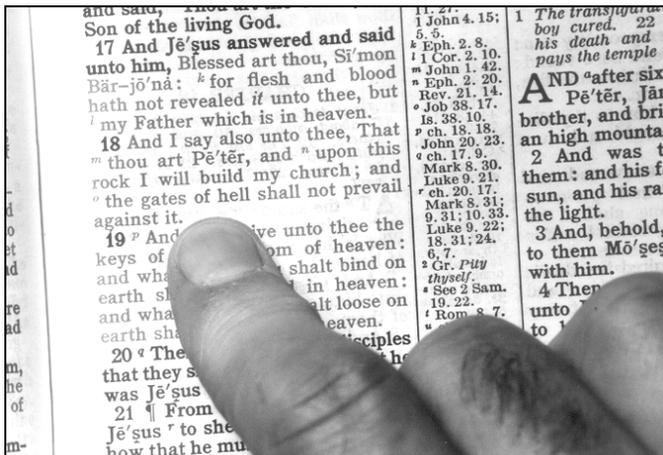


The Sword AND Staff

“Preach the Word” (II Timothy 4:2) • “Feed the Flock” (I Peter 5:2)

Problems in Distinguishing the SPIRITUAL in Reference to the KINGDOM



● By JAMES E. GIBBONS—1535 W. Fairfield Drive
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JOHN 6:63 is a very interesting Scripture. Jesus said, “It is the spirit that quickeneth [gives life]; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak [that I have just spoken] unto you, they are spirit, and they are life” (John 6:63). The Lord the day before had fed the 5000 on the other side of the Sea of Galilee. This miracle, recorded in all four gospel accounts, was so impressive that the people wanted to make him their king (John 6:15). Now back in Capernaum in the synagogue, he preaches a sermon on the Bread of Life, this falling upon the ears of some who had witnessed the miracle. He says some very unusual and radical things, like, “I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world” (6:51). Continuing, “Then Jesus said unto them [the Jews], Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you” (6:53). We further read, “Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said,

This is a hard saying; who can hear it?” (6:60). Then the Lord responded with some perplexing questions of his own. “Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?” This is when he said, “It is the spirit that quickeneth [gives life]; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak [that I have just spoken] unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.”

The Meaning is Spiritual

Taken literally, we can easily understand how his hearers would be more than taken back by such unusual statements (even becoming startled). Cannibalism, eating his flesh and drinking his blood! He had begun his radical pronouncement by saying that he was the bread that came down from heaven. If this statement was startling, what about the time when they would see this bread go back to heaven? In reference to what he has been saying, he is quick to explain, “The words that I speak [literally, that I have just spoken unto you] unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.” In other words, I am talking about something spiritual that would be life-giving and my words are not to be taken literally. It was not a literal eating of the flesh and drinking of the blood of the Son of man. Rather, he is saying that the nature of his teachings is spiritual. This was very much like his parables, stories involving material imagery but having a spiritual meaning (Matthew, chapter 13).

In more ways than one, the Jews of the first century had a problem in distinguishing that which should have been looked upon as spiritual, rather than being earthly or material. This was not limited to them. Others have had this problem, even being found among many professing Christians of our day. Let us consider this.

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—THANK YOU—

Proverbially **SPEAKING...**

HONESTY is a basic ingredient in all morality.

When you bend down to help another, you are reaching up to God.

Weak people drink strong drink and thereby become weaker as they continue to drink it.

People who run "rough shod" over others will eventually be crushed by the heavy heel of another.

Christian conduct is grounded in Christian doctrine.

The abundant life (John 10:10) is experienced by abounding in the work of the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:58).

In helping people, you really don't help them unless you help them to help themselves.

Truth, correctly understood, needs no defense; error, correctly understood, is utterly defenseless.

People who are always on the defensive usually don't have much to defend.

When we are justified, God looks upon us as being just (righteous), "For He [God] hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin: that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). □

EDITORIAL COMMENTS



THE CONTRASTING AND VARIED EMOTIONS OF A CHRISTIAN

SOME would try to picture Christians as people running around "slap-happy," regardless of the circumstances, and oblivious to the world about them (although it may be going up in flames). But is this how Christians should be looked upon? They are still human beings endowed and endued with the same emotions that are the lot of all. There are certain positive emotions and certain negative emotions experienced by all. However, our emotions are rooted in our value system. While saint and sinner may experience similar emotions, what triggers these emotions may be entirely different (and they many times will be). As a Christian's life is one that has been turned around from a negative world of sin, it is one that has now been filled with many wonderful and positive things. Consequently, although he may experience negative emotions, they are tempered by his positive outlook on life. And the degree of the expression of these emotions, regardless of how intense is the feeling, will be determined by one's individual temperament and psychological make-up (but, nonetheless, the emotions are there). Some people express themselves more overtly with their emotions than others.

A fusion of the negative and the positive emotions can be seen, with, no doubt, the positive dominating, when the women ran from the empty tomb to tell the disciples of Christ the good news. "And they departed quickly from the sepulcher with **fear** and **great joy**; and did run to bring his disciples word" (Matthew 28:8). It was not a fear of dread, but of the awesomeness of God and what had taken place (and their encounter with the angel). Their beings were permeated with joy at what had taken place. Christ was raised from the dead. But their emotions were still human, however directed in a different way.

Acts 2:41 tells us that "they that **gladly** received his word [Peter's preaching] were baptized" on the day of Pentecost. In Acts 8:39, upon confessing faith and being baptized, the Ethiopian came "up out of the water...and he went on his way **rejoicing**." In Acts 16:34, the Philippian Jailer upon accepting Christ, "**rejoiced**, believing in God with all his house." Yes, salvation is an occasion of great joy, in being made right with our Maker, but at the same time it can introduce a particular negative emotion not experienced before (especially if we are unselfish in how we look at salvation). Paul, looking at his fellow-Jews, who were not saved and would not accept Christ, said, "I have **great heaviness** and **continual sorrow** in my heart. For I could wish that myself

were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh” (Romans 9:2,3). These negative emotions were thrust upon him because of his positive emotions tied in with his salvation. He wanted others to be saved.

The epistle of 1 Peter was written to Christians experiencing persecution and great trials. Peter reassures them of their hope of the resurrection, the inheritance reserved in heaven, and their salvation in its fullness yet to come. Then he said, “Wherein ye **greatly rejoice**, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in **heaviness** through manifold temptations [trials]” (1 Peter 1:3-6). Their experience of joy brought on another set of problems. Being a Christian, this brought on their occasion of “heaviness.” “Heaviness” means distress, sadness. According to James 4:9, it is the opposite of joy. Yet their joy carried them through their trials and tempered the awful things they had to endure.

As a preacher of the gospel, John wrote of his converts, “I have **no greater joy** than to hear that my children walk in truth” (3 John 3). Even from the perspective of physical parents, Proverbs 10:1 states, “A wise son maketh a **glad** father [makes his father glad]: but a foolish son is the **heaviness** of his mother.” That which brings great joy has the potential of great sorrow, i.e. “heaviness.” The stronger the positive emotion, the more intensely the negative is accented, when the positive is taken away. The greater joy sees it’s opposite. Paul talked about his great care for the churches (2 Corinthians 11:28).

We could examine the whole range of human emotions. These emotions are contrasting and varied. They include such feelings as joy, fear and sadness, as we have just noticed. We could list others, such as love (Matthew 22:37; 1 John 2:15-17; Psalms 119:113), hate (Hebrews 1:9; Revelation 2:6, 15; Psalms 119:104), anger (James 1:20; Mark 3:5; Acts 17:16), grief (John 11:35; Acts 8:2; 1 Thessalonians 4:13), disgust (Romans 12:9), etc. (and the list goes on). Such emotions still are part of the make-up of a Christian, being human, but, being rooted in a new set of values, are directed in a different way. The positive is fused and mingled with the negative. Christianity is not necessarily seen in a superficial display of joy and supposed happiness when the world is burning down, (how insensitive can we get?), but is personally realized in the settled demeanor and stability of soul in a person right with God. The positive prevails. □

Ten Sins of “Church Members” That Hinder the Lord’s Work

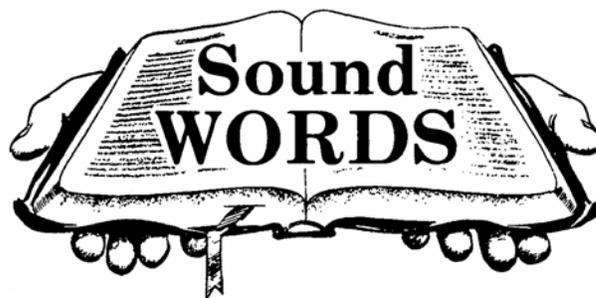
1. **Pride**—a “me first” attitude about everything; thinking you are most important and expecting others to think the same.
2. **Rebellion**—butting heads with or despising those in authority.
3. **Stubbornness**—bull-headed and hard-hearted.
4. **Indifference**—a “take it or leave it” attitude; not committed or involved.
5. **Apathy**—to be emotionless about the things of God.
6. **Worldliness**—exemplifying the world in thought and behavior.
7. **Covetousness**—loving and serving money and things; wanting more; not content.
8. **Prayerlessness**—no prayer or little prayer time and prayer life.
9. **Laziness**—procrastination; not having the character to do right and work hard.
10. **Luke-warmness**—cooling down in fervency.

Please check off those you are practicing, then repent of them and acknowledge your sins. Judge yourself (1 Corinthians 11:31), not others. Make a turn around. Make your “calling and election” sure and bring revival to the church.

Consider Proverbs 28:13 and Numbers 32:32. □

—Adapted

“Hold fast the form of sound words...”



“...Sound speech, that cannot be condemned”
(2 Timothy 1:13; Titus 2:8).

UNDER this heading, and in this column, we plan to feature articles from time to time, involving the study of words. We have the Scriptural injunction to “hold fast the form of sound words.” This can refer to an individual word with its distinctive meaning, or it can mean a whole body of words, collectively brought together and expressing a doctrine. Words are vehicles of thought. This can refer to good and wholesome language, in contrast with that which is profane and vulgar. It can mean an uplifting conversation, as opposed to idle gossip. There are different ways we can look at it. Regard-

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Sound WORDS

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less, we believe a careful treatment of this subject is badly needed today.

As we begin this study, let us zero in on the word “word” as found in the New Testament. There are two basic Greek words that get our attention that are translated “word.” The first is **logos** and the other is **rhema**. The words mean the same, yet are different. **Logos** means word with the emphasis being on the content or meaning of the word. **Rhema** means word with the emphasis on it being spoken, an utterance. Our English word “logic” is derived from **logos**, thus showing the thrust of its meaning. Also, we see traces of this word in such modern terminology as “theology” (theos + logos, study of God), “psychology,” “physiology,” “soci-ology,” “zoology,” etc. (Hey! We unwittingly illustrated it in saying “terminology”). **Rhema** (rhematos) is faintly reflected, along with its meaning, in our English word “rhetoric.” The emphasis is put upon the utterance of the word more than upon its content (as in **logos**).

A great illustration of **logos** is found in the prologue of John. “In the beginning was the Word (**Logos**), and the Word (**Logos**) was with God, and the Word (**Logos**) was God...And the Word (**Logos**) 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” (John 1:1, 14). Can anything be more filled with meaning than God incarnate—“the Word (**Logos**) was made flesh”! In John 17:17 Jesus prayed, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word (**logos**) is truth.” The apostle Peter preached on the Day of Pentecost, “And with many other words (**logos** = words full of meaning) did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward [wicked] generation. Then they that gladly received his word (**logos**) were baptized...” (Acts 2:40,41). Timothy was admonished to “hold fast the form of sound words (**logos**)...” (2 Timothy 1:13) and charged to “preach the word (**logos**)...” (2 Timothy 4:2).

Interestingly, let us now notice two or three references where **rhema** is used; the word that signifies utterance. Romans 10:17 reads, “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word (**rhema**, utterance) of God.” Fittingly, hearing and utterance appear together. Paul, speaking of Christ and the church, said, “That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word (**rhema**, utterance)” (Ephesians 5:26). He could be

talking about the process of preaching (utterance) that leads up to baptism (Mark 16:15, 16) or the words that were being said while the baptism was taking place. In putting on the Christian armor, and standing up against the devil, Christians are told to take “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word (**rhema**, utterance) of God” (Ephesians 6:17). Since he is talking about engaging the devil in spiritual combat, when he identifies God’s word with a word that means utterance, could he mean the word as it is actively being used?

All of this is highly interesting, and we present it as foundational to the articles that will follow. The emphasis will be to “hold fast the form of sound words (**logos**)...” (2 Timothy 1:13), and the focus will be on “Sound speech (**logos**), that cannot be condemned...” (Titus 2:8) (any way you choose to look at it). And keep in mind that the word “sound” as used by Paul in 1st and 2nd Timothy, and Titus, means wholesome and healthy; like we would say that we have a “sound” body. That’s how God wants our words to be. □



Problems in Distinguishing the SPIRITUAL in Reference to the KINGDOM

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THE KINGDOM OF THE CHRIST

The Jews of Jesus’ day had a problem in distinguishing that the kingdom of the Messiah would be a spiritual kingdom and not a political one. Although Isaiah 53 was part of their Scriptures, the crucifixion of the Christ was something they could not accept. They expected an earthly king, a world ruler. Consequently, the apostle Paul said that the preaching of the cross was a “stumbling block” to them (1 Corinthians 1:23). It didn’t fit into their preconceived notions. And many today have much the same problem. They think that Christ failed to set up his earthly kingdom while here, and that things have sort of been kept on hold. Their thoughts are that when he comes back he will actually set up such a kingdom and reign over the earth.

The Language of the Old Testament

The language of the Old Testament, without reading the rest of the story, might lead us to believe this. In dealing with the Jews in bringing about His plan of salvation (Genesis 12:1-3; 22:18; Acts 2:25, 26), God had promised David that of his seed there would be someone for ever upon his

throne. Notice the statement in Psalms 89:3 and 4, "I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, ***Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations.***" Starting with 2 Samuel 7:16, this promise is repeatedly found throughout the Old Testament. Other such Scriptures are Isaiah 9:6 and 7; 11:1-10; Jeremiah 23:5 and 6; 33:14-17; Ezekiel 37:24-28. All of these references sound like David and a physical throne is what is involved. But physically there is no throne of David in the world today, nor is there a descendant or descendants of David ruling upon the earth, although the Scriptures say that someone would be reigning for ever. How do we explain this?

The New Testament makes this plain. The Old Testament was largely a physical system, foretelling and anticipating a spiritual one. Although it was foretelling spiritual things, it was largely clothed in physical language. Even the earthly kingdom of the Jewish people was an antitype of the coming eternal and spiritual kingdom of the Messiah. We only have to study the New Testament to see how it all fits into place.

The Angel's Announcement

When the fullness of time was accomplished that Christ should come into the world, we read of the angel appearing to Mary. He said, "Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and ***the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end***" (Luke 1:30-33). At this point, it seems from what we read here, nothing is said to distinguish that this kingdom would be spiritual. But we read on.

The Kingdom was "At Hand"

Years later we read about John the Baptist, appearing as the forerunner and harbinger of the Christ. "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, And saying, Repent ye: for ***the kingdom of heaven is at hand***. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias [Isaiah], saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight" (Matthew 3:1-3). The quotation in its source can be seen in its fullness in Isaiah 40:3-5 and is repeated more extensively in Luke 3:4-6. "As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias [Isaiah] the prophet, saying,

The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth..." As John was clearing the way for Christ, it sounds like something physically was to take place with the leveling of the terrain and the highway being made straight. But an examination of the Scriptures shows that he is talking about a spiritual preparation. This all fits in with the call for repentance and the announcement of the kingdom being "at hand." The physical language of prophecy here is applied spiritually.

Jesus Takes Up the Same Message

Then when John the Baptist was cast into prison (Matthew 4:12), Jesus took up the same message. We read, "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, ***Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand***" (4:17). In contrast with the other gospel writers, Matthew is unique in referring to the kingdom as the "kingdom of heaven" (although he does call it the kingdom of God, Matthew 6:33, etc.). The other gospel writers simply call it the kingdom of God. And Mark, referring to the same incident as Matthew, says, "Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel (Mark 1:14-15). This plainly shows us that "kingdom of heaven" and "kingdom of God" mean the same thing. This kingdom was "at hand." In other words, its establishment was imminent—"at hand" (just around the corner). On another occasion, Jesus said, "Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power" (Mark 9:1).

Christ's Teachings Were Spiritual

The teachings of Jesus as found in the four gospel accounts all point to a spiritual kingdom, not a political one. Check out the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). We see this in his teachings in the parables. This can be seen in how he says one enters this kingdom.

The Parables of Christ

In his parables, the Lord repeatedly says, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto" thus and so (Matthew 13:24, 31, 33, 44, 45, 47; 18:23; 20:1; 22:2; 25:1, 14). Nowhere is there the overture, or even undertones, of that which is political. Do these

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declarations sound political? “Behold, a sower went forth to sow...” “The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field...” “The kingdom of heaven is like unto a grain of mustard seed...” “The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven...” “The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field...” “The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls...” “The kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea...” “The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants...” “The kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard...” “The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son...” “Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom...” “The kingdom of heaven is as a man traveling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods...” No analogy will make any of this fit into a political picture. His teachings were spiritual.

A Spiritual Entrance into the Kingdom

The disciples of Christ, who had a hard time seeing beyond the Jewish concept of an earthly kingdom, questioned Jesus one time, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” Then we read the response and unfolding answer of the Lord to them. “And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:1-4). Later on Jesus would say, “Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 19:14). Further showing the spiritual nature of entrance into the kingdom, after the rich young ruler went away sorrowful, Jesus said, “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God” (Matthew 19:24). This prompted the disciples to ask, “Who then can be saved” (19:25). The kingdom had to do with salvation. It is a spiritual matter.

The Church and the Kingdom

A very interesting section of Scripture is found in Matthew 16:13-20. Here the kingdom of the Messiah is more distinctly defined. To bring great truths out in the open, Jesus repeatedly questioned his disciples as to his identity. When Simon Peter finally gave the right answer, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,” the Lord responded to him, “Upon this rock [this truth] I will build my church: and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” Here building his church and the use of the keys of the kingdom of heaven are thrown along beside one another. With the use of the “keys” the door was opened whereby entrance into the kingdom was made possible. Initially this took place on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) and with the Gentiles later at the household of Cornelius (Acts 10) (and Peter was the leading spokesman each time). Christ had said on another occasion that some of them standing there would not “taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power” (Mark 9:1). The outpouring of the Holy Spirit took place on the day of Pentecost, with powerful and miraculous manifestations (the kingdom came with power). Peter and the other apostles “loosed” and “bound” in their preaching and in what took place (Matthew 16:19; 18:18; John 20:21-23; Acts 2:14, 37-42, 47). Those who repented and were baptized were “added to the church” by the Lord. Later on in Colossians 1:13 Paul would write, speaking of the common experience of all in becoming Christians, that God “hath delivered us from the power [authority, dominion, kingdom] of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.” Yes, in Christ’s declaration of intent about his church (Matthew 16), in its fulfillment (Acts 2), and in the statement made by Paul here, the church and the kingdom are synonymous terms. The kingdom of Christ is spiritual, not political.

Christ Raised, Seated and Reigning on the Throne of David

Acts 2 is the focal point in the beginning of the church, as the kingdom of God came with power on the day of Pentecost. Later on with the outpouring of the Spirit upon the household of Cornelius, Peter would say, “The Holy Ghost [Spirit] fell on them, as on us *at the beginning*” (Acts 11:15). Pentecost was the beginning, and Peter in Acts 2

explained what was taking place. Jesus had ascended back to heaven and had “shed forth this, which” they were now seeing and hearing. He quotes from a psalm of David (Psalms 16:8-11), referring to the resurrection of someone, which he said could not be David. He was still buried and his tomb was still there. Peter explains that this has to do with the Lord’s resurrection. He elaborates upon what David wrote, explaining it explicitly. “Therefore [David] being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him [Psalms 89:3,4], that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, *he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ...*Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that **God hath made that same Jesus**, whom ye have crucified, **both Lord and Christ**” (Acts 2:30-36). Christ is now the seed of David seated upon the throne of David, according to the apostle Peter. This took place with the Lord’s resurrection and ascension to heaven. He is now reigning as the Christ.

The Preaching of the Kingdom in the Book of Acts

The following Scripture references show that the preaching of the kingdom was part of the gospel message in the book of Acts.

- **Philip Preaching in Samaria:** “But when they believed Philip *preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God*, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women” (Acts 8:12).
- **Paul at Ephesus:** “And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, *disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God*” (Acts 19:8).
- **Paul to the Ephesian Elders:** “And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone *preaching the kingdom of God*, shall see my face no more” (Acts 20:25).
- **Paul to the Jews at Rome:** “And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom *he expounded and testified the kingdom of God*, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening” (Acts 28:23).
- **Paul Under House Arrest as a Prisoner at Rome:** “And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, *Preaching the kingdom of God*, and teaching those things which concern the Lord

Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him” (Acts 28:30,31).

When Paul preached in Thessalonica in the synagogue of the Jews, he “reasoned with them from the scriptures, explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, ‘ This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ.’ ” (Acts 17:2, 3, NKJV). The unbelieving Jews seized upon these words to bring charges against Paul before the Gentile courts, asserting that they “do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus” (17:7). Of course to the Roman ears, the distorted charges by the Jews came across in the wrong way and they were very greatly disturbed by what they heard. However, the Christ Paul preached was a suffering Christ, who purchased the church with his own blood (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 5:25). The Romans had nothing to fear of an insurrection or a rival kingdom. Although Christ told Pilate that was why he was born, to be a king, he said, “My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight...” (John 18:36, 37). His kingdom was, and is, a spiritual kingdom (not an earthly kingdom).

The Overall Extended and Expanded Concept of the Kingdom

This article would not be complete without considering the overall extended and expanded concept of the kingdom. Although the kingdom of God is spoken of as being now, it is also spoken of as being hereafter. Although it is on earth, it is and will be in heaven. After his resurrection, Jesus declared, “All power [authority] is given unto me in heaven and in earth” (Matthew 28:18). As we noticed, he was raised from the dead and ascended to heaven to be enthroned on the right hand of the Father, occupying the throne of David in the expanded spiritual sense. Ephesians 1:20-23 and Colossians 1:13-20 lay out the extended and expanded view of the authority and reign of Christ. (Read this amazing section of Scripture; also, look at Philippians 2:9-11 and 1 Peter 3:22). It involves heaven and earth. It is for time and eternity. It is now and hereafter. God incarnate, our Savior, now resurrected and glorified, is reigning.

The Kingdom on Earth And the Kingdom in Heaven

The church is called the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven. We are much like a colony of heaven implanted in the earth today. Jesus had taught his disciples to pray, “Thy kingdom come.

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Problems in Distinguishing the SPIRITUAL...

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Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). As we noticed, the kingdom came and is here now. And when we are "born again," we enter this kingdom of heaven (John 3:1-5). However, we are still upon the earth, although in an alien land, but Paul tells us that "our conversation [literally, our *citizenship*] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself" (Philippians 3:20, 21). Didn't our Lord say, "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also"? (John 14:3). Our life on earth is lived in our physical bodies and in these bodies we are in the kingdom of heaven right now, but in these physical bodies we cannot enter the eternal phase of this kingdom that will be in heaven itself. Paul said that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God," and that we will be clothed with a new, eternal spiritual body (1 Corinthians 15:49-53). With our new bodies we have "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Peter 1:4; 2 Corinthians 5:1). And Christ reigns and has extended authority in heaven and on earth and all phases of it. How amazing! Yes, finally everything is climaxed in the kingdom being presented up to the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24), and that brings us to our next point.

The Kingdom of Heaven Yet to Come

Paul adjured Timothy, "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick [living] and the dead *at his appearing and his kingdom*" to preach the Word (2 Timothy 4:1-3). Likewise in verse 18 of this chapter, Paul is confident that the Lord would deliver him and preserve him "*unto his heavenly kingdom*." James states that poor Christians were rich in faith and "*heirs of the kingdom* which he hath promised to them that love him" (James 2:5). In 2 Peter 1:5-12, Christians are admonished by the apostle to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord, adding one virtuous thing right after another. In doing this they would make their "calling and election sure." And, thus, finally "an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly *into the everlasting kingdom* of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." We are in the kingdom of heaven right now, but there is a sense in which we are yet to en-

ter this kingdom. That is the eternal phase of it. It comes at the end of a life well lived, with the second coming of Christ and the Day of Judgment. Beyond this land of death, this veil of wrath and tears, awaits "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Peter 1:3-6). It is spoken of as an "everlasting kingdom." It is yet to come.

Those Who Will Not Be in the Kingdom to Come

Paul, likewise, tells us who will "not inherit the kingdom of God," thus showing us that the inheritance has not taken place yet and this kingdom is

(Continued on Page 12)

BIBLE QUESTIONS

(Random Questions Over the Bible)

1. What other cities of the plain were destroyed when Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed?
2. Who in the Bible said, "The Lord watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another"?
3. How did Moses get his name and what does it mean?
4. From what country did the people come who are called Philistines in the Old Testament?
5. Nebat was the father of what infamous son, who was a king, in the Old Testament Scriptures?
6. What king in the southern kingdom of Judah and in the northern kingdom of Israel, whose time of reigning overlapped, had the same name?
7. What king in the Bible ruled from India to Ethiopia and had 127 provinces in his kingdom?
8. Hadassah was another name for what well-known woman in the Old Testament?
9. What were the circumstances one time in the Old Testament period that prompted many Gentiles to convert to the Jewish religion?
10. What was the origin of the feast of Purim among the Jews?
11. According to the book of Proverbs, the fear of God is the beginning of what?
12. What was the name of the angel who appeared to Mary telling her of the coming birth of Jesus?
13. At what well did the Lord talk with the Samaritan woman?
14. According to John 6:1, the Sea of Galilee was also called what in early New Testament times?
15. What was the relative value of a "penny" (translation of *denarius* in KJV) in New Testament times?
16. When did Christ begin to reign upon the throne of David, according to the New Testament?
17. From reading the epistle to the Philippians, what seems to have been the only problem detectable in the church at Philippi?
18. What in the Bible is called "a fire, a world of iniquity"?
19. According to the apostle John, the person who hates his brother is what (or guilty of what)?
20. In the book of Revelation, who was found worthy to open the book (scroll) of seven seals?

(NOTE: Answers found elsewhere in this issue of the paper)

READERS'

...Response

APOLOGY: Please accept our humble apology for slowness in getting correspondence answered. "We" have no staff of secretaries, etc. to handle such, and this is done by the "editor" as time allows. Be it known that you are sincerely appreciated. ☐

FLORIDA:

■ "I noticed on the latest *SWORD AND STAFF* that you were offering some booklets, tracts and leaflets free of charge. I would like for you to send me 25 of each 14 that you offered. I am enclosing my personal check...to defray some of the expense.

"I really do appreciate your journal. I read it from cover to cover. 'After Baptism, What?' might be another one that would serve well in tract form. It could be a companion to 'What Must I Do to Be Saved?'"

Editor's Note: Look on the back page of this issue. At your suggestion, "After Baptism, What?" has been added to our list of booklets and tracts that are available. Also, notice the other new additions.

SOUTH CAROLINA:

■ "Just a note to tell you that I approve of what you did concerning getting someone to help you with *THE SWORD AND STAFF* [printing it]. I've wondered how you and just a few helpers did so good getting out *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. I admire you for it..."

NORTH CAROLINA:

■ "I have been receiving *THE SWORD AND STAFF* for a number of years and delight each time that I receive a new one. I have gained spiritual knowledge using the publication as a guide..."

VIRGINIA:

■ "God bless you for explaining Scripture in a true and clear manner."

■ "Thank you very much for *THE SWORD AND STAFF* ministry. I look forward to every issue..."

■ "After looking through *THE SWORD AND STAFF*, I arrive at a question that I would like to ask both you,

as editor, and other religiously conservative publications that insist on using the King James Version of the Bible with all scripture references...Why...?"

"In addition, I note that not only is this archaic language used for Scripture, but also outside of it: consider the small article 'A Modern Parable on Tipping...'"

"Also, the column on the ACLU appears very biased. I certainly don't agree with everything they do, but please...at least make it look like there is some shred of objectivity." (E-mail)

Editor's Reply: I thank you for writing and expressing your point of view. You are actually the first person who has ever written such a letter critical of my use of the King James Version of the Bible, and this is the 44th year it has gone into the mail. I repeatedly receive correspondence from people expressing their appreciation of the helpfulness of *The Sword and Staff* in their study of God's Word. Evidently we are accomplishing the dispensing of the Word of God in an effective way. Nothing succeeds like success. (But at large in our society today, it seems rather ironical that with the increase of Bible translations, there has correspondingly been a decrease in Bible knowledge and people actually knowing God. Of course many factors are involved).

In reference to what you call "religiously conservative" people being inclined to use the KJV, I can only speak for myself. Years ago when I came into the church as a young teenager, the KJV was the only version that was generally in use (at least in my religious connections, although the American Standard Version was around). In trying to learn the truth of God, I totally immersed myself in searching the Scriptures and in heart searching. And the Scriptures were emotionally embedded and indelibly stamped upon my soul. I have no objection to other translations, as such, although some are somewhat "fuzzy" and others are interpretive in places, instead of simply being literal translations. In fact, in my opinion, a person is not as wise as he could be if he limits his study of God's Word to one translation. I personally use more than one translation in my study and teaching of the Word of God (and always make a word study of key words in the original language). Other translations have been and are used in *The Sword and Staff*, but almost, like as if by default, I personally quote and use the KJV. The little article you mentioned in the paper was a reprint, used not because of the older English mode of expression, but because it had a good point to get across.

In reference to the ACLU, you only have to type your "look up" words in the GOOGLE search engine and you will find that the little article did not misrepresent anything.

Thanks for writing and may God be glorified.

TENNESSEE:

■ "I enjoyed the latest copy of *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. (Continued on Next Page)

READERS'...Response

(Continued from Previous Page)

"I noted with interest the article on tattooing. You'll remember that God forbade tattooing (according to some translations) in Leviticus 19:28. 'Never cut your bodies in mourning for the dead or mark your skin with tattoos, for I am the Lord.' It is translated 'print any mark on your flesh' in the King James Version, which is the same thing.

"May the Good Lord continue to bless you and your work."

KENTUCKY:

■ "Cancel. Do not send!!"

■ "Please send me 3 copies of each (tracts)...This is the first time I have read THE SWORD AND STAFF, very much enjoyed. It is a shame that even if one could be put in everyone's hands, it would be thrown into the trash without a word being read.

"Thanks seem so minimal here."

■ "I have read a lot of tract material written by other brothers, but there has been none, and I mean none, that has held my attention to keep on reading as what you sent me. A Christian or a sinner can find themselves in reading and understanding where they fit in, in the writings. All of the tract material had to be of God. Here is a check [for another supply] as I want to pass them out to sinners, preachers, and above all, church-goers. I'm sure that I will be asking for more... Thanks so much."

WEST VIRGINIA:

■ "I commend you on the good work you are doing in the Lord's service...Please send 100 tracts 'What Must I Do to Be Saved?' Here is a gift...to the good work you are doing..."

PENNSYLVANIA:

■ "Enclosed is check for this year. Please keep up your good work. We enjoy and appreciate it very much..."

■ "Just a note to say sorry I have been amiss not sending money. Thanks for sending THE SWORD AND STAFF anyway. My husband and I really enjoy and appreciate this magazine."

■ "Our church would like to order some tracts from THE SWORD AND STAFF. We would like to see samples of all the listed tracts on the back of the latest SWORD AND STAFF, volume 44, 2006, Number 1..."

"Also, we would like to order 20 of the latest SWORD AND STAFF paper for our current leadership. We will send a donation...As far as the tracts and leaflets, we would like 100 copies of 'What Must I Do to Be Saved?' and 100 copies of 'Easter Every Sunday...'

"We love THE SWORD AND STAFF." (E-mail)

MICHIGAN:

■ "Thanks for your publication. It is terrific!"

OHIO:

■ "Please stop sending THE SWORD AND STAFF paper..."

■ "Enclosed is our check to help in your ministry. Please put us on the mailing list for THE SWORD AND STAFF."

■ "The article you wrote on 'The Sanctity of Human Sexuality' is the best that you have written yet. It is really needed today..."

■ "Would you please send me the following bound volumes of THE SWORD AND STAFF [1999-2000, 2001-2002, and 2003-2004 bound volumes of THE SWORD AND STAFF]..."

I noticed in the recent publication (volume 43, # 4) that you stated this was the 43rd year of publication. Are there any bound volumes prior to 1987, or are there copies of the earlier publications? It is getting harder to get hold of worthwhile reading material, your publication being one of the exceptions, along with the 'GOOD BOOK.' Please inform me of the availability of these earlier publications and cost. I would be very interested in these earlier old school publications. Thank you for your time..."

Editor's Reply: The bound volumes that are available are listed on the back page of *The Sword and Staff*. If they are not listed here, that means our supply is all gone and they are no longer available. I'm sorry, but we don't have the ones you wanted.

■ "Have you written anything dealing with the use of the term 'Pastor' as another term for minister? It bothers me a bit, but I can't put my finger on it, other than the fact that the term is used once in the Bible (KJV) and it seems to apply to the position of Elder. Can you shed any light? (E-mail)

Editor's Reply: You have hit the nail on the head. You are a good student. The word "pastor" (Greek, *poimen* = shepherd) is found in Ephesians 4:11 referring to the elders ("evangelist" has reference to the preacher). The Greek *poimen* is found altogether 20 times in the New Testament, and is in all other places translated "shepherd" in the KJV. This word with a prefix in front of it is found in 1 Peter 5:4, where in relation to the elders Jesus is called the "chief shepherd" (Greek, *archi + poimen*). This word, as such, is found only one time in the New Testament (here). A verbal form of the word, *poimaino*, occurs in Acts 20:28 (Paul is talking to the elders there) and in the KJV is translated "feed the church of God" (this literally means to *tend as a shepherd*). It is also found in 1 Peter 5:2 where it is rendered "feed the flock of God."

I believe this whole matter of the "organizational" setup of the church is all out of kilter today, as far as following the teaching of the New Testament is concerned. The modern so-called "minister" is hard to find in the New Testament. The word "minister" as found in the New Testament is a generic word, simply meaning servant, except when it is applied to the deacon (used technically, meaning a certain kind of servant).

■ “Would you please explain the apparent contradiction contained in Acts 8:16 with other verses, such as Acts 19:4-6 and Acts 2:38?” (E-mail)

The Gift of the Holy Spirit

Editor’s Reply: There is no contradiction. These Scriptures are talking about two different things. There were two different capacities in which the Holy Spirit was received or given.

(1) There is the “conversion” gift of the Holy Spirit that comes in connection with one becoming a Christian and definitely is essential to salvation. Acts 2:38 has reference to this, and it is universal for all people in the New Testament age. According to Acts 2:39, “For the promise” (in connection with repentance and baptism for the remission of sins), as Peter said, “is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” In John 3:5, Jesus had said that a person had to “be born of water and of the Spirit” to enter the kingdom. Also consider Titus 3:5, 1 Corinthians 6:11, and 1 Peter 1:22 and 23. Romans 8:9 tells us that the “Spirit of God” dwells in us, and if any man doesn’t have the Spirit, “he is none of his [God’s].” The presence of the Spirit strengthens and helps us in living the Christian life (Ephesians 3:14-20). A beautiful outcropping of the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives is evident in the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22, 23).

(2) Also, we read about the “charismatic” gift of the Holy Spirit, which was for a witness and witnessing, and has nothing to do with salvation in reference to the one receiving it. We see this in the apostles, the household of Cornelius, and those upon whom the apostles laid their hands. The apostles, who were already disciples of Christ, received the Spirit in this capacity on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2). Read such Scriptures as John 15:26-27, Acts 1:8, 2:43, and 4:33 that verify the witnessing aspect. The household of the Gentile Cornelius, although not saved yet, received the charismatic gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:44-48; 11:14, 15, 17) similar to the way the apostles had received it. This was a witness to the Jewish church that Gentiles should be received into the church (Acts 10:45; 11:17, 18; 15:8). Then in the early days of the church the Holy Spirit in the charismatic sense was given generally by the laying on of the apostles’ hands (Acts 8:14-19; Hebrews 6:1, 2). A close examination of Hebrews 2:3 and 4 is good in understanding this. It was for a witness. The charismatic giving and gift of the Holy Spirit is no longer in the church today, as we no longer have apostles who passed this gift on, and truth has been confirmed, being embodied in the completed Scriptures.

You might check an article we have on our web site, which I think would be helpful, if you would like to read it. Just click on the following web address (after being typed in exactly as follows):

<http://jgibbons.8m.com/Articles-filled-SPIRIT.htm>

■ “First off, let me thank you for sending *THE SWORD AND STAFF* with all the richness it con-

tains! You covered everything in the wonderful article on Salvation—so clear anyone could use it to teach another.

“What a joy to read the article you brought to attention on Tattooing! It really is distressing to see a Christian woman with such low-class decoration on her neck, back, calf, forearm or whatever. Of course, the older men you see were in the armed services and drunk when they got theirs. But that practice—and all the body piercing—is certainly ‘out of place’ for Christians, it seems to me!

“Forgive me for the theft! But I’m ‘stealing’ your marvelous sermon on ‘After Baptism—What?’ And I loved the page of ‘Barbs’.

“Now, I would like to be put on your permanent mailing list...”

Editor’s Note: Several have responded, wanting extra copies of the last issue of *The Sword and Staff*. It featured a study on “What Must I Do to Be Saved?” and an article on “After Baptism, What?” Evidently they thought this material complimented one another, was helpful, and would be good to hand out. We have several hundred copies of that paper left over, if you would like to have a bundle to use in this way. Just let us know, and we will send them to you as long as the supply lasts. A little help with the postage would be appreciated.

INDIANA:

■ “I’m interested in the tracts that were listed on page 16 of your magazine. Is it possible to get about 10 copies of each? These will be used for my congregation....

“I love your magazine. It holds so many truths that we need today.

“Look forward to your response.” (E-mail)

ILLINOIS:

■ “Enjoy so very much *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. It is always so refreshing, delightful, and uplifting whenever we receive it. Enclosed is another contribution for such a worthy publication...May our Lord’s love and blessings continue to abound upon you.”

MISSOURI:

■ “Please send me two more of the book *NOBODY LEFT BEHIND*. It’s one of the best books I have ever owned. And you do a wonderful work. Thanks very much.”

ARKANSAS:

■ “Please send me a complimentary copy of *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. God bless you.” (E-mail, Web page response)

NEBRASKA:

■ “We very much appreciate the copies of *THE SWORD AND STAFF* that you send our congregation...They are enjoyed by many...The work you do is needed. Please continue in your good work and do not give in to the pressures of conforming to the ideologies of this world...” (Continued on Next Page)

READERS'...Response

(Continued from Previous Page)

COLORADO:

■ "I wanted to commend you on a great issue of *THE SWORD AND STAFF* (as usual). Forty-four years... quite a feat! Here's a check to help cover costs in sending it out.

"Thanks for keeping it in print for so many years. I know that it is no small task."

NEW MEXICO:

■ "Would you be kind enough to send us 15 copies of *NOBODY LEFT BEHIND?* I have started through the book again and last week began a series of sermons using the Bible and this book as a guide..."

"Use any monies left to pay postage on the books and for publishing *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. We enjoy your publication greatly."

CALIFORNIA:

■ "Please discontinue sending *THE SWORD AND STAFF* to me."

OREGON:

■ "Please take us off your mailing list. Thank you."

■ "I thank God for His leading and hope that *THE SWORD AND STAFF* being printed [by an outside printer] and mailed is a great help..."

■ "We have appreciated your *SWORD AND STAFF* for a long time. It is really true to the Scriptures and that is excellent.

"We would like to give you an offering to help with the publication..."

"Thanks and God bless you."

UNITED STATES:

■ "Back in the mid 1990's a minister friend of mine had sent me some bound volumes of *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. Since that time I had not seen your publication till recently when I was paroled from prison. A Christian friend found one of your publications. I am writing to find out if you still publish this wonderful paper and if so, could you add me to your mailing list. I would very much appreciate this. Thank you in advance for your help."

CHILE:

■ "God bless you always. We are thankful for you. For the times you have sent me *La Espada y el Cayado*. I am satisfied with your topics, which are varied. And they help a lot for someone who must preach and teach. Please continue to send them to me during this year." (Translated) □

Leave the Providence to God

“**D**UTIES are ours, events are God's; When our faith goes to meddle with events, and to hold account upon God's Providence, and beginneth to say, 'How wilt Thou do this or that?' we lose ground; we have nothing to do there; it is our part to let the Al-

mighty exercise His own office, and steer His own helm; there is nothing left for us, but to see how we may be approved of Him, and how we roll the weight of our weak souls upon Him who is God omnipotent, and when we thus essay miscarrieth, it shall be neither our sin nor our cross.”—*Samuel Rutherford*

Problems in Distinguishing the SPIRITUAL...

(Continued from Page 8)

yet to come (verifying what we have just said). Notice these revealing Scriptures.

- “Know ye not that the unrighteous **shall not inherit the kingdom of God?** Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate [homosexuals], nor abusers of themselves with mankind [sodomites], nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, **shall inherit the kingdom of God**” (1 Corinthians 6:9, 10).
- “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things **shall not inherit the kingdom of God**” (Galatians 5:19-21).
- “For this ye know, that no whoremonger [fornicator], nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, **hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God**” (Ephesians 5:5).

Concluding Remarks

There is much more that could be written on this subject of distinguishing the spiritual from the physical in reference to the kingdom of the Messiah. In fact, this theme could be enlarged and applied to other matters. That which claims to be the church in many places today seems to have become sidetracked from actually why the church came into being in the first place. All kinds of programs and even non-religious activities have supplanted its distinctive spiritual function and role in the community. But, we trust, this article will suffice for now to show that the kingdom of heaven is indeed that, not some earthly or political kingdom yet to be set up. The great Scriptures anticipating the Christ have been fulfilled. He is now enthroned and reigning upon the throne of David. □

“When in Rome...”

THERE IS a saying, “When in Rome, do as the Romans do.” But Paul, writing to the Christians in Rome, said, “Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Romans 12:2).

—*New Home Bulletin* □



BARBS

...with a POINT

LUST is covetousness intensified.

Life without Christ is as a “sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal” (1 Corinthians 13:1).

The Bible only makes Christians only; the Bible plus the names, doctrines and traditions of men make denominations.

People who are always “tooting their own horn,” especially preachers, need to be dehorned.

People preoccupied with religious movements tend to exalt men, rather than simply Christ and His church, and that alone.

The trouble with “perfect” people is that they tend to not see their imperfections.

Embellishing the tombs of the “prophets” (Matthew 23:29) can never take the place of living the life they preached.

The job of the preacher is to preach THE BOOK, not give book reports.

People who are unduly preoccupied with their “image” need to realize that in the Bible images have to do with idolatry, which is wicked and strongly condemned by God.

If “birds of a feather flock together,” what do your associates tell about you?

Those who have made their peace with God are not as likely to “go to pieces” when facing life’s problems.

Many times people become mean when life has no meaning to them.

All of us, who are “set in our ways,” whether good or bad, will one day have to sit before the Judgment seat of God.

Compromise in the name of “Christian unity” does not comprise “Christian unity.”

The Bible tells us that Christ purchased the “church” with his own blood (Acts 20:28), but it doesn’t say he purchased “Ministries” (as some groups, meeting like churches, are calling themselves today).

There is no one so blind as the person who will not see.

We live in an era of “Christianity lite”; if we are very religious, it “turns people off” (even professed Christians).

It is hard to walk with the Lord if you are always dragging your feet.

Your set of values (what you esteem to be important) is reflected in what you enjoy and have pleasure in doing.

The things that people find laughable today are enough to make decent people cry.

Religious unity that is accomplished without the inspired Word of the Holy Spirit, the Bible, is not the “unity of the Spirit” enjoined in Ephesians 4:3.

People who try to defend their sins will find they are defenseless in the Day of Judgment.

If the Jews under the Law gave a tithe to the LORD, and we are now under grace, it is a disgrace to give less than a tithe.

When the books are opened on the Day of Judgment, every man’s life will be an open book.

When a Christian is slack in his church attendance, it indicates he has spiritual problems greater than just not attending the church services.

Grace does not negate the necessity of living a life of holiness and righteousness.

Some schools, thought to be citadels of conservatism, may not even be conservative, let alone being a citadel.

Numbers mean nothing unless they count. □

I’d Rather See a Sermon

I’d rather see a sermon than hear one any day.
I’d rather one would walk with me than merely show the way.

The eye’s a better pupil and much sharper than the ear.
Fine counsel can confuse me, but examples always clear.

The lectures you deliver may be very wise and true.
But I’d rather get my lesson by observing what you do.

You are writing a gospel, a Chapter each day;
By the deeds that you do, by the words that you say.

Men read what they write whether faithless or true.
Say, what is the gospel according to you?

We are the only Bible a careless world will read.
We are the sinner’s gospel; we are the scoffer’s creed.

We are the Lord’s last message given in deed and word.
What if the type is crooked; what if the print is blurred?

The Bible says, let your light so shine before men that they

May see your good works and glorify your Father in Heaven.

—*Author Unknown*

Christianity WITHOUT Denominations

Ephesians 4:4-6

“There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”

—The Apostle Paul

TO WHAT denomination did Peter, James, John, the 3000 on Pentecost (Acts 2:38-47), Cornelius, the Ethiopian eunuch, Lydia, the Corinthians, and the Philippian jailer belong (as well as everyone else we read about in the book of Acts)? The answer, they belonged to none. They were simply members of the body of Christ, which is the Lord’s church (Ephesians 1:22, 23; Colossians 1:18, 24), yet they were not members of any denomination as we know them today (Ephesians 4:4-6). All who were saved became members of this body (Ephesians 5:23), the church, by virtue of the fact that the Lord added them to it (Acts 2:47). Yet they belonged to no denomination. They had been delivered from the “power of darkness,” or the world, and were now translated into the “kingdom of God’s dear Son,” which is the church (Colossians 1:13, 14, 18), but still they were not members of any denominational church. They had been called into one body (Colossians 3:15).

Just so, today, if a sinner believes in Christ, and is baptized, just as the 3000 on Pentecost were, the eunuch, Lydia, Cornelius, the jailer, etc., such would make this person simply a Christian, but nothing more (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:36-41; 8:35-39; 16:14, 15; 16:30, 34; Romans 6:3, 4; Galatians 3:26, 27). This would not make him a member of any denomination. And if a great number should do this, would they not have the same status?

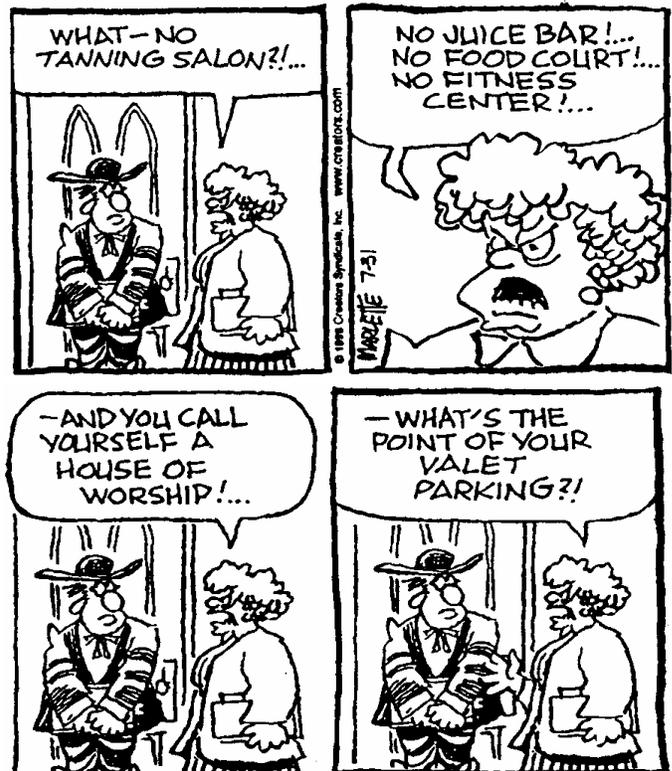
Should this number come together on the first day of the week to worship, Acts 20:7, identify themselves simply by the name of Christ as did the apostles and early Christians, accept and teach the Bible as their only rule of faith and practice, have such leaders to serve as the Bible authorizes, and believe and observe the same teachings in the same way as the apostles and early Christians did, and as are set forth in the Bible, would they not simply be the Lord’s church without being a denomination?

We believe this is the position taught in the Bible and that all of us should take. The Bible only makes only New Testament Christians, no more and no less, and as New Testament Christians we are members of the New Testament church, and that alone. If upon repenting and being baptized, the Lord adds us to His

church, like in the first century, why be joined to anything else? With the possession of the Word of God in its entirety, why think that we must have man-made creeds and rules of faith? Why call ourselves by denominational names? We believe in Christ. He is our creed, and we do what he says. Consequently, the New Testament is our only rule of faith and doctrine (no man-made creeds).

Does this sound good to you? Does it sound too good to be true? Most people will say that they actually believe that this is the way it should be, but getting them to implement it is another thing. Really, it is not a matter of opinion or optional. Christ purchased the church with his own blood (Acts 20:28). The church belongs to him. It is not for us to do with as we please. This is a very serious matter, and it is of the utmost importance that we listen and do what the Lord says (Luke 6:46; John 12:48). □

“Can the Church Become A Hindrance to the Lord?”



• By Harry J. Bowers

THE MESSAGE of Isaiah was so important that in the very beginning of his prophesy, God calls for both the heavens and the earth to hear. The first chapter of Isaiah is an indictment of Israel for their unfaithfulness, but they did not know nor understand their condition (Isaiah 1:3). They were said to have abandoned the Lord, despised the Holy One of Israel and had turned away from Him. Their cities had been burned with fire, their land lay desolate and strangers were devouring them. Yet God had to send them a

prophet to tell them what was going on right before their eyes. God said this great nation that He had called out of slavery and redeemed for a great purpose had become as useless as a watchman's hut in a cucumber field and as a shelter in a vineyard. Why did this condition exist and why were they not aware of their degenerate condition? Verses 1 through 15 answer this question: They were too busy being religious. In our language, they were too busy going to church.

God looked at their multitude of sacrifices, the burnt offerings of rams, and fat of fed cattle, their appearing before Him and trampling His courts, the offerings and the observance of new moons and Sabbaths, their spreading out of their hands in prayer, and said, "I am weary of this, it is an abomination to Me." In fact, He said that he hated what they were doing. Israel had been chosen to be a holy nation and a kingdom of priests. Their purpose therefore was to tell the world about God and convince the world of His love. Paul, in pointing out the failure of the nation (Romans 2:18-22), reminds them of their failure to live up to their God-commanded goals. They were to be a guide to the blind, a light to those in darkness, a corrector of the foolish and a teacher of the immature. Unfortunately Israel never understood nor accepted the purpose of their calling.

In the New Testament, the Pharisees and Sadducees became the prime example of Israel's failure. The Sadducees sold out to materialism and ritual. The Pharisees produced a dead religion although they were in search of a means to reach a level of acceptance with God. The Pharisees were a very close-knit club. Their answer for pleasing God was "become like us." Their message (to put it in modern language): "believe like us, dress like us, act like us, like what we like and don't like what we don't like." In church language: if you want to know God and change your life, come to us. We have a nice building, a great musical program, an outstanding youth program with a hippy young youth director and a great staff to serve you. Anything in the world that attracts you we can provide the same, just come and get it. As a result of this thinking the modern church's target has been the church itself, not the decaying society around us. When the church becomes self serving, as most churches today are, those on the outside who are not a part of a religious club are turning to New Age crystals and self-enlightenment resulting in all sorts of crazy stuff about God. A 2001 survey by the *Christian Science Monitor* reports that the number of Americans who have "no religious preference" has doubled from 1990 to 2001. George Barna reports (*State of the Church 2002*, page 17) that the un-churched population has grown from 24 to 34 percent in the last decade.

To stop this trend the modern church has spawned the Church Growth Movement, the Mega Church, the Church planting phase, the Contempo-

rary life-style Christian, and the Purpose Driven Church program which results in a whole industry springing up to help churches do whatever they decide to do, and be whatever they decide to be. The religious world is overrun with consultants, parachurch ministries, publishing houses, conventions and seminars, religious publishing houses and book stores offering answers to any problem any church member may have and how to overcome any problem they may face.

We are not saying all of this is bad and worthless, but we must admit that all the effect and activity we see going on in the world of the modern church is making very little difference in the society as a whole. Most of the energy spent by the church is focused on itself, on what it takes to succeed and be popular. Like the Pharisees, it has become an elite club more interested in running the machinery than in reaching the lost and seeing them grow to maturity in Christ. But hasn't there been a great surge of interest in spirituality? How can the *Prayer of Jabez*, *the Purpose Driven Life*, *Promise Keepers* and the movie *The Passion* and the *Left Behind* series not indicate a great interest in spirituality? And what about churches having to have two or three services on Sunday to accommodate the crowds? My question: Is all this we are seeing going on and being experienced in the modern church what Jesus meant for the church to be? And is all the activity inside the church what he intended the church to do? Is the Kingdom of God being reflected in the modern church? Is it the power of the Spirit that has brought the modern church to the condition it is in today? These questions make me ask, "Can the church become a hindrance to the Lord?"—**Selected**



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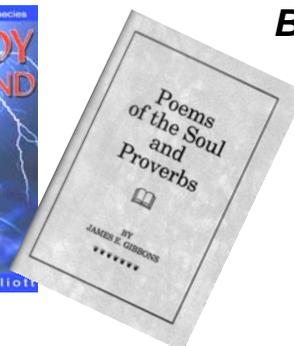
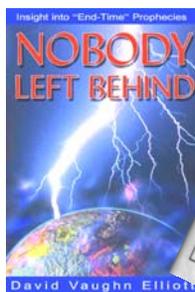
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