue.)



Jesus Called Them

(Continued from page 101) ♦

it?" Potter answered, "I'm going to be honest about it. I am going to join the Unitarians." The rest of those who had expounded Unitarian beliefs said, "We are going to stay with the Baptists and bore from the inside." There is a lot of "boring from the inside" going on today and the borers are just plain crooks.

So-called theologians have multiplied. Men like the professor in a mid-western Baptist seminary who wrote a book on Genesis in which he denied the truthfulness of some of the greatest teachings of the Bible. He denied the universality of the flood. He denied the literal truth of the Bible story of creation. He made Melchisedec out to be a prophet of Baal, and so on through the book. An outcry was raised against the book, and the trustees of the school let him out of his job---not because of the heresy of the book, but because he had become a controversial figure and this might hurt the institution. The nearest they came to rebuking him was to give him an extra year's salary!

But a Methodist University professor went the Baptist professor one better, and advanced the theory that GOD IS DEAD! Not to be outdistanced in liberalism, a Baptist theological professor in a northern Baptist seminary joined in the teaching that God is dead. If either of these professors were ever rebuked by their schools, I never heard of it. Honesty would have induced these men to have resigned their jobs, but no, they chose to stay and undermine the very institutions from which they receive their pay.

For some years now the theological pattern has been largely set by a small group of European pseudo-scholars. Men like Barth and Brunner and Tillich.

Strange it is that our theological teachers should have kept crossing the ocean to sit under the teaching of such men, for Europe is a place of religious decadence, and the teachings of such pseudo-intellectuals has helped to produce this decadence. In England for instance, despite all of the magnificent cathedrals, comparatively few people attend church. Bishops and leaders of some of these decadent institutions came to America and begged Billy Graham to come and hold a revival in England. They wanted a fundamental Bible believing preacher, to do what their formalistic, liberalism couldn't do.

Many don't understand why so many ministers and theological students have become so prominent in the civil rights movements, marches and demonstrations. It is because such have lost faith in the Bible as the Word of God. It is because they no longer believe in old-time supernatural conversion. Nothing is left for such but to try to minister to the physical man. When churches cease to proclaim the gospel of personal regeneration, they become more do-good, political institutions. Such throw away the Commission that Jesus gave to His churches. But then---let us remember that the thorough going religious liberal no longer believes that Jesus was virgin born, or that He was in reality deity, or that He came out of the grave and is scheduled to return to this earth.

Those who believe that Jesus was the virgin born son of God, and who take His words seriously, know that He never gave any indication that men will bring in the Kingdom of God through any of the plans of men. Quite the contrary. He taught that there will be moral and spiritual deterioration before He returns such that conditions will be analogous to those that existed in the days of Noah. So gloomy was the picture of things as foretold by Him that He asked the question, "**When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?**" (Luke 18:8). Further in describing the situation that will come to exist, He said as recorded in Matthew 24:22, "**Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved**" (Matt. 24:21). In other words, human society shall degenerate such that were it not for divine intervention the human race would commit suicide. What a blow to post-millennialism, and to the idea that men are going to bring in the kingdom of God, that is. But it doesn't matter to the confirmed liberal what Jesus taught or said. They think of Him just as a man. I am persuaded that the thorough going liberal uses the name of Jesus merely as a rallying cry. They could affiliate with Buddhists and could use the name of Buddha to the same advantage.

NO SOCIAL "OVERTONES"

Many of those who have not become

thorough social gospellers, compromise somewhat and say, "Oh well, it is true that the gospel has social overtones." The truth is IT HAS NOTHING OF THE KIND. The gospel relates to the regeneration of the individual soul, and knows nothing of social salvation. When one is supernaturally saved, he becomes a "**new creature**" and he will seek to treat his fellow man right. "**As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith**" (Eph. 6:10). Enough truly converted persons in any community will change the community for good. Improved social and other relations come as a result of supernatural conversion. Let it be remembered that the apostle Paul lived in a society where slavery thrived. Did he start some kind of a civil rights movement designed to overthrow slavery? He did not. We have no record that he organized any anti-slavery demonstrations.

To the contrary he counseled slaves to be obedient to their masters. In Ephesians 6:5 we read, "**Servants (slaves) be obedient to them that are your masters. . . as unto Christ. . . as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God.**" It will be remembered that Paul sent a run-away slave, Onesimus, back to his master Philemon. Philemon was won to Christ by Paul and so was the run-away slave. In Paul's letter he reminded Philemon to treat his returned slave like a Christian brother. Paul did not inveigh against the institution of slavery, which he certainly would have done had he been a social gospeller. But be reminded of the fact that as Christianity spread, it undermined the institution of slavery. Freedom was a by-product of Christianity.

REFUSED TO INVOLVE HIMSELF

Jesus upon one occasion was interrupted by a man who wanted Him to bring about social justice. He wanted his brother to divide an inheritance in what he deemed to be a satisfactory way, so he butted right in to cry out, "**Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me**" (Luke 12:13). What did Jesus do? He said, (Luke 12:14) "Man who made me to judge or divider over you?" Jesus refused to enter the matter entirely, but the modern social gospeller is more concerned about such questions than anything else.

Where and how did this social craze get its start? I can recall that a professor in one of our Baptist modernistic seminaries, Walter Rauschenbush, wrote a book entitled "The Social Gospel." Why did he write that book? He was a SOCIALIST, and he wanted to divert the church away from the gospel of individual salvation into a socialist scheme.

The "social gospel" is fittingly characterized by the apostle Paul in Galatians 1:6-8 where he speaks of "**another gospel: Which is not another.**" Paul is pretty hard on any who substitute

a false gospel. He says (v. 8) "**Let him be accursed.**" This applies to the preacher of the social gospel as much as to those of whom Paul wrote in his day.

Modernism logically leads to repudiation of the supernatural, hence the thorough going religious liberal holds that there can be no real prophecy since this requires supernatural knowledge of coming events. This repudiation of the supernatural finds its ultimate in the "God is Dead" theory. The liberal who doesn't go quite far enough to espouse the "God is Dead" theory is to be pitied. He tries to hang onto some semblance of the Christian faith, when logically there is no place to stop short of the "God is Dead" position. He holds on to the idea that the Scriptures have some value, while at the same time he divides Isaiah into segments, and reduces the book of Daniel to the position of a book written by some liar who falsely called himself Daniel and who palmed off history as prophecy.

JESUS CALLED SUCH MEN FOOLS!

He met the despondent disciples on their way to Emmaus. They didn't recognize Jesus at first, but told Him of the hopes that they had entertained that Jesus was the Messiah---but of course these hopes had collapsed because Jesus had been crucified. What did Jesus say to these men? He said, (Luke 24:25) "**O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.**" Then He went ahead to expound the various Old Testament Scriptures that foretold His coming and His crucifixion. Jesus not only called those disciples fools, that is His word for all deniers of prophecy of this day. Many who are proud to be known today as "liberals," are designated by Jesus as FOOLS!

In a world where some religious leaders are saying that God is dead, is there a simple, irrefutable way to prove the existence of a living God? Yes, there is a very simple and practical way of proving this. What is it? It is ANSWER TO PRAYER. It takes only one certain, sure, irrefutable, answer to prayer to prove that God is. Since I have been a Christian I have had many such answers to prayer. That is why I am writing this book---as a stimulus to faith. I have not had a fraction of the answers to prayer that I might have had, if I had exercised more faith, or if I had made more prayer requests, but I have had enough to prove the point that I am making. NO---GOD IS NOT DEAD. HE HAS ANSWERED MY PRAYERS!

THEORY WORTH LITTLE

There are many books on prayer, but most of them deal with the theory of prayer. I am not interested in reading such books, for I am not interested in mere theory. One indisputable answer to prayer is worth a million theories.

♦ (Continued on page 109)

Jesus Called Them

(Continued from page 108) ◊

George Mueller of Bristol, England, was one of the greatest men of prayer that I have ever heard of, and he kept books on prayer. After his death his prayer record was examined and it was found that he had recorded more than 25,000 answers to prayer.

Some years ago there was a question and answer column that ran in the "Word and Way", the Baptist state paper of Missouri. A well known pastor of a large Baptist church of St. Louis conducted the column. A man wrote in and asked him this question, "Did praying ever help you?" In answer the columnist said, "Yes, praying helps me." Then he outlined four ways in which prayer helped him as follows:

1. Praying helps me by reminding me that I live in my Father's world.
2. Praying helps me by bringing the assurance that God cares for me.
3. Prayer helps me by giving me a new view point.
4. Prayer helps by giving me new power.

You will note that the columnist valued prayer chiefly for its psychological effect on the one praying. He said not one word about God actually granting the requests that were made. Such views of prayer are in the nature of self-delusion. I do not recall anywhere a Bible passage that indicates that we are to pray for the psychological effect that it has on us. Jesus said, "Seek and ye shall find. Ask, and it shall be given unto you" (Luke 11:9).

In this book I cannot do more than mention just a few, a very few, of the answers to prayer that I have received through the years. I praise God, and thank Him fervently for answering prayer. This did not come as a result of personal merit on my part, but because I presented my petitions in the name of Jesus. My hope is that those who read may be encouraged to pray more and in greater faith. God is not dead. He is alive, and He will hear and answer prayer!



Church Distinguished

(Continued from page 101) ◊

from Pentecost to the Rapture constitute the mystical body of Christ, and that all believers at regeneration are baptized by the Holy Spirit into the universal, invisible church. Dispensational premillennialists stress the church being an organism rather than an organization. They minister the ordinances of the local church and emphasize the spiritual life of the believer.

If you are ready to ask me to which school I belong, I will quickly answer: To neither one in a strict sense. I am a Baptist

and find myself some where between the two opposing schools of thought. I agree with amillennialists that God saves all the elect on the basis of the death of Christ, but I sharply reject their making Israel and the church synonymous. I agree with dispensationalists that there is a distinction between Israel and the church, but I would condemn them for starting the church with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost rather than with Christ during His personal ministry on earth. Both schools teach the unscriptural idea of a universal, invisible church which I totally reject. Both start the church at the wrong time: amillennialists with Adam and premillennialists at Pentecost.

There are some ways that Israel and the church compare and seem to be similar. Both were established by a God-appointed person and both were the people of God. God's blessings were in the main upon Israel in the Old Testament time, as they are in the main upon the churches today. In the old economy the will of God was made known by Israel; in the new economy the church makes known His will. The nation of Israel was real and visible; the New Testament church is likewise. In the Old Testament, God had a visible congregation with rituals and laws. In the New Testament Christ has visible churches with rituals and laws, although they are not the same rituals and laws which Israel had.

While there are ways in which they compare, there are greater contrasts. To make Israel and the church the same is a grievous error. Strict covenant theologians insist circumcision was a sign and seal of membership in the Hebrew nation and the Hebrew church. They make circumcision in the Old Testament to be the same as baptism in the New Testament. Baptism and circumcision are two different things. The natural seed of Abraham were entitled to circumcision; only his spiritual seed are qualified to be baptized. The right of a child to circumcision did not depend upon the faith of his parents. No sponsors were required in circumcision. Only males were circumcised; both males and females are baptized. The Apostles baptized Jewish converts who had already been circumcised. Jewish Christians continued for many years to circumcise their children. Paul, to satisfy the Jews, even circumcised Timothy who had already been baptized. The Apostles, neither at the Council at Jerusalem, nor on any other occasion, manifest any knowledge of the substitution of baptism for circumcision. Circumcision in the Old Testament was a type of the new birth (Rom. 2:28-29).

In the old economy Israel and the church in the wilderness were identical. The priests and Levites were civil as well as religious officers. The New Testament church is to be totally separated from the state (Matt. 22:21). The church in

the wilderness had the right to inflict the death penalty; the New Testament church has no such power from God. Israel was one nation; the churches have in them people from many nations and are found in many nations. Israel is an unfaithful wife (Isa. 54:5; Hos. 2); the church is Christ's virgin bride (II Cor. 11:2). About four-fifths of the Bible is written to Israel, and about one-fifth to the churches.

Israel was instructed by God to kill all their enemies (Deut. 7:1-2), but the church is taught to love and to bless her enemies (Matt. 5:44; I Cor. 4:12-13). In Israel only men were priests unto God, in the church men, women, boys and girls are all priests, since all believers are priests unto God. The worshipper in Israel could only bring his offering to the door of the tabernacle or temple (Luke 1:10; Lev. 17:8-9; Num. 3:10). The New Testament worshipper can "**enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus**" (Heb. 10:19-20). The Israelites were baptized unto Moses as their leader (I Cor. 10:2). The members of the church are baptized unto Christ as their Saviour and Leader (Gal. 3:27).

Instead of viewing the church and Israel as one big house, the writer of Hebrews makes Israel a separate house with Moses as its builder, and the church another house with Christ as its builder. Observe what he said: "**Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus; Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house. For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house. For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God. And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; But Christ is a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end**" (Heb. 3:1-6).

The Hebrew writer views Israel and the church as two separate houses, not two rooms in the same house as strict covenant theologians do. Moses led the Israelites from temporal Egypt; Christ from spiritual Egypt. By Divine appointment Moses founded the laws, rituals, and ministry of the household of Israel. By Divine appointment Christ founded the laws, rites, and ministry of the New Testament house of God (Matt. 16:18; I Tim. 3:15). Moses during his personal ministry on earth founded the Old Testament house of God in Egypt and the wilderness. Christ during His own personal ministry on earth established the New Testament house of God in Palestine. Here are two

different households and two distinct builders. Moses founded the Jewish theocracy subordinately as a servant; Christ founded the church supremely as a Son. Moses was a part of the church in the wilderness; Christ is the Head of the church.

The church and Israel are two separate households and people widely different. The church in the wilderness was made up in the main of Israelites, yet the church consists in the main of Gentiles. During the ministry of Christ both institutions existed at the same time and were clearly separate from each other. While the first members of the New Testament church were Jews, they became church members by the baptism of John and the call of Christ. Circumcision did not put them in the church. Being a part of the nation of Israel did not make them church members. Judaism persecuted Christ and His church. The church did not triumph in its missionary endeavor until Judaism was broken up and dispersed. To argue that Israel and the church were one and the same during the ministry of Christ seems to ignore much of the teaching of the Four Gospels.

There was a visible congregation of God in the Old Testament times. But there was no church on earth at that time, nor was Israel ever called the body of Christ. The congregation in the wilderness never baptized any person, nor did they observe the Lord's Supper. The congregation of Israel in the Old Testament had kings, prophets, and priests, but they never had any apostles, bishops, or deacons. The Jews never were able to understand in the Old Testament that one day Christ would build a house of God which would consist of both Jews and Gentiles (Eph. 2:12-21; 3:1-9).

Amillennialists take pleasure in claiming all the promises made to the Israelites, and with equal pleasure they leave all the curses in the Old Testament to the Jews. But it is as bad to apply God's promises to the Israelites to the church as it is to apply all the promises Christ made to the church to Israel. Most Landmark Baptists will concede there was no Baptist church in the Old Testament, but amillennial Landmark Baptists find much in the Old Testament about the Church. Is it not a bit foolish to say that God often spoke to the Jews His message to the Gentiles? Is it not sheer folly to teach God spoke at length in the Old Testament to the church when no church existed?

To add to this inconsistency, these same people can find nothing in the New Testament written to Israel. They say the whole New Testament was written to Baptist church members and no one else. But did not the nation of Israel exist in the apostolic age? Were not the early Christians all Jews? Honest people know the Jews still exist as a people even today.

◊ (Continued on page 110)

The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

1. Please explain the difference of the gift or the Holy Spirit given in John 20:22 and that given on the day of Pentecost?

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“And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost” (John 20:22).

Mostly because we are so late with this forum session, we simply point the reader to these excerpts from some reputable commentators.

“Jesus appears suddenly and mysteriously. He establishes His identity with the disciples, who are obviously convinced (v. 20), sends them to continue His mission to the world (v. 21; cf. 17:18), and equips them with His Spirit (20:22), the fulfillment of earlier promises (cf. 14:16; 16:7, 13-14). This scene marks the beginning of the church as a body inspired by the Spirit of Jesus and dedicated to the spreading of the gospel (cf. Acts 2).” (Harper)

“**“Receive ye the Holy Spirit.”** Though He continues to be the only Shepherd of His Church, He must necessarily display the power of His Spirit in the ministers whose agency He employs; and this also He testified by the outward symbol, when **“he breathed on”** the Apostles; for this would not be applicable, if the Spirit did not proceed from Him.” (Calvin)

“The qualifying of them for the discharge of the trust reposed in them by their commission (v. 22): **“He breathed on them, and saith, Receive ye the Holy Ghost?”** Observe,

[1.] The sign He used to assure them of, and affect them with, the gift He was now about to bestow upon them: **“He breathed on them;”** not only to show them, by this breath of life, that He Himself was really alive, but to signify to them the spiritual life and power which they should receive from Him for all the services that lay before them.” (Matthew Henry)

But perhaps Pink gives us the best explanation, differentiating between the personal, private and quiet visitation of the Holy Spirit, and the public, visible manifestation(s) of the Holy Spirit.

“In connection with the advent of Christ there was both a private and a public aspect to it: in like manner too was it in the giving of the Spirit. The birth of the Saviour was made known unto a few, but when He was to **“be made manifest**

to Israel” (John 1:31), He was publicly identified, for at His baptism the heavens were opened, the Spirit descended upon Him in the form of a dove, and the voice of the Father audibly owned Him as His Son. Correspondingly, the Spirit was communicated to the apostles privately, when the risen Saviour **“breathed on, and said unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost”** (John 20:22); and later He came publicly on the day of Pentecost when all the great throng then in Jerusalem were made aware of His descent (Acts 2:32-36).”

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John 20:22 declares: **“And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.”** The disciples had already received the regenerating and indwelling grace of the Holy Spirit. Every person who is born again has been brought to spiritual life and given the gifts of repentance and faith through the powerful, quickening work of the Holy Spirit. The moment a person is born again the Holy Spirit indwells the new nature that He has sovereignly created. Romans 8:9 declares: **“But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”**

The setting of John 20:22 is important. Jesus had already risen from the dead and had ascended to His Father (v. 17-18), prior to His appearing to the disciples. When Christ appears He speaks peace to their troubled hearts which brought great joy to the disciples (v. 20). Christ then informs them that as the Father had sent, authorized, and empowered Him, He was now sending them out on a mission of mercy in like manner. Jesus then breathed on them and empowered them personally with the Holy Spirit. Symbolically, this is the firstfruits of the power of the Holy Spirit that would come in its fulness upon the Lord's New Testament Church on the day of Pentecost. In John 20:22 the personal power of the Holy Spirit is given to the disciples to carry out the work the Saviour had commissioned them to do. In Acts chapter two the Lord baptizes

the first New Testament Baptist Church with the power of the Holy Spirit in a corporate way to empower them to carry out the Great Commission. In John 20:22 Christ empowers individuals with the Holy Spirit, in Acts chapter two Christ empowers the church by baptizing it with the Spirit.

TOM ROSS



Church Distinguished

(Continued from page 109) ♦

Then why is it that amillennial Landmark Baptists teach that God often spoke to the church in the Old Testament when it did not exist, and He never spoke to Israel in one passage in the New Testament even though the nation existed and all the early Christians were Jews! Would I not be safe in saying that such reasoning can come only from a man who is beside himself?

Elder Joe Bell, pastor of Central Baptist Church, Grenada, Miss., in his book, **GOD'S PRIESTHOOD ON EARTH**, page 34, asserts the word saints in the New Testament means the saved in church capacity. He goes on to emphatically declare “there are no other ones addressed in the New Testament.” On page 94 of this book, written to prove Baptist churches are God's present priesthood on earth, he affirms that there is nothing in the Word of God that is not addressed to those in church capacity. (These are only indirect quotes from his book. He positively forbade any direct quotes, hiding out behind the copyright law to prevent exposure at the hands of his brethren.) This idea, revolutionary and extreme, is absolutely essential to his trying to prove the Baptist priesthood theory. Bro. Bell confuses the church with Israel in the worst possible way. An amillennial covenant theologian had never done any worse, yet Bro. Bell professes to be a premillennialist.

The idea that every word in the New Testament is addressed to saints in church capacity puts some odd persons in the churches. Let's try a few verses to see if Bro. Bell's theory is correct. In Matthew 4:4-10 Christ addresses the Devil. Is the Devil a saint in church capacity? Look at the whole 23rd chapter of Matthew. Note especially verse 33 which reads: **“Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?”** Are saints in church capacity snakes headed for Hell? Note verse 38 of Matthew 23: **“Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.”** Does this mean Christ had forsaken His newly organized church? Need I go further in the Scriptures? Unless one is willing to put Satan and unsaved Jews in a Baptist church, he must reject Bro. Bell's theory.

Some priesthood of the Baptist church men assume Matthew was written to

saints in church capacity because the word “church” is mentioned in the Book (Matt. 16:18; 18:17). This is very poor logic. By the same logic I could assume it was written to the Devil since he is mentioned in the Book (Matt. 4:2-13). But it would be more reasonable and consistent with Christian scholarship to assume it as generally written to Jews (Matt. 2:2; 27:11, 29, 37; 28:15); or Israelites (Matt. 2:6, 20-21; 8:10; 9:33; 10:6, 23; 15:24, 31; 19:28; 27:9, 42).

Any person who reads the Four Gospels with no theory to defend can easily see there are some words addressed to specific individuals, some to the church, some to Israel, some to all believers, and at least some to unbelievers and Satan.

Baptist church priesthood men claim that every word in the epistles of the New Testament was written to saints in church capacity. Their theory permits no place for a personal epistle or a general epistle. I agree with priesthood men that many epistles in the main are written to local churches and to saints in church capacity such as Romans, I and II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and I and II Thessalonians. But unlike them I would not take the extreme position that every word in these can be applied to church members and never to believers outside the church. No doubt the whole Bible was written for the benefit of the saints in the Lord's churches, but this is not to say that the Bible does not contain some things to believers outside the churches.

In no way can I agree with priesthood men that I and II Timothy were written to the church of Timothy. Timothy was a man (I Tim. 1:1-2; II Tim. 1:1-2), not a Baptist church. These two books were addressed to a young preacher and not a church, although their message concerned the orderly management of church affairs. Titus and Philemon were persons, not Baptist churches. There is abundant information for the Lord's churches in these books, but they were written to individuals.

♦ (Continued on page 111)

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The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

2. Can you give some enlightenment to what is being taught in Col. 2:16-17? What is meant by meat, drink, holyday, new moon, and Sabbath that are said to be a shadow of things to come?

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Colossians 2:8-10 declares: **"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power."** Paul is warning the brethren at Colosse not to be misled by those who would seek to impose the legalistic requirements of the civil laws of Israel, or the philosophies of supposedly "enlightened" men as tests of salvation, sanctification, and spirituality. Jesus Christ has put away our sins through His perfect sacrifice. Our spiritual life and acceptance with God is bound up in our union with Christ.

Those in Christ are not bound to keep the civil laws that governed Israel under the Old Covenant. There were Jews in the early churches that insisted that certain drinks, days, sacrifices, sabbaths, etc. must be observed in addition to faith in Christ to prove genuine salvation and spirituality. We are not saved by observing certain rules imposed by men, we are saved by the finished work of Jesus Christ alone, period. All of the things mentioned in Colossians 2:16 were shadows and types in the Old Testament that pointed to the Christ who would come. We are not saved or kept by our efforts to observe certain laws, rules, or traditions, but by the power of the living Christ alone. Colossians 2:14 states: **"Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross."**

I like the introductory remarks of John MacArthur the expositor, as he commented on this passage:

"The churches in the Lycus Valley also faced the danger of spiritual intimidation. False teachers were telling them that Jesus Christ was not sufficient, that they needed something more. These people believed they were privy to a higher level of spiritual knowledge and the secrets of spiritual illumination. This higher, hidden truth was beyond Jesus Christ and the Word.

These heretics formed an elite, exclusive group that disdained "unenlightened" and "simplistic" Christians. They effectively beguiled some Christians and drew them away from confidence in Christ alone. The "something more" that the false teachers offered was a syncretism of pagan philosophy, Jewish legalism, mysticism, and asceticism. As noted earlier, Paul wrote the Colossians to refute that false teaching and to present the absolute sufficiency of Jesus Christ for salvation and sanctification. Because the Colossians had Christ, and He is sufficient, they did not need to be intimidated by the false teachers." (*The MacArthur New Testament Commentary on Colossians & Philemon*, p. 116).

TOM ROSS

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"Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ" (Col. 2:16-17).

The Jews were bound up in legalistic taboos, manmade restrictions added to the Law, i.e. the Word of God, which had nothing to do with the holiness desired of us, neither by God nor as any kind of "condition" of salvation. Long before Paul wrote this letter to the church at Colossi these legalistic issues had become problems in the young Gentile churches, as seen especially in Paul's letter to the Galatians. **"But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain"** (Gal. 4:9-11).

The things mentioned in Colossians 2:16-17, and a few verses later in verses 21-22: **"(Touch not; taste not; handle not; Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men"** all refer to particular requirements of the Law, all picturing the coming of Christ, His holiness and His sacrifice. They were "shadows", indicating the yet unseen real thing which was to come. The keeping of them was an ever

present reminder of the necessary purity of and the assurance of the yet to come Messiah. They served a forward looking reminder to the Old Testament (Old Covenant) saints in the same manner as the Lord's Supper serves as a backwards looking reminder that Christ has come, the sacrifice has been made and it has been accepted.

Old Testament dietary restrictions are no longer valid, so don't get into bondage with those who seek to limit your diet (don't eat pork, etc.). The Old Testament "feast days" are no longer worship requirements. The "Sabbath" has been replaced by the "Lord's Day" worship on the first day of the week (see next month's forum answer) which is the only real "Christian" holiday.

Closely associated, however, is the question of how much obligation the New Testament believer has to the Law of God. This also will be discussed in next month's forum. Suffice it to say for now: (a) a true believer will worship (Heb. 10:25) and (b) Romans 6:14: **"For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace"** does not make the New Testament believer exempt from the holiness required by the law. **"What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid"** (Rom. 6:15). **"To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law"** (I Cor. 9:21). But true New Covenant believers are not bound by artificial taboo restrictions imposed by outside organizations such as the W.C.T.U., denominational or traditional "traditions", of worship demands by some self authorized ecclesiastical hierarchy whether by association, denomination or even over zealous local church boards and pastors.

RAY BENNETT



Church Distinguished

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Because I Peter is so essential to the priesthood theory, priesthood of the Baptist church men are quick to affirm it was written to saints in church capacity. I do not deny that some of the persons addressed were church members and had elders (I Pet. 5:1-4). I do have trouble with believing that saints in five Roman provinces (I Pet. 1:1) were all in one big Baptist church. This would be a much larger church than Jack Hyles even has today! I have an equally hard time believing that saints in a Baptist church are the only ones elected by the Father (I Pet. 1:2), sprinkled with the blood of Christ (I Pet. 1:2), begotten again (I Pet. 1:3), saved (I Pet. 1:5), purchased by Christ (I Pet. 1:18-19) and new born

babes (I Pet. 2:2). To believe such is to shut salvation inside a Baptist church.

The Epistle of James is addressed to **"the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad"** (Jas. 1:1). Since every word in the New Testament was written to saints in church capacity, I would assume that priesthood of the Baptist church men would be forced to make this twelve Baptist churches. Since they were scattered they would probably say these were twelve scattered Baptist churches. This would be to ignore the fact that the term "twelve tribes" is used throughout both the Old and New Testaments to designate the twelve tribes of Israel. But remember to priesthood men there are no statements in the New Testament to Israel. I believe it would be much better to take the twelve tribes to be believing Jews in the twelve tribes. This has been the general views of all scholars until some in very modern times obtained new-lite.

I do not deny that ecclesiastical authority is in the church. I do not deny that New Testament Baptist churches are the only true churches on earth. I do not deny that God is working through His church in the world today. I do deny that every word in the New Testament is written to saints in church capacity. I do deny that the Baptist churches are God's priesthood on earth today. I do deny salvation is in the Baptist church. I do deny that Israel and the church compare in every way with no exceptions. I affirm there is a clear distinction between Israel and the church. I do affirm that those who fail to make any distinction between Israel and the church are teaching heresy.



Spiritual Investment

By Raymond Bennett
of Ithaca, New York

"And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (Luke 12:16-21).

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Spiritual Investment

(Continued from page 111) ♦

“Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Luke 12:32-34).

I have a bank account. It often gets pretty low but my gracious Lord has always made sure that the needs are met and even most of the wants. We Americans think we need a lot more than we actually need but yet our Father in Heaven, who holds the wealth of the world in His hands, Who owns the cattle on a thousand hills (Psalm 50:10) has seen fit to grant us material provision for our earthly sojourn far in excess of what He has been pleased to provide many others. For this we should be very grateful and very aware of our stewardship responsibilities. Let us not be prodigal sons and waste our **“substance with riotous living”**.

James’ comments in James 4:3 have a bearing on the tenor of these verses. **“Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.”** A frequent theme in the recent passages we have looked at in Luke’s gospel has been God’s provision for His servants. The servant must be a good steward of that which is placed in his hands. It is the Lord’s goods, not his. It is to be used to do that which the Lord wants, not what the servant wants. Often times it seems that the servant must work extra hard and do without things he might want, in order to do that which the Lord wants. The key here is that God will grant us abundant blessing but it to be used for His service, not squandered on our personal lusts. It is better to be satisfied with peanut butter sandwiches instead of fillet mignon and use the money saved to further the gospel. It is sometimes surprising how richly God will bless that servant. Remember how richly God blessed Solomon when he chose that which was right before God rather than that which would please and glorify him.

Paul speaks to that relationship when he reminds young Timothy, **“No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier”** (II Tim. 2:4). But he also reminds the Corinthians that the soldier or servant is to be fully supported – all his needs met - by the one whom he serves. **“Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?”** (I

Cor. 9:7). Church, are you taking care of your pastor? Or are you making him “feed the flock without eating the milk of the flock”?

Our good Master knows our needs! Matthew 6:8: **“...for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.”** He assures us that all those things will be added to us – but with the condition that we are first seeking the kingdom of God. **“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you”** (Matt. 6:33).

The faithful servant, one who sees to it that his master’s goods are well invested and profitable, will never lack for his own provision. Heed Solomon’s good advice. **“Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds. For riches are not for ever: and doth the crown endure to every generation? The hay appeareth, and the tender grass sheweth itself, and herbs of the mountains are gathered. The lambs are for thy clothing, and the goats are the price of the field. And thou shalt have goats’ milk enough for thy food, for the food of thy household, and for the maintenance for thy maidens”** (Pro. 27:23-27). That servant will doubtlessly be seated and served at that great victory supper we have so often referred to in Luke 12:37: **“Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.”**

What are earthly goods? We can and should enjoy whatever pleasures God grants us in this life but always remember, this life is all they are good for. Whatever we acquire in this life we will leave to another. **“There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God”** (Eccl. 2:24). But Christ reminds us (v. 20), as did Solomon and as does James, that we have no assurance of enjoying the treasures we acquire on earth. **“Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.”** (Pro. 17:1) **“Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away”** (James 4:13-14).

The rich man in the parable died the very night he thought himself so secure in his wealth. How like the church of the Laodiceans! **“So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”**

Let us not seek glory or put our confidence in the wealth of our ministries or the size of our congregations. **“Fear**

not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth.”

Let us therefore seek to establish treasure in Heaven, not gold, silver and luxurious mansions, but that spiritual treasure that grows and shines as our life and service for the Lord becomes more and more our priority. **“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”**



Books by Tom Ross



Abandoned Truth	\$15.00
Abandoned Truth Study Guide	\$10.00
The Fruit of the Spirit	\$12.00
A Baptist Exposition of the Book of Acts	\$20.00
Teachings On the Local Church.....	\$20.00
See postage chart on page 119.	

THE BIBLE AND THE NEWSPAPER

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.

HOUSE COMMITTEE APPROVES HATE-CRIMES LEGISLATION

(EP News)--The U.S. House Judiciary Committee voted 15-12 on April 23 in favor of legislation that would create a new class of crimes based on the victim’s “actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity.” Under “hate-crimes” laws like H.R. 1913, pastors could be prosecuted for preaching the biblical view of homosexuality. Similar laws have been used to prosecute religious speech in the U.S. at the state level and abroad.

“The homosexual activists’ mantra is no longer tolerance — it’s embrace and promote,” said Ashley Horne, federal policy analyst at Focus on the Family Action. “Anything less will be silenced. Christians must speak up.”

“Every human being in the world deserves to be equally protected, no matter who they are,” Rep. Louie Gohmert, R-Texas, said in opposition to the measure. H.R. 1913 now heads to the full House for a vote.

“HATE-CRIMES” BILL PASSES JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

(EP News)--The U.S. House Judiciary Committee passed legislation on April 23 that would create a new class of crimes based on the victim’s “actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity.” Under “hate-crimes” laws like H.R. 1913, pastors could be prosecuted for preaching the biblical view of homosexuality. Similar laws have been used to prosecute religious speech in the U.S. at the state level and abroad. “The homosexual activists’ mantra is no longer tolerance — it’s embrace and promote,” said Ashley Horne, federal policy analyst at Focus on the Family Action. “Anything less will be silenced. Christians must speak up.”

TWO MILLION RED ENVELOPES CAME TO OBAMA AGAINST ABORTION

(EP News)--A White House mailroom staffer has confirmed that nearly 2.5 million red envelopes have made their way to President Barack Obama to protest his pro-abortion record. The staff member says the campaign is one of the largest efforts he can recall in his 35 years working at the White House. Though President Obama was in Europe on a foreign trip, the White House worker said the Obama administration has noticed the flood of red envelopes against abortion. Inspired during a prayer, Massachusetts resident Christ Otto came up with the idea of sending red envelopes to President Barack Obama to protest his pro-abortion policies. As he told LifeNews.com back in February, what started out as an email request to 120 of his ministry friends and supporters turned into a nationwide phenomenon that saw others ask pro-life advocates to coordinate sending their red envelopes to Obama on March 31.

STUDY: 3 MILLION AMERICAN KIDS MAY BE ADDICTED TO VIDEO GAMES

(EP News)--An estimated 3 million U.S. children ages 8-18 show multiple signs of behavioral addiction, according to an Iowa State University study. Lead researcher Douglas Gentile found 8.5 percent of all youths who play video games exhibited such symptoms. “It becomes an addiction when it starts damaging multiple areas of your life,” he told Fox News, “such as your social functioning, your psychological functioning, your family functioning, your occupational functioning, your school functioning.” Kurt Bruner, co-author of Playstation Nation, said

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video games can trigger high dopamine levels in the brain, similar to cocaine addiction. "It's unlike TV," he said. "It's unlike other things that might be a waste of time, because video games actually become a replacement for real life. "The best thing a parent can do is understand the process that's taking place and make wise decisions."

SENATE TO VOTE ON PRO-ABORTION JUSTICE NOMINEE

(EP News)--President Barack Obama's nominee to head the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel -- Dawn Johnsen -- is expected to get a vote in the Senate soon. Rep. Steve King, R-Iowa, and dozens of his colleagues in the U.S. House have asked Obama to withdraw the nomination of Johnsen, who is the former legal director for NARAL Pro-Choice America. "Her personal pro-abortion agenda, previous disparaging comments about pro-life Americans and past criticism of Congress' ban on partial-birth abortion are evidence she is not interested in finding common ground with those who oppose her narrow philosophy," King said in a statement. "Ms. Johnsen has condemned virtually every type of regulation of abortion conceived by a legislature. "The Office of Legal Counsel needs a leader who will place the rule of law above political philosophy or personal agenda. Ms. Johnsen is not that leader."

INTOLERANCE MARKS PRO-GAY DAY OF SILENCE

(EP News)--Gay activists tout the Day of Silence as a campaign against name-calling and harassment, but family advocates have been receiving threats and hateful e-mails and phone calls since the April 17 event. Karen England, executive director of California's pro-family Capitol Resource Institute, has received a phone message suggesting she "go kill herself" and a threat that included an image of a coffin. She said this is about more than tolerance. "I am tolerant of other people, but I don't think that means embrace, accept, promote like they want to do with our children and our schools and out in society," England said. "You're shamed if you support traditional marriage. They really are the intolerant ones." On April 20, pro-family students took a stand for biblical principles on the Day of Truth, which was designed as a response to the Day of Silence.

COLLEGE SETTLES LAWSUIT, ALLOWS FREE SPEECH ON CAMPUS

(EP News)--The City College of San Francisco will allow Jews for Jesus to distribute literature and express its Christian message on its campuses, following a lawsuit by the Alliance Defense Fund. "Christians shouldn't be arrested for expressing their beliefs on public college campuses," said ADF-allied attorney Frederick Nelson of the American Liberties Institute. "We are pleased the

college will allow free speech on its campuses in accord with the First Amendment." While distributing literature at the college's Ocean Campus in 2007 and early 2008, Jews for Jesus employee Robert Wertheim was told he needed a permit to hand out literature. When Wertheim returned to distribute literature in April 2008, he was arrested and handcuffed. The charges were dropped the next day.

GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY COVERS JESUS SYMBOL FOR OBAMA SPEECH

(EP News)--At the request of the White House and ahead of a visit by President Barack Obama, Georgetown University -- which is Catholic -- covered a monogram symbolizing the name of Jesus. Gary Bauer, chairman of American Values and a Georgetown Law School alumnus, said he took offense to both the White House request and the compliance of Georgetown in covering the symbol on the stage. "Whatever the motivation of the White House was," he said, "the officials at Georgetown certainly should have said, 'If you want to come here to speak, the evidence of our faith will remain visible.'" Kathryn Lopez, editor of National Review Online, also expressed disgust. "It really was an outrage," she said, "and it suggests an identity crisis at Georgetown University."

SENATE CONFIRMS SEBELIUS TO LEAD HEALTH DEPARTMENT

(EP News)--The U.S. Senate voted 65-31 in April to place Kansas Gov. Kathleen Sebelius in charge of the Health and Human Services Department (HHS). Sebelius has admitted tax problems and failed to report \$23,000 in campaign contributions from notorious abortionist George Tiller. As HHS secretary, she will profoundly influence federal and state policies on abortion, rights of conscience, bioethics and end-of-life issues. She also will be instrumental in distributing federal funding to abortion businesses such as Planned Parenthood. As a state representative, she voted to weaken or eliminate parental-notification and informed-consent measures. And as governor, she routinely opposed or vetoed abortion-accountability bills, including clinic-regulation legislation. In 2008, she vetoed a measure that would have strengthened the state's parental-notification law.

U.S. HOUSE CREATES SPECIAL LEGAL STATUS FOR GAY PEOPLE

(EP News)--Despite intense opposition from family advocates the U.S. House voted 249-175 in late April to create a new class of crimes based on the traits of the victim, including "sexual orientation" and "gender identity." Eighteen Republicans voted for the bill, while 17 Democrats voted against it. Under the "hate-crimes" legislation, Christian groups fear that pastors could be prosecuted for preaching the biblical view of homosexuality. Similar laws have been used to prosecute religious speech in the U.S. and abroad.

MISS CALIFORNIA USA LOSES CROWN AFTER DEFENDING MARRIAGE

(EP News)--Miss California USA Carrie Prejean said she knew she'd lost the Miss USA crown as soon as she spoke in favor of one-man, one-woman marriage. During the Miss USA telecast, Prejean was asked whether other states should follow Vermont's lead in legislating same-sex "marriage." "In my family, I believe marriage should be between a man and a woman," she said. "No offense to anybody out there, but that's how I was raised." Prejean later told NBC: "I knew at that moment, after I'd answered the question, I knew that I was not going to win because of my answer -- because I had spoken from my heart, from my beliefs, and for my God." However, since the event, there has been an outpouring of support for Prejean. Ron Prentice, chairman of California's ProtectMarriage.com, said, "The majority of California's voters -- more than 7 million people -- voted to protect traditional marriage," Prentice said. "And we congratulate Miss California for her conviction to speak her beliefs."

340,000 SUPPORT DOCTORS' FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE

(EP News)--Through the efforts of nearly a dozen pro-family groups more than 340,000 Americans have sent comments to the Health and Human Services Department (HHS) in support of health care professionals' right of conscience. President George W. Bush put regulations in place in December to reinforce federal laws that protect medical professionals from being forced to participate in abortion and other anti-life practices that violate their morals. President Barack Obama wants to overturn them. Carrie Gordon Earll, senior bioethics analyst at Focus on the Family Action, called it a serious situation.

"If the Bush regulations are reversed and the trend to discriminate continues, people of faith and strong conviction will stop going into medicine," she said. "In 20 years, you may not be able to find a pro-life doctor. Reversing the regulations puts medical professionals and patients at risk."

CONNECTICUT APPROVES GAY MARRIAGE

(EP News)--A decade-long battle for marriage equality in Connecticut ended late April 22 when the General Assembly voted to update the state's marriage laws to conform with a landmark court ruling allowing gay and lesbian couples to tie the knot. A spokesman for Gov. M. Jodi Rell said she will sign the bill, which passed 28-7 in the Senate and 100-44 in the House of Representatives, into law. While Rell, a Republican, signed the state's 2005 civil unions law, she has said she believes that marriage should be between a man and a woman. The bill comes six months after the State Supreme Court ruled 4-3 that same-sex couples have the right to wed in Connecticut, rather than accept the civil union law designed to give them the same rights as married couples. It redefines marriage in Connecticut as the legal union of two people. State law

previously defined marriage as the union of a man and a woman.

STUDY LINKS TEEN SEX TO CHILDHOOD TV HABITS

(EP News)--Children who are exposed to adult-themed TV shows and movies are more likely to have sex in early adolescence, according to a study by Children's Hospital Boston. The study found that for every hour the youngest group of children (6- to 8-year-olds) watched adult-targeted content over the two sample days, their chances of having sex during early adolescence increased by 33 percent. Dr. Jennifer Shuford, director of applied science at the Medical Institute for Sexual Health, said other research has shown children don't have the capacity to distinguish entertainment from reality. "When they see sexual activity on television, it becomes part of their reality," she said. "As an adult, you can look at that and say, 'That's television, and that's not the real world.'"

SUPREME COURT EMPOWERS FCC TO CLEAN UP TV

(EP News)--The U.S. Supreme Court decided April 28 that the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has the authority to protect families by punishing a television station or network for even "fleeting uses" of indecent language. The Fox network had appealed an FCC order that found the live airing of one or two expletives violated its rules. Other networks joined Fox in asserting the right to air indecent language. The 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in favor of Fox in 2007. The FCC appealed to the nation's highest court, which ruled in favor of the FCC and sent the case back to the 2nd Circuit.

FEDERAL BILL WOULD ADD PRO-GAY POLICIES TO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

(EP News)--Family advocates are concerned by the so-called Safe Schools Improvement Act, which was introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives. The anti-bullying bill would require many public schools to add special protections for students based on sexual orientation and gender identity, in addition to race and religion. GLSEN, the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, applauded the legislation, but Candi Cushman, a pro-family activist, said all children deserve the same protection from bullies. "It's possible to have safe schools and to have strong policies against bullying," she said, "without introducing controversial sexual topics to kids or politicizing our schools with adult agendas."

CALIFORNIA SUPREME COURT SIDES WITH CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

(EP News)--The California Supreme Court left intact a lower court ruling that said a Christian high school has the right to make decisions based on its religious beliefs, the San Francisco Chronicle reported. The families of two girls had sued California Lutheran High School because it suspended the girls when

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they violated the school's code of conduct by having an inappropriate relationship with each other. The 4th District Court of Appeal in San Bernardino ruled in January that religious schools are not subject to California laws that provide special protections based on sexual orientation. It said a private religious school exists mainly to instill its values in young people. "Christian schools should be able to make admission and discipline decisions consistent with their religious beliefs," Timothy J. Tracey, litigation counsel with the CLS Center for Law & Religious Freedom, said after the January decision.

OBAMA GETS TO CHOOSE REPLACEMENT FOR JUSTICE SOUTER

(EP News)--Justice David Souter, 69, plans to retire when the U.S. Supreme Court completes its term. Souter has been a consistent liberal vote on the court, meaning President Barack Obama's nominee — presumably a liberal, as well — is unlikely to shift the balance of power. Bruce Hausknecht, judicial analyst at Focus on the Family Action, said Obama should choose carefully. "Americans may have elected a liberal president," he said, "but polls indicate they like their judges to be conservative, follow the law and the Constitution, and not make up new rights and impose new social policies from the bench."

"POLYAMORISTS" CALL FOR GROUP MARRIAGE

(EP News)--As gay activists take aim at marriage across the country, other groups are raising their voices in the battle to redefine marriage. Polyamorists claim there's no reason to confine a marriage to two people and are calling for "equal marriage rights."

Glenn Stanton, director of family formation studies at Focus on the Family, said, "We had warned that same-sex 'marriage' would be a wedge to drive through a whole bunch of stuff," he said. "And it hasn't taken very long for the polyamory people to come along and say, 'Hey, they got their rights. They got their benefits. Why can't we have ours?'" Dave Quist, executive director of the Institute of Marriage and Family Canada, said cohabitation and the legalization of same-sex "marriage" in his country have eroded marriage. "As it collapses, our children see that marriage is something very different than what it should be," he said. "And the effect on succeeding generations is very sad."

HOUSE RESOLUTION WOULD RECOGNIZE AMERICA'S SPIRITUAL HERITAGE

(EP News)--U.S. Rep. Randy Forbes, R-Va., has introduced a resolution that affirms the rich spiritual and diverse religious history of America and calls for a designated "Spiritual Heritage Week." The initiative has 38 co-sponsors. H.Res. 397 also would recognize

that the religious foundations of faith on which America was built are critical underpinnings of our Nation's most valuable institutions and form the inseparable foundation for America's representative processes, legal systems, and societal structures; and reject, in the strongest possible terms, any effort to remove, obscure, or purposely omit such history from our Nation's public buildings and educational resources. No vote has been scheduled for the resolution.

MAINE LEGALIZES HOMOSEXUAL 'MARRIAGE'

(EP News)--Maine Gov. John Baldacci signed a bill making the state the fifth to allow same-sex "marriage." The Associated Press reported. A "people's veto" is in the works in Maine; it allows voters to place an issue on the ballot. The Maine Family Policy Council has posted a note on its Web site: "Please pray that God will intervene. He is our best hope. God has not forgotten about Maine. Even though things seem grim, He may yet be gracious toward us." Massachusetts, Connecticut, Iowa and Vermont also allow same-sex couples to "marry." Thirty states have amended their constitutions to protect marriage. On May 5, the Washington, D.C., Council voted to recognize gay "marriages" performed elsewhere. The decision faces congressional review.

N.C. SENATE PASSES "BULLYING BILL"

(EP News)--The North Carolina Senate gave final approval May 6 to a bill that would grant special legal protections based on "sexual orientation" and "gender identity" for the first time in North Carolina history. The bill, which purports to be about bullying, includes a list of characteristics of students that deserve special attention by teachers and school administrators. Last session, bill sponsors in the House refused to consider a Senate version of the bill that removed all enumerations and sought to protect all students from any bullying for any reason, revealing the true intent of the bill to be normalization of "alternative" sexual behaviors. Now that the Senate has passed the bill, SB 526 will go to the House for consideration.

N.H. POLL SHOWS MAJORITY SUPPORTS MARRIAGE

(EP News)--A survey of every household in New Hampshire -- 432,398 total -- found 64 percent of respondents agreed that "marriage between one man and one woman should be the only legal definition of marriage" in the state. The poll, conducted by Cornerstone Policy Research Action, comes as a bill to legalize homosexual "marriage" heads to Gov. John Lynch's desk. "Since 2005, the governor has gone on the record many times stating his opposition to same-sex 'marriage,'" said Kevin Smith, executive director of Cornerstone. "We'd like him to carry through and keep his word to New Hampshire citizens."



Why Go to Church?

By Tom Ross
of South Point, Ohio

"Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the LORD your God, and observe to do all the words of this law: And that their children, which have not known any thing, may hear, and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as ye live in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it" (Deut. 31:12-13).

Though our text is found in the Old Testament and was directed specifically at the nation of Israel, I believe that the principles found in this passage may be applied to God's elect today. Our God is a gracious and loving Father who knows what is best for His children in every age. God commanded the children of Israel to gather the people together to hear the Word of the Lord and be instructed by it so that they might fear and serve the Lord acceptably and live a life of consecrated obedience. When He issued this command it was intended to be a help and a blessing to His people, not an unnecessary burden to be borne. When preachers preach about faithful church attendance and the sin of forsaking the assembly they are not doing it to be hateful or hurtful to anyone. Rather they are attempting to be a blessing to God's people by faithfully declaring the whole counsel of God. Please keep this fact in mind as you read the remainder of this treatise. Jesus gave all of His people a solemn warning in Matthew 5:19 when He said: **"Whoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."**

There seems to be a growing indifference and apathy among God's people towards church attendance and public worship. As I visit door to door in our community I hear many people saying: "I don't believe you have to go to church to be a Christian," or "I can worship God in my own way at home just as well as I can at church." Going to church never made anyone a Christian, but if you don't go to church faithfully you will never be a successful Christian. You can and should worship God privately in your own home, but you are disobeying God and robbing yourself of manifold blessings if you refuse to assemble with the Lord's people in public worship. You cannot live as well outside the church with the Devil's crowd as you can inside the Lord's church with God's children.

The excuses that most people come up with for not faithfully going to church are usually just a smokescreen to hide their sin. There are a myriad of excuses for not going to church. Some people say the weather is too bad. Others say that Sunday is their only day to sleep in. Others say they are just too busy. For many people God's commandments are just not a priority. Many would rather pursue a course of worldly pleasure, self-fulfillment, and care-free living than discipline themselves to be faithful to God's house. I realize that there are times when people are going to be providentially hindered from going to church because of employment, distance, or sickness. I am speaking to those who can go to God's house, but don't. I would like to offer the following Scriptural reasons why people should faithfully go to church every time they are physically able.

BECAUSE OF THE DIFFERENCE MADE IN SALVATION

If you are a child of God who has been born of the Spirit, washed in the blood of the Lamb, and are on your way to Heaven, you ought to want to assemble with the Lord's people. God has made a miraculous difference in your life. II Corinthians 5:17 declares: **"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."** When God saves a person He changes their attitudes and affections. Before I was saved I had little or no interest in the things of God, especially in going to church. However, once the Lord changed my heart I couldn't get enough of church. I started going to church every time the doors were open. I wanted to express my gratitude to God for saving me from a life of sin by worshipping and praising Him in the assembly of His saints.

I thank God for a pastor who faithfully taught me the importance of consistent church attendance early in my Christian life. By the grace of God, since I have been saved, I have only forsaken the Lord's house willfully only one time. I will never forget the conviction and feeling of regret that burdened my heart that one time. I was so tore up over my sin that I went to the throne of grace to ask for forgiveness and the grace never to forsake the Lord's house again. Dear reader, if you have been changed by the power of God in salvation you ought to want to be in church every available opportunity. Your pastor should not have to badger you to get you to come to church!

BECAUSE GOD COMMANDS IT

Hebrews 10:25 declares: **"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the**

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more, as ye see the day approaching. Faithful, consistent church attendance is required of God's people because God has commanded it. None of God's commands are to be taken lightly or to be considered as optional. God is our Master, our Owner, our Ruler, and as such we ought to respectfully obey His commandments. Ecclesiastes 12:13 declares: **"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man."** I fear that many professing Christians obey and respect men more than they do the commands of God. How long would you last on your job if you came to work only when it was convenient or when you felt like it? You go to work faithfully because it is your responsibility to do so, not because you feel like going. In like manner you should go to church, not because you feel like it, but because God has commanded it and you are responsible to obey Him!

Obedience to God's commands is a proof that you have truly been saved. I John 2:3-5 states: **"And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whosoever keepeth my word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him."** I John 5:2-3 declares: **"By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous."**

We prove our love for Jesus Christ through obedience to His holy commands. John 14:15 states: **"If ye love me, keep my commandments."** John 15:14 declares: **"Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you."** If you profess to be a follower, a friend, a lover of the Lord Jesus Christ, then you should strive to obey Him with every fiber of your being. If you can willfully and flagrantly forsake the house of the Lord without being convicted of sin and disobedience you have a serious spiritual problem. Jesus said: **"And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say"** (Luke 6:46)? Dear reader, if you think I am being too harsh or judgmental, please understand that all I am doing is quoting Scripture and asking you to apply it to your life! **"Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth"** (Gal. 4:16)?

TO ENGAGE IN PUBLIC WORSHIP

One of the choicest and grandest privileges of the Christian life is to publicly assemble with the saints in the

Lord's church for the purpose of worship. What joy and gladness should flood our hearts each time we anticipate going to God's house to worship Him! The Psalmist declared: **"I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD"** (Psa. 122:1). How refreshing it is to be able to cease from the rat race of the daily grind to worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness in the presence of His saints. After dealing with the world all week, public worship serves to revive our spirits and encourage our hearts.

We are to faithfully go to church so that we can lift up our voices in praise and song to our gracious Creator and Redeemer! We ought to rejoice that we have the opportunity of hearing His Word faithfully declared and expounded by one of His servants! By publicly worshipping the Lord we are declaring our allegiance and loyalty to Almighty God. In worship we are expressing our love and gratitude to God for who He is and what He has done in our lives. When we engage in public worship we are manifesting to other believers as well as the lost world at large that our Lord is worthy of our highest praise and dedication. Our attitude toward public worship ought to be that of the Psalmist's when he said: **"How amiable are thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. . . Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. . . For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness"** (Psa. 84:1-2; 4; 10).

TO FOLLOW THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST

During the earthly life of Jesus Christ, He faithfully attended the synagogue, which was the place of public worship for the Jews. They would gather to read the law, and have one of the teachers expound the truths of the Old Testament. Luke 4:16 states: **"And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read."** If it was customary for our Lord to be found engaging in public worship on the Sabbath day, then it ought to be customary for the elect to be found in church on the Lord's day. If we claim affinity with the Lord Jesus Christ we ought to take heed to the admonition of I Peter 2:21 which states: **"For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow in his steps."** I John 2:6 declares: **"He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked."** If the great Head and Lawgiver of the church faithfully assembled to engage in

public worship, as His professed followers should we not heartily strive to follow His example?

TO HEAR GOD'S WORD PREACHED

The Holy Spirit has been pleased to appoint pastors to oversee and feed the churches of the Lord Jesus Christ. Every time the church meets for worship the pastor has the solemn responsibility of nourishing the saints of God with a substantial diet of the Word of God. God-called pastors go to great lengths to prepare messages from God's Word to edify the Lord's people. Much time is spent in earnest study, prayer, and meditation in the preparation of sermons. Out of respect for God's Holy Word and His ministers, church members ought to anticipate with joy and faithfully attend each service of the church so that they may hear the wondrous truths of the Bible expounded. If every church member fed their bodies like they feed their souls I am afraid many would starve to death! The attitude of every church member ought to be like those in Acts 10:33 which states: **"... Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God."**

It is sad, but true, that in many churches across our land there is little reverence for the Holy Bible. Professing ministers handle it carelessly and spend much time joking and entertaining their hearers from the pulpit. This type of ministry seems to be popular among the masses. However, where a true servant of God is preaching the whole counsel of God, with sermons chocked full of the glory of Christ, earnest souls should attend each

service with great delight. There will be little or no growth in the Christian life if a person fails to receive a steady diet of Scriptural preaching. I Peter 2:2-3 declares: **"As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious."** If you have little or no desire for hearing God's Word faithfully proclaimed it may be that you are a hypocrite with an outward form of godliness, void of any inward power. John 8:47 declares: **"He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God."**

Not only is Christian growth a result of hearing the Word, your faith will also be nourished and strengthened through hearing God's Word. Romans 10:17 states: **"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."** The best place for any person, whether lost or saved, is to be consistently in attendance upon the preaching of God's Word.

As God's people come to hear the Word of the Lord, and be fed and nourished by it, they are to go forth applying and practicing the truth in their daily lives. If you do not faithfully attend church to hear God's message on a consistent basis it is highly unlikely that you will practice the principles of Christianity in your daily life. Hearing and doing God's Word are intricately linked together. James 1:21-22 states: **"Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."** I have no doubt that the moral degeneracy and breakdown in our land is directly linked to the failure of people to attend church regularly to hear God's Word faithfully preached.

FOR PERSONAL EDIFICATION AND INSTRUCTION

It is highly unlikely that a person will be built up in the most holy faith if they rarely attend church. The public worship of God in His house, and all that it entails is aimed at building up and maturing God's people. As we sing the great hymns of the faith our hearts should be rejoicing. As we lift up our hearts in united prayer and supplication we ought to anticipate God's blessing upon our congregations. As we fellowship with other believers around the things of God our souls should be encouraged to continue to fight the good fight of faith. Oh, that God would give us the same desire as the Psalmist who wrote: **"One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple"** (Ps. 27:4).

The church is called **"the pillar and ground of the truth"** (I Tim. 3:15)

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See postage chart page 119.

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because it supports and upholds the faith once delivered to the saints. It is the Divinely appointed place of instruction and edification for the saints of God. The church is like God's school where scholars come to learn their lessons which equip them for service. God's people are instructed and challenged from the Word of God through the preaching of the Word. A person who attends church haphazardly and irregularly cannot expect to grow up to be a mature Christian. The reason why many Christians are immature and easily deceived by error and false doctrine is because they don't attend church like they ought to. Ephesians 4:11-14 declares: **"And he gave some apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive."**

AS AN EXAMPLE TO OTHERS

Each time that we prepare our hearts for public worship and faithfully attend the house of the Lord we are providing a proper example to our children, other believers, and the lost world at large. Each time we engage in public worship we are declaring to everyone our allegiance and loyalty to the cause of Christ. Every time we willfully neglect the house of the Lord our actions show that we have little respect for God and His ways. I agree with Milburn Cockrell who wrote: "The indifference of church members to the institution that stands for Christ is the greatest hindrance to the progress of Christ's work. A person has no more interest in the souls of men and Jesus Christ than he has for Christ's church."

What kind of example are we setting for our lost relatives and neighbors when we fail to go to church consistently? Even lost people scoff at a man's religion that doesn't have enough power to take him to church! What do visitors think when they come into our churches on Wednesday nights and see the church house nearly empty? Do they see a church that is not seriously committed to God? What kind of example are we setting for our children when ball games, boating, fishing, and other pleasures take a precedence over the Lord's church? These are questions individuals ought to seriously consider the next time they contemplate willfully missing church for

no good reason.

Our failure to attend church regularly will have a corrupting influence on others as II Chronicles 27:2 implies: **"And he (Jotham, v. 1) did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Uzziah did: Howbeit he entered not into the temple of the LORD. And the people did yet corruptly."** Jotham's failure to publicly worship the Lord had a damning effect upon Ahaz his son of whom it is written: **"For he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and made also molten images for Baalim. Moreover he burnt incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and burnt his children in the fire, after the abominations of the heathen whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel."** May God help us to remember that little eyes are watching the examples that we set for others!

TO FELLOWSHIP WITH CHRIST

Jesus Christ is the Head and Lawgiver of His churches, and as such He is in attendance every time the church assembles. He walks in the midst of His churches. He has deposited His glory in His church according to Ephesians 3:21 which states: **"Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."** If Christ's glory and presence is found in His churches, then should we not make every effort to be faithful to assemble in His name and enjoy His blessed fellowship? Matthew 18:20 declares: **"For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."** Christ has promised to meet with His people when they assemble in His name and we should count that a most glorious privilege. I wonder what our dear Saviour thinks when people stay home to watch television rather than come to worship and fellowship with Him in His church?

People will go to great lengths to converse with and be in the presence of a famous person. Jesus Christ is the most important person in all the universe. He is spiritually present in all of His churches when they meet together for public worship. We ought to never willfully allow one opportunity of fellowship with Him pass by through neglecting God's house. Oh that God will change our attitudes so that we could say with the Psalmist: **"LORD, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth"** (Psa. 26:8).

CONCLUSION

1. Please receive this message as it was intended. My only desire is to edify God's people and prepare them for the Judgment Seat of Christ. As a preacher of the Gospel I must strive to glorify Him and obey the injunction of Jeremiah 26:2 which states: **"Thus saith the LORD; Stand in the court of the LORD'S house, and speak unto all the cities of Judah, which come to worship in the**

LORD'S house, all the words that I command thee to speak unto them: diminish not a word."

2. If God has dealt with you and convicted you of willful neglect of His ways then please repent and seek to do God's will. Ask Him for grace to faithfully attend His church every time you are physically able. Carefully consider your ways and then solemnly vow to God that you will be faithful and consistent in church attendance. Then pay your vows to God by doing what you promised you would do. Psalms 22:25 declares: **"My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear him."**

3. If you are unfaithful in church attendance and remain unconcerned and unchanged by this message please understand what you are saying by your actions. You are displaying ingratitude for what the Lord has done for you. You are showing a lack of interest in the great work of the church. You are being indifferent to your responsibility. Finally, you are manifesting an unwillingness to fulfill your duty to stand by your church and your pastor. **"Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things"** (II Tim. 2:7).



Pulpit Affiliation with Heretics

By Milburn Cockrell
(1941 - 2002)

"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them" (Rom. 16:17).

"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you" (II Cor. 6:17).

"If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds" (II John 10-11).

Generally speaking, the old Sovereign Grace, Landmark, Independent Baptists understood the above Scriptures and others like them to prohibit true New Testament Baptist churches from practicing pulpit affiliation with heretical religious groups. To them Hardshell Baptists, Free Will Baptists, Reformed Baptists, universal church Baptists, open communion Baptists, and alien immersionist Baptists were considered heretics. The old Baptists would not have such preachers to preach, would not recognize their churches as scriptural churches, and would denounce such

people as "heretics." The old Sovereign Grace, Landmark, Independent Baptists believed that to invite such people into their churches to preach was to endorse them as gospel ministers and their churches as true churches. Any Sovereign Grace, Landmark, Independent church which dared to deviate from the ancient landmarks of the fathers was disfellowshipped and denounced as heretics.

These were the good old days when at least most Sovereign Grace, Landmark, Independent Baptists were Landmarkers in profession and practice. The faith meant more to them than finance. Pleasing Christ was more important than pleasing the religious world. They were men of courage and conviction. They stood against heresy and heretics. They took Titus 3:10 seriously: **"A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject."** They obeyed from the heart the command in Romans 16:17 to avoid heretics. These men were consistent with Holy Scripture and the principles of Landmarkism. These old days were the finest hours of our people.

But we have come to a new day. Things "ain't what they used to be." Many of the men of courage and conviction of the past are dead. Others who remain are developing the Elijah syndrome. The old-time Sovereign Grace, Landmark, Independent Baptists are on the verge of extinction!

It is not at all uncommon in this modern day to hear of some rank Arminian, or Reformed Baptist, or Hardshell Baptist, or some other heretic holding a revival meeting in one of our churches, or preaching in a Bible conference. Those who dare to protest such things are isolated and denounced as trouble-makers and heresy-hunters. It seems now that almost anything goes. Our Landmark principles and practices have been cast to the wind. Now we are told that we need to be liberal with such heretics, and that we need to invite them to our churches in hopes that we might reclaim them. The same reason could be given for inviting the Pope of Rome! Some of our preachers have the backbone of a jelly fish and the conviction of a dead hog. Religious cowards are the worst kind of cowards!

I continue to be amazed at how far we have moved away from the Scriptures on separation from heretics. Church truth has been cast into the scrap heaps of liberalism. Many profess it, but very few practice it. A man's creed is not what he professes with his lips but what he practices in his life!

With such things going on among our churches it is little wonder that our preachers rejoin other groups. Some have gone to the Reformed Baptists and the Hardshell Baptists. I would guess that such men reason that these other groups

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are about as consistent as we are. We as a distinct people are slowly but surely being swallowed up by other groups because too many professed Sovereign Grace, Landmark, Independent Baptists are willing to sell their birthright for a mess of ecumenical pottage.

Oh, that God would strengthen us that we might restore the ancient landmarks of our fathers!

Can any such men be found among us?

Thus death and destruction are at our door!



Polycarp of Smyrna

By Richard Newton
(1813 - 1887)

We come now to study the history of the third of our heroes of the early Church; and in considering it our attention may be given to two leading points: these are *the facts of Polycarp's life*, and *the truths illustrated in them*.

The place of Polycarp's birth is nowhere definitely stated. It is generally supposed, however, that he was born at Smyrna, which was the scene of his life's labours. The time of his birth is not distinctly stated either. At the time of his martyrdom, which is said to have taken place about the year 167 of the Christian era, he declared that he had been serving Christ for eighty-six years. This doubtless referred not to the years of his natural life, but to his Christian life, or to the years in which he had been working for his Saviour. And if we suppose that he was fifteen to twenty years old when he became a Christian and joined the church, then he must have been over a hundred years old at the time of his death; and according to this, he must have been born between the years 60 and 70 in the first century of the Christian era. Early in life he became a disciple of the apostle John, and was taught the truths of the gospel by him and other apostles who had seen and conversed with our blessed Lord in the flesh.

By the apostle John he was put in charge of the church at Smyrna; and he spent the years of his long life in earnest and successful labours for its welfare.

Smyrna, the scene of Polycarp's ministry, is a famous city in Asia Minor. It lies at the head of a gulf of the same name. It is an ancient city, founded by Theseus in B.C. 1312, who named it after his wife. It has a population of one hundred and thirty thousand. It is situated on a beautiful plain surrounded

by mountains. Its domes and minarets and tall cypress trees give it a splendid appearance. It is generally supposed to be the birthplace of Homer, the famous Greek poet. Here Polycarp lived and laboured all the days of his life; and here, when the persecution broke out under the Emperor Marcus Antoninus, he ended his course by a martyr's death, being burned at the stake, it is said, in the year 167 of the Christian era.

Such are the leading facts in the history of this noble hero of the early Church.

And now let us look at some of the lessons which we find illustrated in this history.

There are four of these of which we wish to speak.

1. We have in Polycarp's life a good illustration of the way in which God's providence takes care of his people. Polycarp was born in poverty. When he was a mere child, he was sold to some one for a trifling sum. Now if you or I had seen this poor, ignorant child when he was sold into slavery, how little we should ever have expected to hear of him as becoming a great and useful man in the world! Yet so it was. But how was this unexpected result brought about? By the wonderful working of God's providence. There was a noble Christian woman then living in Smyrna whose name was Callisto. She had a dream one night in which an angel appeared to her. The tradition is, that the angel told her about this child Polycarp, and directed her, in the name of God, to send for the child, to redeem him from slavery, and then take him into her own house and have him educated. She did so; and in that good Christian home Polycarp was brought up and received his education. There he was taught about Jesus and His mission into our world; there he became acquainted with the apostle John. Through John's influence he was brought into the church, and was prepared for his great life-work as the head or bishop of the church at Smyrna.

We could not wish for a better illustration of the way in which God's providence works in taking care of His people, and in preparing them for what He has for them to do, than Polycarp's life affords. And it would be easy enough to find illustrations of the same kind on every hand. The lives of such men as William Carey, or John Newton, or John Williams, "the martyr-missionary of Erromanga," and of other Christian labourers would furnish illustrations of just the same kind.

2. We have in the history of Polycarp a good illustration of earnestness in learning the truth and of diligence in teaching it to others. The two points now before us--earnestness in seeking the truth and diligence in teaching it--are matters of the greatest importance to us all. In the case of Polycarp, the first of these points is well brought out by a pupil of his named Irenaeus. He is one of the heroes

who will soon come before us. In writing to a friend of his about Polycarp, he says: "I remember seeing you when yet a boy with Polycarp in Asia Minor. I could even now point out the place where he used to sit and talk to us. I could describe his going out and his coming in, his manner of life, his personal appearance; and how he used to tell us of his intercourse with the apostle John and with others who had seen the Lord, and the pleasure with which he used to repeat all that he had heard them say about Jesus, about His miracles and His teachings. Polycarp told it all to us as one who had received it from the lips of those who had seen the blessed Lord with their own eyes." Here we see the earnestness with which Polycarp listened to the words of those who could tell him about Jesus and the truths which He taught.

God says to each of us by Solomon (Prov. 2:3-6), "**If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God.**" This was just what Polycarp did. He sought the knowledge of God in the way here pointed out, and he found it according to the promise here given. And if we follow his example, we shall be rewarded as he was.

And then, when Polycarp had gained the knowledge of the truth in the earnest way here spoken of, he was diligent in teaching it to others. One way in which he did this was by the faithful preaching which he kept up through all the years of his long life. Another way in which he did it was by the earnestness with which he opposed the prevailing errors of that day. As our Saviour opposed the temptations of Satan in the wilderness by simply saying, "**It is written,**" and then quoting God's written Word, so did Polycarp in his contests with the heretics of his day.

And then he showed the same diligence in teaching the truth in his writings, which have come down to us. His epistle to the Philippians is genuine, and the most important of his writings. In speaking of this epistle, one of the early writers calls it "a most perfect epistle." Another writer says, "It is an admirable epistle. From it those who are anxious about their salvation may learn about the gospel of Jesus and the truth which it teaches." It is full of short and useful precepts and rules of life, all of which are sustained and urged by quotations from different portions of the Word of God. This epistle was so highly prized by the early Christians that they used to have it read in their churches just as they did the canonical Scriptures. Thus we see how diligent Polycarp was in teaching the truth which he had been so earnest to learn. And this is what we should all try to do.

3. We have in the life of this good man

an illustration of the honour which God puts upon His faithful servants. God says to His people, "**Them that honour me I will honour**" (1 Sam. 2:30). Polycarp honoured God by the readiness with which he received His truth and the faithfulness with which he obeyed His commands. And God honoured him in a very peculiar way by the message which He sent to him from Heaven.

In the opening chapter of the book of the Revelation, the seven churches then existing in Asia Minor are mentioned. The apostle John was directed by God to write a letter, or epistle, to the head of each of those seven churches. The second of those churches was that of Smyrna. This epistle begins thus: "**Unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive; I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty (but thou art rich). . . . Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer. . . . be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life**" (Rev. 2:8-10). Now think what an honour it was for God to call Polycarp "**the angel of the church in Smyrna.**" To be called the king or the emperor of the mightiest kingdom in the world would be nothing in comparison with this. The king would soon be obliged to put off his crown and lay aside his scepter, and let his kingdom pass into the hands of another; but the Church of Christ, of which Polycarp was one of the angels, is an everlasting Church. And Polycarp's connection with it will be everlasting, too. No change will come over that Church, or over those who are the angels, the ministers, or the servants of it, but that which is involved in their everlasting march from glory to glory. And then think of the honour of receiving such a promise as God here gave to Polycarp. It was the promise of "**a crown of life,**" if he proved faithful unto death. In all the world there is no honour to be compared to the "**crown of life**" here referred to. Let us all try to be "**faithful unto death,**" as Polycarp was, and then we shall share the honour which God gave him.

4. The closing scene in the life of Polycarp illustrates very strikingly the sustaining power of the grace of God. Under the reign of the Emperor Marcus Antoninus a very severe persecution broke out against the Christians. As the most prominent man in the church, Polycarp was seized and put in prison. On the breaking out of the persecution his friends advised him to leave Smyrna, and try to save his life by retiring to a small country town. He did so, but the servants of the emperor followed him there. They found out the house in which he was staying, and called there late at night. He had gone to bed before they came; but when he understood who the men were and what they had come for, he

♦ (Continued on page 118)

Polycarp

(Continued from page 117) ♦

rose and dressed himself. Then he went downstairs and received them as kindly and pleasantly as though they had come to save his life instead of to destroy it. Then he had a supper prepared for them, and insisted on their partaking of it, which they did with the greatest surprise and wonder. After this he gave himself up into their hands, and they took him back to Smyrna and delivered him to the officers of the government. Now, how wonderful the power of God's grace must be which could lead a man to act in this way toward those who were seeking his destruction!

The proconsul, or chief officer of the government, then tried very hard to persuade Polycarp to renounce Christianity and swear by the gods of Rome. Polycarp listened attentively to all he had to say, and then gave this as his noble answer: "Eighty and six years I have served my blessed Saviour. He has done nothing but bless me all the time; then how can I forsake him now?" Then he was led forth to execution. The officers had determined that he should be burned



Polycarp not being burned by the flames of the fire is thrust through with a spear.

to death. When they reached the place the soldiers were about to nail him to the stake, he begged them not to do that, assuring them that his God, Who gave strength to endure the fire, would enable him to stand there without being nailed. Then they only tied him to the stake. And as he stood there, patiently waiting for the fire to be kindled, the words of his prayer were the last he ever spoke: "O Lord God Almighty, the Father of thy well-beloved Son, Jesus Christ, by whom we received the knowledge of thee, the God of angels and of all creatures! I bless thee that thou hast graciously brought me to this day and hour, that I may receive a portion among the number of thy martyrs and drink of Christ's cup. Wherefore I praise thee for all thy mercies; I bless thee and glorify thee through thy beloved Son, Jesus Christ, through Whom to thee and the Holy Ghost be glory both now and for ever. Amen." Then the fire was kindled and the flames rose; but

instead of wrapping themselves about him, tradition says that they formed an arch of fire over him and left his body untouched. Then the officer in charge ordered one of the soldiers to thrust him through with his spear, which he did. After his body was burned, his Christian friends gathered up his bones and buried them in a tomb, over which a little chapel has been built, on the southeastern side of the city. That spot has ever been regarded as sacred to the memory of this hero of the early Church.

And when we think of the calm, triumphant way in which Polycarp was able to meet his painful death, we have a splendid illustration of the sustaining power of the grace of God.

(*Heroes of the Early Church*, 1889 via. 2005, pp. 26-35).



Introduction to A Sermon

On II Peter 3; "But grow in grace."

Ah! my hearers---there are many to whom this exhortation is equally inapplicable as unwelcome. Many hearers have no grace. Much sin but no grace. No grace! then no promise; no glory! O my soul, what is the awful alternative? Conscience! Hear this old Christian adage, "A prayerless soul is a graceless soul; a graceless soul is a Christless soul; and a Christless soul, so living and so 'dying, will be a damned soul."

And have you, Young people, no grace? you are honest, amiable, lovely, virtuous, chaste, and modest: but believe me, you have no security that you shall continue to be either, without grace: nor any kind of preparation for another world. Grace first, then all these good things, and then glory. And you, Aged friends, are ye destitute of grace? I ask not how you have passed your days: they are all a blank. A blank? no, a graceless life is one great blot of sin. Oh think, think a moment, before you go. See you not yon grave? It gapes for you: and if you enter it without grace, there is none communicated there.

*There are no acts of pardon past
In the cold grave to which we haste;
But darkness, death, and long despair,
Reign in eternal silence there.*

And how do ye bear up, dear friends and equals, in the intermediate classes? You are under the heat and burden of the day. How do you regulate your affairs? how manage your servants? And those dear little ones, how are they brought up? if you have no grace. Think a little, turn it on your pillow, once before you sleep. My soul longs for your salvation. O my God; the God of all grace, grant these souls thy blessing and thy favour.

There are also many that have only the appearance of grace. What shall I say to

such? But first, who are they? ---Let us begin with the pulpit. Preacher, by thine office, thou appearest to have grace. But remember, gifts are not grace: even should those gifts be splendid. Thine employment is no proof. Nay, thy call to that employment is no certain proof of grace. Judas, was called and numbered with the Apostles. Even thy usefulness is no positive evidence of thine own grace. Ah, preacher, thou mayest feel some degree of concern for the eternal happiness of thine hearers, and yet have no grace. Thou mayest preach the doctrines of grace clearly and distinctly, and live without any one laying graceless practices to thy charge, even so as to make many think thou hast grace, and some may think thou hast great grace; and after all, thou mayest have only the appearance. Saul was among the Prophets, Judas among the Apostles; let the occupiers of pulpits tremble, whilst the inhabitants of the rock sing, for the Lord will say to many who have prophesied in His name, "depart from me, I never knew you" (Matt. 7:23).

From the pulpit we descend to the pews. Ye officers of the church, if ye are men of God, ye have purchased to yourselves a good degree. But there have been deacons who only appeared to be gracious. Remember, it is not your being in that official situation, nor your being called to that office, nor your abilities to fill it up, nor your integrity in the discharge of its various duties, that constitute your gracious characters, you may be kind, and punctual in office, and yet have only the appearance of grace.

And you, dear fellow members, my joy and crown, (if ye are the Lord's) search and see into this matter. Ye have been solemnly baptized in the awful name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. But your baptism did not make you members of Christ, children of God, nor inheritors of the kingdom of Heaven. Many are no better than baptized infidels. Simon Magus was such an one: and many hypocrites still creep into the churches. Even when there is no designed hypocrisy but strict morality and sobriety are kept up, there may be only the appearance of grace. It is pleasant to see you walk in all the ordinances of His house,

"What sight upon Earth is so fair?" Ye then appear gracious persons, set apart for God, to show forth His praise. But take heed lest it be only the appearance. Remember, the foundation is the principal thing. Had you seen the house built upon the sand, and not known on what it was built, perhaps you might have even preferred it for your own dwelling, to that which was built upon the rock. Many professors place more confidence in what they call their Evangelical obedience than in the righteousness of Christ. Many, who have only the appearance, may appear more fair than some who really possess grace.

This leads me to add,

Some have real grace, yet bear but little fruit. Scarcely do they come up to the lowest standard, even thirty fold: and grace never produces less. What shall I say to you? You have heard the language of Heaven, "**Grow in grace**" (II Pet. 3:18). The husbandman saith, O Lord! O my Master! Spare yet another year. Do you not lament your barrenness! Are you not saying, "Awake, Oh north wind, and come thou south, and blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden and eat his pleasant fruit? Will ye not pray, Lord revive us that we may rejoice in thee?"

There are also many gracious souls, that have great grace, and do grow in grace, and yet fear, yes, have awful fears that they "never had any grace," and are sometimes distressed with the apprehension that they "never shall have any." These are tender plants; sensitive, not sensual. Let them be carefully cherished.

Brethren, let us pray to Him that giveth grace to help, while I endeavour, 1. To remove the difficulties and correct the errors to which we are exposed in judging of ourselves, 2. To lay down the means and the evidences of growth in grace.

(*The Baptist Magazine*, May, 1809 pp. 177-179).



For the Time Is Coming

By Mark Livingston

"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth" (II Tim. 4:3-4).

I recently spoke with an elder pastor of a growing, prominent community church who has faithfully served his church for many years. When I asked him what his church was doing of the "new" end of things, he said they were canceling Sunday school and redirecting Sunday night. Why? Because people were too busy!

He said, "Studies have shown that the days of people committing to church 3 times a week are over. According to research we (the church) get them (congregation) for 2 units (hours) a week. We have got to make those 2 hours count."

The pastor was correct in leading his church to make the most of the time he had with his people, but I wondered if the research he referred to was reality.

♦ (Continued on page 119)

For the Time Is

(Continued from page 118) ♦

If you listen to denominations, books, and conferences, then you can conclude very quickly that apathy has settled over the Christian landscape. Are the days of faithful church attendance really over?

Should I, as a pastor, be thankful that the congregants come to only one service weekly? If I preached to the people to be faithful to Sunday night worship and Wednesday night Bible study, would that be legalistic in our busy age? If you were to take our church and its attendance in services other than 10:00 AM Sunday morning, what would you believe?

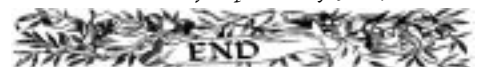
I believe there is something wrong when the church does not want to gather. I know that people cannot gather every time the doors of the church are open, but I also know that a problem of apathy exists when people are seldom fellowshipping, seldom participating, and seldom serving.

I had a similar discussion with a friend who works in the secular field. He stated to me that he loved and longed to go to church because the fellowship and encouragement he received from the brothers was such a blessing. His work place was full of men who constantly talked about debauchery and sin, so when he attended worship he was in essence breathing fresh air. It was food for his soul to be around Godly people and hear Biblical preaching. When he had to miss due to work he greatly missed being there.

Do you find that you miss the gathering of the saints? Perhaps some of us have become too complacent in our Christian life to the point that we just see little need to be around preaching and Godly fellowship. Maybe some of us are not facing spiritual warfare any longer because we have given in to sin, so the world's effect on us has diminished.

Are we living in the times that Paul warned against? Are people not enduring teaching and turning away from truth? We all need to examine our heart, our time, and our energy to see if God is our priority and His grace is our need.

(From Missouri Missionary Baptist via. Northern Landmark Missionary Baptist, May/June)



ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Indore Baptist Church of Indore, WV will be conducting a Spring Revival June 11th – 14th.

Scheduled speakers are Elders Tom Ross, John Pruitt, Jim Rader, Leroy Pack, Benjamin Stepp, Joe Collins, Chris Burke, Tom Hysell, Carl Barnette and Dan Stepp.

Service times are Thursday 7:00 p.m., Friday 7:00 p.m., Saturday 9:30 a.m., 1:20 p.m., Sunday 10:00 a.m.

Please note that Thursday evening services will convene with the Charleston, WV Mission Work – the Charleston Baptist Congregation. The remaining services will be at the Indore Baptist Church. For directions to the Charleston Baptist Congregation location or for more information please call Pastor Paul Stepp at (304) 587-4660; or, visit the church's website at www.indorebaptistchurch.org.

The Grace Bible Baptist Church, 26080 Wax Road, Denham Springs, LA will be holding a Bible Conference June 5th – 7th.

Scheduled to speak are Elders Tom Horn, Larry Wilson, Eldon Joslin, Leroy Pack and Jose Serrano.

Service times are Friday 5:00 p.m., Saturday 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., Sunday 9:45 a.m.

For more information please contact Pastor Jerry Dodson at (225) 664-3223.

The Lord's Sovereign Grace Baptist Church of Eagle, AK will be hosting a three day preaching service starting on Friday July 24th.

There are several men scheduled to speak. All are invited to fellowship and attend.

For more information please contact Pastor Gary Howard at (907) 547-2256.

The Bethel Bible Baptist Church, PO Box 85, Mansfield, LA is in need of a pastor.

Any interested Elders should call Connie McMellon at 318-872-1647.

The Landmark Baptist Church of Collinsville, IL is in need of a pastor.

Any interested Elders may call (618) 288-4236 for more information.

BEREA BAPTIST BANNER

Financial Report

4-1-2009 to 4-30-2009

Beginning Balance \$5,671.51

RECEIPTS:

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Subscriptions	241.00
Anon.....	1,141.00
Dividing Checks	161.50
Sub Total	\$4,149.50
TOTAL	\$9,737.32

EXPENDITURES:

Printing.....	581.71
Postage	1,094.04
Wages	2,000.00
FICA	152.95
Dividing Checks	161.50
Total Expenditures	3,990.20
ENDING BALANCE	\$5,830.81



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.....	775.00
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EXPENDITURES:

Radio Time	402.40
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	402.40
.....	\$11,943.42
Interest	+94
.....	11,944.36
Less Corbin, KY des.	-1,168.52
ENDING BALANCE	\$10,775.84

CORBIN, KENTUCKY REPORT

Beginning Balance \$1,370.92

RECEIPTS:

.....	1,370.92
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EXPENDITURES:

Radio Time	202.40
ENDING BALANCE	\$1,168.52

THE BAPTIST CLASSROOM

The Birth of Jesus Christ

By John Pruitt
of Maysel, West Virginia

Matthew
1:18-25; Luke
1:26-38



I will not argue whether Mary was a virgin. The Bible says that she was and the Bible is God's infallible word. I will not argue whether

virgin birth is, or was, in the realm of possibility. The fact is, that a virgin birth is not in the realm of human possibility, that is why it is a miracle. The question then is, why are these things so important to the world today? What difference does it make whether Jesus of Nazareth even existed? Why is it so important that Old Testament prophecy be linked to the birth of Jesus. Why does it matter so, that He must be virgin born? What does virgin born mean anyway?

The birth of Jesus of Nazareth is one of the most extraordinary events to take place in world history. It is no doubt the most important event to take place in history. It is even more important than the crucifixion for the following reasons. 1. Without a birth there could not have been a death. 2. There had to be a miraculous conception (not immaculate conception) in order for the Messiah to be God man. 3. Without a virgin birth, prophecy would not have been fulfilled, therefore Jesus would not have qualified as the true Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.

JESUS DID IN FACT EXIST:

There was a historian named Joseph ben Matthias and commonly called Josephus who was a Jew and a Pharisee during the ministry of the apostles. This man, though he did not know Jesus personally and likely not a believer, makes several references to Him in his work. He mentions Him as being the Christ and that He was crucified. We know that He existed because the theme of the whole Bible is Jesus Christ. Why would 30-35 writers, over a period of about 4,000 years write so much about a fictitious character, and all agree as to who He is?

THE BIRTH OF JESUS:

In reality, it is not the birth of Jesus that is miraculous: for he had a natural birth like that of every other person who has been born. What is miraculous is His conception. Mary had not known a man; she was a virgin. It is physically impossible for a virgin who has never known a man in sexual relations to conceive a child, yet it did happen. The Roman Catholic Church tries to explain the virgin birth by claiming

that Mary, herself had an immaculate conception. Immaculate conception means that Mary was born "with grace in her soul;" in other words she was born with a divine nature, not being affected by the original sin of Adam. Notwithstanding, the seed that she conceived was not the seed of a man, but the seed of God the Holy Spirit Himself. Galatians 3:16, "**Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.**"

THE VIRGIN BIRTH WAS FORETOLD BY SEVERAL PROPHETS, INCLUDING MOSES:

Genesis 3:15 is the first mention of the way in which God would send the Savior. "**And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.**" Notice that it says, "**her seed,**" and not Adam's seed. This speaks of Mary the mother of our Lord Jesus Christ. The virgin birth of Jesus Christ was indeed a miracle. Never before had such a thing happened, nor would it ever happen again. It was a unique event, belonging only to the One whom God would send to be the Redeemer of the world. It should be made clear that Mary did not remain a virgin after the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ—the Bible never mentions her as a virgin after the birth of the Lord Jesus. In the Catholic handbook, "A Catechism for Adults" by William J. Cogan, Question: "did Mary have any other children besides Jesus? Answer: No, "she and Joseph lived as brother and sister, although they were legally married." Let me stop here and point out Matthew 1:25 which indicates that Jesus was the first of more to come and that Joseph did in fact know Mary after Jesus' birth. A further explanation is given in "A Catechism for Adults" under "Practical Points;" "the brothers and sisters of Jesus mentioned in the Bible were not children of Mary, but were only cousins. The words 'brother' and 'sister' were used by the Jews to mean cousins, because there was no word in Hebrew for cousin." The New Testament was written in the Greek language, and there is a word in the Greek for cousin. It is the word *soong-ghen-ace* meaning near kin. Luke 1:36; "**And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age; and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren.**" Elisabeth was of the tribe of Levi and Mary of the tribe of Judah. They were near kin by marriage through their parents. The true answer is found in the Word of God; all true answers are found in the Word of God. Matthew 13:54-56 "**And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this [man] this wisdom, and [these] mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his**

brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things?" The word "brother" is the Greek word meaning the son of either one or both parents. The word "sister" is similar to *ad-el-fos'* and is *ad-el-fey'* meaning full or own sister. In order for Mary to have a divine nature, coinciding with the pagan sun god Ishtar, the Roman Catholic church had to make sure that she remained a virgin until she supposedly ascended into heaven. There was no mistaking the words of Isaiah when he spoke of the coming Savior and King, Isaiah 7:14; "**Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.** Isaiah 9:6; "**For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.**" The one speaks of the coming of Immanuel, our Savior, while the other speaks of the coming King. At the exact moment that God had determined, Immanuel was born of a virgin as the Old Testament prophet had said. Matthew 1:18-25 gives details as to the timing of this great and miraculous event. Galatians 4:1-6 confirms that the timing was exact according to the sovereignty of God. Galatians 4:4; "**But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law.**"

THE LOCATION OF THE BIRTH PLACE:

Even the place of His birth is foretold in Micah 5:1-2. "**Now gather thyself in troops, O daughter of troops: he (Assyria) hath laid siege against us: they shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek. But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.**" Bethlehem is six miles south of Jerusalem and seventy miles south of Nazareth— It is the burying place of Rachel, the home of Boaz and Ruth, and the birth place of King David. Though it was the very place in which the Prophet Micah, (Micah 5:1-2) had foretold the Messiah would be born, no one suspected that this young pregnant girl was the one chosen of God to bring Him into the world; besides, she was from Nazareth, not Bethlehem. But God works all things after the counsel of His own will; so He used a heathen king to bring about the circumstances whereby Mary would end up in Bethlehem to deliver her baby, which was conceived by the Holy Spirit. Luke 2:1-7; "**And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius**

was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn."

WHY DOES ALL OF THIS MATTER?

We will not consider the suggested possibility that Jesus was an illegitimate child by some German soldier. Anyone who accepts that idea cannot be a believer in the Bible, nor a believer in Christ Jesus as the Son of God. The fact that He was virgin born is clearly the miracle of God. The fact that He was virgin born is necessary for Him to be the Savior; the Savior of men could not be anything less than God Himself. He must be perfect, holy and immortal and only God Himself possess these attributes. According to God's own scheme, the redeemer would become human flesh and dwell among men. According to God's own law of nature, man kind begets man kind; therefore, if the Lord Jesus had a human father, He would be just a man. The Bible records the angel informing Mary, "**that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.**"

There are only two ways that a person can become a son or daughter, by natural birth or adoption. Jesus was not the Son of God by birth. It was by birth that God the Son was manifest to the world. "**And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.**"

CONCLUSION:

There is only one way that a person can become a son of God, and that is through a supernatural new birth by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is because of the miraculous birth of the Lord Jesus Christ that we may have a miraculous birth. Jesus Himself told a man, "**Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God**" (John 3:3). Matthew 1:20 "**But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.**" Because Jesus Christ was virgin born, through repentance and faith in His name, the sinner can have a new birth and become a son of God.

