A photograph of a large, healthy bush of pink roses. The flowers are in various stages of bloom, with some fully open and others as buds. The leaves are dark green and glossy. The background is a soft-focus green, suggesting a garden setting. A semi-transparent rectangular box is overlaid on the bottom right of the image, containing the text.

**The
Advocate
of
Truth**



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Fax: 304-782-2248

E-Mail: cogsevdav@aol.com

Web site: www.churchofgod-7thday.org

Del DeLong

Bond Tennant.....Editorial Staff

Gary Mills Managing Editor

Ludina Mills.....Children's Page Editor

Fred Hardman Printer

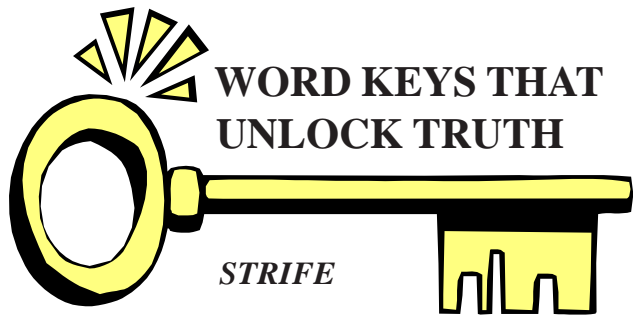
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Strife is exertion or contention for superiority; altercation; continuousness; quarreling; fighting. There is no place for strife in the Church of God.

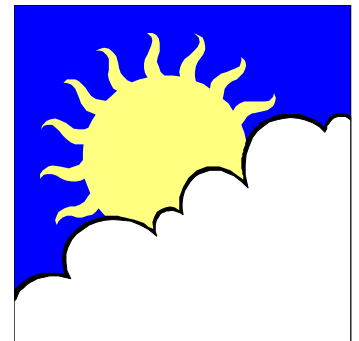
The whole trend of Christ's teaching was against strife. Not only did He teach the fallacy and sin of strife, but His apostles and disciples were careful to call attention of the flock to His commands and wishes on the subject.

There are many exhortations against strife recorded in the scriptures. "Strive not with a man without cause, if he have done thee no harm" (Proverbs 3:30). "The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water: therefore leave off contention, before it be meddled with" (Proverbs 17:14). "Go not forth hastily to strive, lest thou know not what to do in the end thereof, when thy neighbor hath put thee to shame" (Proverbs 25:8). He that passeth by,

and meddleth with strife belonging not to him is like one that taketh a dog by the ears" (Proverbs 26:17). "Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying" (Romans 13:13). "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). "Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves" (Philippians 2:3). "But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes" (II Timothy 2:23). "But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contention, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain" (Titus 3:9). "But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth" (James 3:14). The scriptures also tell us the results of strife. "But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another" (Galatians 5:15). "For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work" (James 3:16).

THE PROPHETIC SUMMER

By Moises Torres M.



The Lord Jesus spoke a parable to His disciples: "And he spake to them a parable: Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; when they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves **that summer is now nigh at hand**. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand," (Luke 21:29-31).

Why did the Lord Jesus use the word "summer" in this prophecy related to the coming of the kingdom of God? What happens in the summer season?

Speaking about the ants, Solomon says: "Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest." (Proverbs 6:8). "He that gathereth in summer is a wise son; but he that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame" (Proverbs 10:5). Summer has been the harvest season since the Old Testament times.

The Lord established the different seasons of the year from the very beginning of creation for a purpose: "While the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not

cease" (Genesis 8:22). So, there is a time for sowing, and a harvest time. Summer is the harvest season.

The Lord Jesus and the prophets foretold about a summer in which there would be a special harvest. John the Baptist, said: "But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance...And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees; therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner: but he burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire" (Matthew 3:7-12). In these Scriptures, John the Baptist introduces the Lord Jesus as the "Reaper" of a special harvest who will purge His floor and will gather His wheat in His garner and burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. We know that the wheat are the righteous, and the wicked are the chaff which will be burned up. So, this tells us that this is a harvest of men.

Daniel, the prophet, tells us that the threshing floors are in the summer. Revealing the dream of the image of Nebuchadnezzar about the future of the nations, he said: "Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron, and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors: and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth." (Daniel 2:34-35). Here Daniel is saying that all empires, powers, and governments of men would come to an end at the future summer harvest of God. All nations and idolatrous people will become like the summer threshing floors and their place would not be found.

John, the writer of Apocalypse or Revelation, tells us also about this prophetic summer. Two different reapings would take place in this harvest; "And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of

the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud. Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped" (Revelation 14:14-16). This is the first reaping of the harvest which is the reaping of the saints or righteous people of the earth, and the reaper is the Lord Jesus himself who sat on a white cloud having a crown on his head because he is the King of the Saints (Revelation 15:3).

From verse 17 on, the second reaping of this prophetic harvest is described: "And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud voice to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth: for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs."

This winepress is the Valley of Armageddon where the captain angel in charge of the sixth plague will gather all nations for the battle of that great day of God Almighty. "And he (the angel) gather them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon" (Revelation 16:12, 16). Compare to Revelation 14:19.

These two different reapings described in chapter fourteen complete the prophetic summer the threshing floors of the Lord Jesus which was foretold by John the Baptist and Daniel. The Lord Jesus will purge his floor and will gather his wheat (the saints) in his garner; and will burn the chaff (the wicked) in eternal life.

Coming back to the parable in Luke 21, the Lord Jesus mentions the fig tree and all the trees, and He says: "WHEN THEY NOW SHOOT FORTH, YE SEE AND KNOW OF YOURSELVES THAT SUMMER IS NOW NIGH AT HAND" (Verses 29-30). The trees represent the Gentile nations, the fig tree is Israel. The Lord was foretelling that when Israel and all the Gentile nations would show forth in knowledge and power, the prophetic summer would be near at hand; That would be a time of harvest.

In the Old Testament, Amos was also shown a bas-

ket of summer fruit whose meaning was the imminent destruction of Jerusalem (Amos 8:1-2). In the New Testament, John the Baptist, John the Apostle, and the Lord Jesus also made allusion of a future summer season which would be a time of destruction of all the wicked nations of the world.

The Bible prophecies are being fulfilled in our days. The nations and Israel have already shown forth with great power and technology. The Lord is coming back to the

earth and he has his sickle, basket and gather ready to reap his harvest IN THE SUMMER.

Today is the time to bring good fruit to partake in the first reaping of the harvest and be taken to the storehouse of the Lord, the New Jerusalem, so we do not have to say as Israel in the past: "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved" (Jeremiah 8:20). May God bless you all as you consider the prophecies of the book of God.

OUR JUSTIFICATION BEFORE GOD

By Ben DeLong

One of the fundamental questions of our Christian faith is how does God decide who receives eternal life in the day of judgment, and who will be destroyed in the lake of fire. Put another way, how does man achieve a righteousness that will allow him to stand before God? To bring this question down to a more personal level, "What must I do to be saved?"

To address this topic, we must first understand the concept of sin. Sin is simply the transgression of God's law. "**Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law**" (I John 3:4). Because our God is righteous and a just God, He cannot let sin go unpunished. The punishment for sin is severe. "**For the wages of sin is death;...**" (Roman 6:23 - first part).

Since the punishment for sin (death) is so severe, we need to avoid sin at all cost. Unfortunately, we bump up against another problem, the nature of man. "**For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God**" (Romans 3:23). "**If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us**" (I John 1:8). "**If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.**" (I John 1:10)



Left to our own devices, all men sin and are therefore worthy of eternal death. All men.

This picture is very bleak and would be completely hopeless if it were not for one essential aspect of God's nature. God is love. "**He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love**" (I John 4:8). Because God loves us, He provided us with a means for escaping sin and its deadly consequences. "**For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life**" (John 3:16). The solution to sin is belief in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

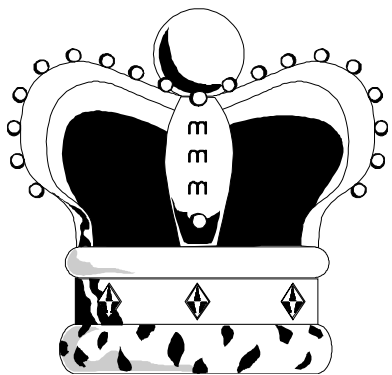
Our salvation depends on our relationship with Christ and not up to our deeds. It is through the blood of Christ that our sins are taken away from us. "**But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin**" (I John 1:7). As this verse highlights, it is the blood of Christ that washes away our sins and allows us to stand justified in the presence of God. This verse also highlights the responsibility of the believer to "walk in the light". We must, to the best of our ability, understand God's ways and follow them. The fail-

ure to do this causes the blood of Jesus to be taken away from us. **"For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins"** (Hebrews 10:26). The key word in this verse is "willfully". All men sin and make mistakes. It is when we make a conscience choice to go against God and willfully sin that we lose the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus Christ.

In order for us to be justified before God, we must have no sin held to our account. Because we are human, we cannot accomplish this on our own. No matter how hard we try, we can never keep God's laws and commandments to perfection. We will trip up somewhere along the way. It is only through the blood of Christ that

these mistakes can be removed and that we can be restored to a completely righteous state. In order to receive this cleansing blood, we must walk the path of righteousness spelled in God's Word and not turn willfully from it.

When John saw the vision of the saints standing before the throne of God, they were described to him as the ones who washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb. **"And I said unto him Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."** (Revelation 7;14) "What must I do to be saved?" Wash away your sins with the blood of Jesus.



REMEMBER AMAZIAH!

By Carol Buechner

The word remember means to bring into the mind in order to think about or consider again, keep in your memory, be careful not to forget, recall, look back upon, impressed in the mind, keep the memory of and to dwell upon in the thoughts. If something is important enough to remember, it has a message for you or it has a lesson for you to consider to assist you with your life activities. This is what you need to do as you carefully study the life of Amaziah. Examine his actions and see how they fit into the word of God. Doing this can help you live a better Christian life.

Amaziah was the king of Judah from 797 B.C. to 767 B.C. he became king at the age of twenty-five, following the murder of his father, Joash. As soon as he became established as king, Amaziah slew the servants that were responsible for his father's murder. However, he did not kill the children of these people because the

book of Moses commanded that "...The fathers shall not die for the children, neither shall the children die for the fathers, but every man shall die for his own sin" (II Chronicles 25:4). After revenging his father's death, Amaziah organized the fighting men making captains by thousands and hundreds according to their fathers. These included those twenty years of age and above. He numbered these men and there were "...three hundred thousand choice men, able to go forth to war, that could handle spear and shield" (verse 5).

Amaziah's next move was to hire one hundred thousand mighty men of valor from Israel. He agreed to pay the sum of a hundred talents of silver (\$192,000.00) for the services of these men. However, "...there came a man of God to him, saying, O king, let not the army of Israel go with thee; for the Lord is not with Israel, to wit, with all the children of Ephraim. But if thou wilt go, do it, be strong

for the battle: God shall make thee fall before the enemy: For God hath power to help, and to cast down" (verses 7-8). Amaziah has paid \$192,000.00 for the services of the army of Israel and now a man of God comes to tell him that God is not with Israel and he should not take these soldiers into battle with him. The man of God tells the kingdom that God will be with him to help him in the battle. What is Amaziah going to do? Will he listen to the man of God or will he go ahead and let the army he has paid for even though God is not with them? And Amaziah said to the man of God, But what shall we do for the hundred talents (\$192,000.00) which I have given to the army of Israel? And the man of God answered, The Lord is able to give thee much more than this. Then Amziah separated them, to wit, the army that was come to the mount of Ephriam, to go home again: wherefore their anger was greatly kindled against Judah, and they returned home in great anger" (verses 9-10). Amaziah listened to the man of God and sent the army of Israel home even though it meant a loss of all the money and it made the soldiers very angry to be sent home.

What did Amaziah do next? "And Amaziah strengthened himself, and led forth his people, and went to the valley of salt, and smote of the children of Seir ten thousand. And other ten thousand left alive did the children of Judah carry away captive, and brought them unto the top of the rock, and cast them down from the top of the rock, that they all were broken in pieces" (verses 11-12). Amaziah did go to war and won, killing twenty thousand of the enemy. It has come to pass that what God had told him, was true.

It is important to notice Amaziah's next action. "Now it came to pass, after that Amaziah was come from the slaughter of the Edomites, that he brought the gods of the children of Seir, and set them up to be his gods, and bowed down himself before them, and burned incense unto them" (verse 14). Of the spoil that Amaziah gathered of the people of Seir, he brought home their gods, He set them up and worshipped them! What will be the results of this act? "Wherefore the anger of the Lord was kindled against Amaziah, and he sent unto him a prophet, which said unto him, Why hast thou sought after the gods of the people, which could not deliver their own people out of thine hand? And it came to pass, as he talked with him, that the king said unto him, Art thou made of the king's counsel? for bear, why shouldest thou be smitten? Then the prophet

for lore, and said, I know that God hath determined to destroy thee, because thou hast done this, and hast not hearkened unto my counsel" (verse 15-16). Amaziah has now turned his back on God by telling the prophet God sent that he was no longer needed to give him advice. He had his own counsel to follow.

By this time, Amaziah is feeling pretty good about himself. He thinks "he knows it all." So he sends word to Jehu, king of Israel, challenging him to battle. Jehu's message back to Amaziah advised, "...Lo, thou hast smitten the Edomites; and thine heart lifteth thee up to boast: abide now at home; why shouldest thou meddle to thine hurt, that thou shouldest fall, even thou, and Judah with thee? (verse 19). Jehu is telling Amaziah that he had better be careful because of his victory over the Edomites is making him too proud. Jehu is saying, "Amaziah, your heart is making you prideful and you should consider what you want to do. You need to stay home and not get involved in a battle with Israel because you could fail and take Judah down with you." This seems like a reasonable statement.

Did Amaziah follow Jehu's advice? "But Amaziah would not hear; for it came of God, that he might deliver them into the hand of their enemies, because they sought after the gods of Edom" (verse 20). Amaziah did not take Jehu's advice because, so you can see in verse 20, it was God's will that he should not listen.

What was the result? "So Joash the king of Israel went up; and they saw one another in the face, both he and Amaziah king of Judah, at Bethshemesh, which belongeth to Judah. And Judah was put to the worse before Israel, and they fled every man to his tent. And Joash the king of Israel took Amaziah king of Judah...at Beth-shemesh, and brought him to Jerusalem, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem from the gate of Ephriam to the corner gate...And he took all the gold and the silver, and all the vessels that were found in the house of God with Obedom, and the treasures of the king's house, and the hostages also, and returned to Samaria" (verses 21-23). As you can see, Amaziah's prideful action brought destruction to Jerusalem, plundering of riches of the house of God and the king's palace and hostages were taken, including Amaziah.

Amaziah has lost it all. What happened to him? "Now after the time that Amaziah did turn away from following the Lord they made a conspiracy against him in Jerusa-

lem; and he fled to Lachish: but they sent to Lachish after him, and slew him there. And they brought him upon horses, and buried him with this fathers in the city of Judah" (verse 27-28).

As you previewed the life of Amaziah, there should have been some things that happened in his life that will help you live a better Christian life. What can you remember about Amaziah? There is one important verse about Amaziah that you need to put into your memory. It says in II Chronicles 25:2:

**"AND HE DID THAT WHICH WAS RIGHT
IN THE SIGHT OF THE LORD,
BUT NOT WITH A PERFECT HEART."**

What does this verse mean? It states that Amaziah did do what he knew was right according to the Lord. He knew the rules and followed them. When Amaziah took vengeance on those that had killed his father, he did it according to the laws of Moses. He did not kill the children. He listened to the man of God regarding the use of the army of Israel. He sent them home even though he was wasting much money. This was probably a difficult thing for Amaziah to do. Because Amaziah did what was right, God was with him and he defeated the Edomites. Now you can see the change beginning to happen with Amaziah because he gathers up the gods of his enemy, takes them home, sets the map, worships them and burns incense to them. God is now furious with him over this action.

The last part of verse two of II Chronicles 25 is of extreme importance: 'BUT NOT WITH A PERFECT HEART.' This must be the reason why Amaziah did not continue doing what was right with the Lord. What is the Bible referring to concerning the Heart? The "HOLMAN BIBLE DICTIONARY" explains the heart in this manner: "The center of the physical, mental, and spiritual life of humans."

"First, the word heart refers to the physical organ and is considered to be the center of the physical life. Eating and drinking are spoken of as strengthening the heart...As the center of physical life, the heart came to stand for the person as a whole."

"The heart became the focus for all the evil functions of the body; including both intellectual and spiritual life. The heart and the intellect are closely connected, to the

heart being the set of intelligence: "For this people's heart is waxed gross..lest at anytime they should...understand with their heart, and should be converted" (Matthew 13:15). The heart is connected with thinking: As a person "thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23;7). To ponder something in one's heart means to consider it carefully...to call to heart (mind) something means to remember something...All of these are functions of the mind, but are connected with the heart in biblical language.

"Closely related to the mind are acts of the will, acts resulting from a conscious or even a deliberate decision. Thus, II Corinthians 9:7: "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give." Ananias contrived his deed of lying to the Holy Spirit in his heart (Acts 5:4). The conscious decision is made in the heart (Romans 6:17).

"Not only is the heart associated with the activities of the mind and the will, but it is also closely connected to the feelings and affections of a person. Emotions such as joy originate in the heart (Psalm 4:7; Isaiah 65:14). Other emotions are ascribed to the heart, especially in the Old Testament....Discouragement or despair is described by the phrase "heaviness in the heart" which makes it stop (Proverbs 12:25)."

Finally, the heart is spoken of in Scripture as the center of the moral and spiritual life. The conscience, for instance, is associated with the heart. In fact, the Hebrew language had no word for conscience, so the word heart was often used to express this concept: "my heart shall not reproach me as long as I live" (Job 27:6). All moral conditions from the highest to the lowest are said to center in the heart. Sometimes the heart is used to represent a person's true nature or character. This true nature is contrasted with the outward appearance: "man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on their heart" (I Samuel 16:7 RSV)."

As you consider the word heart, you find that it is referring to more than just the physical part of your body that serves to pump the blood through your body. The heart is a very important part to how you live, how you react, what emotions you express, what you say, etc. In most cases, it is the mind this being referred to in biblical passage. Some more information taken from the "HOLMAN BIBLE DICTIONARY" shed more light on the use of the words heart and mind meaning the same thing. "The more common terms for mind, however are

nous and dianoia. Dianoia occurs twelve times in the New Testament. It refers to "thinking through" or "thinking over" of something or to the "understanding" or "sentiment" which results from that process of reflection. Paul said that in times past we all lived according to the flesh, "fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind". Nous is the most prominent term for mind; it occurs twenty-four times. Nous represents the "set of understanding," the place of "knowing and reasoning." It also includes feeling and deciding. Hence it sometimes includes the counsels and purposes of the mind."

"...In Scripture the heart is more often considered to be the center of the human personality. In the Old Testament, especially, this is true because of the lack of an exact equivalent for mind. The word heart fills this idea, and the New Testament follows the practice of the Old Testament very closely. Why then can the mind as well as the heart be spoken of as the center of a person? Because in Hebrew thought a person is looked at as a single entity with no attempt to compartmentalize the person into separate parts which act more or less independently of one another. Therefore, the heart, mind, and soul, while in some ways different, are seen as one."

It is obvious that you must realize that the heart or mind is the very center of who you are. It is your thoughts, your reactions, your emotions and so much more. It can be looked upon as the "control center" of your body. All areas of your life are a result of what is in the heart or mind. If you will remember, Amaziah did what was right in the sight of the Lord, BUT not with a perfect heart. What does it mean to have a perfect heart?

Once more the "Holman Bible Dictionary" helps you understand the word perfect. "Reaching an ideal state of spiritual wholeness or completeness. It is not a quality which is achieved by human effort alone, nor is it an end in itself. Christian perfection consists essentially in exercising the divine gift of love. (Colossians 3:14 NIV), for God, and for other people (Matthew 22:37-39)."

"Through a covenant relationship with His people, and by grace, God thus offers to His people the possibility of perfection. In the Old Testament being "perfect" is ascribed to individuals, such as Noah (Genesis 6:9) and Job (1:1), in response to their whole hearted obedience. In other contexts, corporate perfection and being "upright" belong together (Psalm 37:37; Proverbs 2:21). In the New Testament, God's relationship with His people is

itself fulfilled, and the old covenant is replaced, and through Christ believers can be perfected for ever (Hebrews 10:14). Christians are, however, to grow from spiritual infancy to maturity so as to share the full stature of Christ, in whose image they may become renewed and perfected (Colossians 3:10).

"...Perfection is not equated in the Bible with sinlessness...the divine gift of perfection will be fully realized only in eternity (Philippians 3:10-14); (I John 3:2). It is a goal to be sought (II Corinthians 7:1; Hebrews 6:1)..."

No human being can be perfect while living on this earth. Sin is a part of your very nature. You can strive to be perfect through the process of maturing in your Christian walk. The most important part of that walk of maturity is learning to walk in love. Examine closely the following verses from I John 4: "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and HIS LOVE IS PERFECTED IN US" (verses 7,8,11,12).

Delve further into this concept of love as a maturing process for a Christian by examining Matthew 5:43-48: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven...For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even republicans so? BE YE THEREFORE PERFECT, EVEN AS YOUR FATHER WHICH IS IN HEAVEN IS PERFECT." As you mature as a Christian, you learn to love others with a pure love like the love of God. You learn that loving your enemies is just as vital as loving those that are easy to love.

What can be concluded about perfection? I John 1:8-10 can help us see it a little more clearly. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." Perfection is

not being sinless because it is impossible for a human being to be sinless. You must confess your sins and get forgiveness for them. Having done that, you can move on to maturity, walking in love and keeping the commandments of God. This is a sign that God dwells in you and His love can be perfected in you.

What is it that you need to remember about Amaziah? Amaziah did those things that were right in the sight of God and he listened to the man of God the first time. Following success with God's help, he got feeling good about himself and did what he wanted to do rather than listening to God. Perhaps Amaziah was only doing those things because he had seen his father do them, or he had read them in the book of the law of Moses. His heart was not in the right place because he became distracted and wandered away from the law. God was not first in his heart. Amaziah became involved in his own wants, needs and desires. The foreign gods attracted him and he soon forgot the true God that had been with him when he conquered the Edomites. Their gods were useless.

This can happen to you, too. There are so many "gods" in this busy world to distract you and cause you to get involved in the wrong things. Being a Christian can become a habit in which you do things just for the people to see. If they see you doing what appears to be right, they

will think you are a good Christian. Perhaps you attend church because you were raised to do it or you want to please someone. It may be that you do "religious things" to soothe your conscience. Could it be that your heart is not really with God? Everything you do is just habit and you aren't really growing to maturity in your Christian walk. You would rather "do your own thing" than do God's will. To whom are you listening? Can you hear God guiding you? Are you listening to the advice of godly friends or would you listen to those of the world because you like what they say?

Amaziah did not have his heart completely focused on God. What is your heart focused on? God requires a complete, pure focus on Him. Do you have faith in God and have confidence in what his words say? Or are you allowing doubt to cloud your mind? Is your heart filled with love for God and all mankind? Are you dedicated to following God's commandments in EVERY area of your life? Remember Amaziah did not put God first, and he soon drifted away from following God and doing what was right. His heart was not pure and this led to his tragic end. Do you want a tragic end or are you focused on God and your reward of eternal life when Jesus returns?

REMEMBER AMAZIAH!

HAVE YOU SEEN THE CHURCH?

*Reprinted from
May 25, 1987*



If this question sounds strange and ambiguous, the chances are very good that the original form of the church Jesus built and portrayed in the scriptures has not yet come to focus for you. The truth of God's word comes to us by revelation and studying the Scriptures.

A gentleman recently told me he had just finished reading through the Bible for the nineteenth time. I asked him this question: "If one would build a church according to what you have learned reading the Bible nineteen times, what would be the principal features of that church?" His

answer was shocking.

He said, "Well, first one would have to decide whether he wanted to be a Presbyterian, Lutheran, Methodist, or whatever kind of church. Then he would start from there. The Bible doesn't mention the different churches, so I can't see that a person would get much help from it."

Conversely, some who read the Bible without a fixed notion that the scriptural concept of the church must conform to the present day-institutional pattern may have the New Testament church come into view as they read. When

I was twelve years of age an evangelist came to the church two blocks from our home. (It was a congregation of a prominent denomination.) I attended some of the services with friends, many of whom were going forward to join the church.

I remember on one occasion the preacher met with a group of boys ages 10 to 15 for a "talk session," There were twenty or more of us. He told us that the important thing for boys of our age was to join the church. "Of course," said he, "If you later wish to become a Christian, as many people profess to be, it is good. But for now, I advise you to join the church."

"There's Only One"

My father was not a Christian at that time, but he was a Bible reader. When I told him I was considering joining that church he asked me to sit down. He then told me what he had learned from reading the Bible. He said, "According to the New Testament there is only one church - the true Church of God. The way to get into it is to get saved. When one is saved, he is a member of the Bible church. An unsaved person cannot become a member of that church by joining a denomination."

He urged me to wait and not join a church. "For," he said, "Who knows but that some of the preachers will wise up and begin preaching and teaching about God's church, the one that's mentioned in the New Testament?" We had not heard of the Church of God at that time.

Ordained by God

The church is God's method! After Peter's confession that Jesus is the anointed Son of God, the Lord said to him and his other followers, "I tell you, you are Peter (Petros, masculine, a large piece of rock), and on this rock (Petru, feminine, a huge rock like Gibraltar) I will build my church, and the gates of Hell (the powers of the grave) shall not overpower it. .." (Matthew 16:18, Amplified).

The primary aim of Jesus' coming to the world was to save the world of people, but that His primary method of doing this was the church. By becoming the recipient of the Holy Spirit and the depository of His conferred gifts, the first followers became the church. He forbade His believers to go to evangelize until the church thus came into being.

The Giver of gifts must needs be given, before the church (which functions by the exercise of these gifts) can operate in the world. The Lord started just one church, but he started it with just one congregation! Whatever he

deposited with those disciples on and before the Day of Pentecost was what it took to save the world - no more, no less.

The Church And It's Work

"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28).

1. The church is composed of regenerated believers (John 3:3).
2. It was purchased by the blood of Jesus (Acts 20:28), and therefore is precious unto Him (Ephesians 5:25-27).
3. Its dynamic is the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8).
4. Its assignment is the evangelization of the world (Matthew 28:18-20).
5. Its mechanics are of divine appointment (I Corinthians 12:18).
6. Its passion is its glory (Galatians 6:14).
7. Its reward is the Master's presence (Colossians 1:27).

The Church is God's organization for the believers in this age. And because this is particularly man's age-worldly man's age-the Church experiences one crisis after another. For the fortunes of men and of nations are no indices of spiritual estate. Very often what the world calls a good day is for the Church a very evil day.

1. The Church in the political crisis.
2. The Church in the economic crisis.
3. The Church in the moral crisis.
4. The Church in the spiritual crisis.

God calls the Church to awake, take its share of responsibility, and to exercise its healing ministry regardless of the merits or demerits of the world and men.

We need a renewal of the vitality you see in the New Testament. That early church was a movement among laymen, not a highly organized thing under the tight control of clergymen. It was an existing life-sharing fellowship of people who loved one another, who prayed for one another. It was not a stiff, impersonal thing that left them untouched and unmoved. It was a group informed and disciplined by very clear spiritual teaching, giving people direction and hope. No wonder they responded! People respond to that today too. It's what they're hungry for.

While Paul, the apostle, was primarily an evangelist, he saw that if everything depended on preachers, the

church never could fulfill its mission. He himself had been largely responsible for planting the church at Ephesus, for instance, but years later he wrote to the growing church in Ephesus. If you have your Bible, turn to Ephesians 4. Let's lift up just some of the main points of the first sixteen verses.

1. "I...beg you," he says, "to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called." There you have a basic characteristic of the church: Every person is called. Every person has work to do. The whole church is a ministering community of living persons. If we could just recapture that one important thing in our churches they would take on a new life. People are bored because they really aren't involved. They never experience the joy of relating to other people in any helpful way, so they die inside. And when people die spiritually, the church dies too.

2. Paul says, "Maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace." Do you know what has happened to many churches? They have had so many overgrown babies in them, quibbling and whining, that they have been robbed of the Spirit. Personal and family feuds destroy a church, no matter how much money or education or culture there may be. When you destroy the warm loving fellowship, you destroy the spirit and fellowship which people desperately need. The Holy Spirit works through harmony and fellowship.

3. Paul says that God's Spirit works through the whole body of believers—not just clergymen. God is "above all and through all and in all." Now that's when the church really becomes a power - when God's Spirit moves in and through his people as they witness and serve. People are converted. Christians are joyful. The church grows and God is glorified. The Apostle goes on to say that gifts of the Spirit are given to his people. These gifts are serving gifts. They are the means by which we can be a blessing to one another. As Paul says in another place, they are exercised "for the common, good." Wouldn't that be a great church?

4. Then Paul speaks of those who are called to special teaching functions - apostles, prophets, evangelist, pastors, and teachers. And he says that these are called for the purpose of equipping his people for their ministering service. The whole church is a fellowship of ministering to people, and these special functions are to prepare them, to equip them for such work. The crucial point, you see, was that of scriptural teaching. Everything depended upon faithful teaching of the Scriptures. It's that way now.

The strong church is one where there is strong scriptural preaching and, consequently, people with strong convictions.

5. According to Paul this is for the building up of the church. There's a false idea going around that only the small church can be very spiritual. On the contrary, it is normal for a church to grow, just as it is normal for a person to grow. God uses a church large or small as we are willing to obey him. And if we obey, the small church will become larger. If we stay small and stunted there's something wrong. We know, of course, that there are some churches in communities where people are moving away for economic reasons, so they don't apparently grow: but count the number of people who have gone out from among them to be a blessing somewhere else.

6. Paul sets before them the objective that "all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God." Now the "unity of the faith" doesn't mean that we all will agree on everything, that we all will think just alike. It means our faith in Christ—on that we are united. And that's the real basis of unity. If we wait until we all think just alike, we'll be waiting a long, long time. No, it means we believe in Christ together. We are united in him.

"Now ye all the body of Christ, and members in particular" (I Corinthians 12:27).

We become part of the Church when we are born again. The simplest form of the Church is "where two or three are gathered together in my name." There are many symbols of the Church in the Scriptures. For example the Church is a building with Christ as the cornerstone and the master builder. It is a flock with Christ as the shepherd. It is a living body with Christ as the head. However, we have chosen four symbols for a special emphasis here:

1. The Church is a school. Christ is the master. His people are the scholar-disciples.

2. The Church is a temple. Christ is the priest. His people are the worshippers.

3. The Church is an army. Christ is the commander. His people are the soldiers.

4. The Church is a mother in travail for the salvation of souls.

CONCLUSION: The true Church member is a willing learner in the school of Christ, a devout worshipper in the temple of Christ, an obedient soldier in the army of Christ, and a faithful co-laborer with Christ in seeking and saving the lost.



VITAL COMMUNICATION

There are many things in our lives that we do not think we could live without, but we really can. One of the things that we really cannot live without is communication. Without communication, we would not know what to do at work, what is going on with our family and friends. We would simply wander around without a clue. Communication is a key to our relationships. In the past ten years, our dependence on communication has changed dramatically.

In order to make dinner plans, check on our children, get directions, or simply say "Hi," we had to wait until we were somewhere where there was a telephone. This is not true now. We can e-mail, text message, or call from our cars. We can even call across the country while walking to our cars. The lines of communication have changed because communication is vital for every aspect of life.

The same is true of our relationship with God. Communication is vital! However, many only call upon God in church or at a time when help is needed. In church is not the only time that we may contact God. Jeremiah 33:3 says, "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not." Anywhere we are, we have the ability to call on God. There are not set times to communicate with Him, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints" (Ephesians 6:18). "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17). "Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer" (Romans 12:12).

In order to grow our relationship with God, we must communicate with Him always. We must not simply talk to Him about our major problems and our major accomplishments, but also our minor problems and our minor accomplishments. He wants to hear about them all, no matter when it is. Proverbs 3:5-6 says, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." When we acknowledge God in all our

ways, we are in direct, intimate contact with Him. When we are in contact with God, He will protect us, provide for us, and guide our every step.

The communication lines are open! We must communicate with God always, and our relationship with Him will grow strong.

LAY UP FOR YOURSELF TREASURES

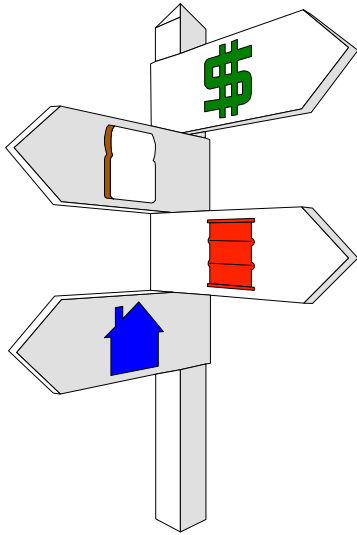
Jesus said, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul" (Matthew 16:26).

Sometimes we may get the feeling that we spend too much of our time and energy on things that seem to have so little relative worth in this world. Although our jobs, homes, cars, etc. are all necessary and important to maintaining our daily lives, it seems that too much emphasis is placed on so many short-term things. Today, it seems that most everyone is trying to acquire as much wealth as they can so they can buy more things that will make them happier.

We are a competitive people, and it seems that we are always trying to obtain something bigger or better than the next person. Perhaps we should simply try to enjoy all the blessings that our Father in heaven has given to us, and realize that true lasting peace can only be found in doing God's will.

Jesus said, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasures is there will your heart be also" (Matthew 6:19-21). We are laying up for ourselves treasures in heaven every time we do what God wants us to do.

We should be good stewards of the many gifts that God gives us, and we should realize that His love is the greatest gift of all.



THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

If you have any items of interest that you would like to submit to this segment, please send them to The Church of God Publishing House, PO Box 328, Salem, WV 26426-0328.

The following is a portion of an article which appeared in the *Houston Chronicle*.

WEDDED TO COMMITMENT

**Scores of gays, lesbians to marry
in ceremony today**

by Allan Turner Houston Chronicle

Wedding bells will ring this afternoon for Mike and Vince, Michelle and Kelly, Dennis and Bruce and hundreds of other Houston gays and lesbians who will tie the knot in what may be Texas' largest same-sex wedding - a wedding, that although the state rejects its validity, participants insist will strengthen their relationships and provide a beacon to future generations.

Between 100 and 200 couples are expected for the mass wedding ceremony at Resurrection Metropolitan Community Church, 2025 W. 11th St., which ministers to the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender communities. The wedding and related activities - including a possible mass application for marriage licenses at the Harris County Courthouse - will be part of the national Freedom to Marry Day campaign to gain for gays and lesbians the rights granted married heterosexuals.

"This is going to be a real celebration of same-sex couples," said the Rev. Chris Chiles of Community Gospel Church, coordinator of the pre-Valentine's Day ceremony. "We know that we're not only making a commitment publicly, and asking God's blessing of the union, but that we are making a statement which is going to be changing the face of the country."

The 1:30 ceremony, which will involve clergy from a number of churches - most from Houston but including one from Livingston - flies in the face of national opposition to same-sex marriages. Only Massachusetts sanc-

tions such marriages, although Vermont allows civil unions and California provides for domestic partnerships that ensure many rights enjoyed by heterosexual couples.

Nationally, President Bush has called for a constitutional amendment stipulating marriages and unions between a man and a woman.

Same-sex marriages have drawn staunch opposition from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Southern Baptist Convention and other denominations and faiths. And although the unions are not recognized as marriages by government, some denominations, including Unitarian Universalists, as well as some Episcopal churches, offer same-sex blessing ceremonies. Reform Judaism also is open to same-sex blessings and unions.

Texas is one of 38 states with "Defence of Marriage" laws banning recognition of same-sex marriages. And state Rep. Warren Chisum, house sponsor of Texas 2003 defence of marriage act, said he will push this year for a popular vote on a constitutional amendment essentially barring gay and lesbian marriage.

"The fact of the matter," said Chisum, R-Pampa, "is that marriage - one man, one woman- is the basic, bottom-line structure of the family."

Gays and lesbians already can adopt children and gain many of the rights of married heterosexuals through legal contracts, he said.

"I don't think (gaining legal rights) is their real purpose," Chisum said. "Their real purpose is to dilute the family, to attack the family..to weaken the definition of marriage so that they're seen as normal and traditional. In my humble opinion, they are not."

Chisum asserted that a primary purpose of marriage is procreation.

"Look in the book of Genesis," he said. The first commandment God gave was to go forth and bear children."

Similar views were voiced last July by Archbishop Wilton Gregory, who then was president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

"Marriage, as properly understood, is more than a life-style choice," he said. "...A same-sex union is not equivalent to marriage. It is not based on the natural complementarity of male and female; it cannot cooperate with God to create new life; it cannot be a true conjugal union."

"That's just a cover-up for bigotry," Chiles rejoined. "If that were the actual case, the state wouldn't recognize marriage of couples over 50, men with vasectomies would have to be checked to make sure they're in working order before they could get marriage licenses. It's ludicrous. It is not about procreation; it's about a living commitment to another person. "The Rev. Charolyn Mobley, associate pastor at Resurrection Metropolitan, said gay and lesbian couples share family values.

"Most of us grew up in traditional families," she said. "We share their values, care for loved ones, protection of children, rearing them in the fear of God, to be law-abiding-all of those are family values... Giving gay and lesbian couples the same rights in a union-that would not dilute Mom and Dad's marriage, make it any less binding or strong. We so value it that we want to share it."

Matt Foremen, executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, suggested conservative leaders cynically have embraced opposition to same-sex marriages as a "wedge issue" to advocate a larger agenda.

"This is the new abortion. They've about whipped the abortion horse to death, but this is the new hot-button issue," she said. "If we were on their side, I'd be dancing every day."

Nevertheless, he contented, older Americans are the most fervent opponents of gay and lesbians marriage.

"In 20 years, this will be a non issue, and conservative leaders recognize this," Foreman said. "They are diligently exploiting a closing window of opportunity."

Several who plan to exchange vows today said they hope their action will reassure young gays and lesbians that long-term committed same-sex relationships are possible. Smaller ceremonies will occur throughout the country, according to national Freedom to Marry spokesman Harry Knox..

Participants today will include Michelle Dean and Kelly Gilbert. The local teachers have been together nine years and were united by a Vermont civil ceremony five years

ago, and are rearing Dean's children, ages 9, 11, and 16, from a previous heterosexual marriage.

"Cheapening the institution of marriage? Traditional couples have done that on their own," said Dean, 35. "The divorce rate is extremely high. We're not looking to cheapen marriage, but to be recognized. There have been many couples together for long periods of time in a committed monogamous relationship, and they deserve the same rights."

"As far as the relationship not being the same - no, they are not the same, but they are equal and should be given the same recognition."

Dean noted that when one of her children recently underwent surgery, Gilbert was not allowed to visit him immediately after the operation because he wasn't a relative.

"I've seen it too many times - a partner not being able to get into a hospital room because the family objects," Chiles said. "And death really does strange things to people. There was one couple where the parents were staying with the partner. 'We know this is your home, these are your belongings,' they told him. And not five minutes after their son died, they were pilfering through things (their son) owned."

While today's same-sex weddings will be sanctioned by a Christian church, some of those exchanging rings and vows expressed frustration with denominations that staunchly oppose same sex unions.

Dennis Milam, who will renew vows Saturday with Bruce Aleksander, his partner of 30 years, blamed Christian fundamentalism for a host of ills.

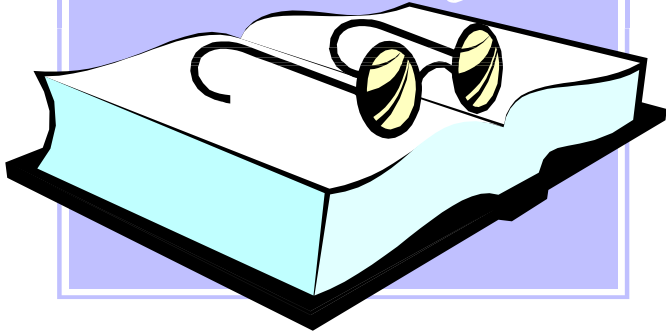
"The United States is totally out of step with the rest of the Western world," he asserted. "It's fallen behind... The more strong fundamentalist movement, in my personal view, is responsible for many problems. It started in the American South, spreading through black and white. It has a belief in magic, superstition, literalism, dogma and delusion."

Comment

The marriage or union (whatever one may call it) of gays and lesbians is surely a sign of the times! It is an abomination to commit such acts. It is sad to see that some who teach this abomination are ministers and teachers who say that they know God. In reality, they are among those mentioned in Romans 1:25: "Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever."

BIBLE

Study



Questions and Answers

Question: Will you please contrast the new Jerusalem with the earthly Jerusalem?

Answer: Yes, we will. Both cities are linked with the predictions of Christ's second advent. The earthly Jerusalem will continue to be in bondage with its inhabitants blinded until the end of the seven last plagues. The new Jerusalem which is now in heaven and will come down from God out of heaven is for a habitation of all children of God. It will take both cities for Jesus, the Lamb of God, to be vindicated, and His glorification will be in these two cities. In the place of Christ's rejection, He is to be glorified and receive the honors of earth. While in the new Jerusalem, Jesus is going to be married and be the bridegroom. The saints will be the wedding guests. Jesus will be worshipped and adorned in the air by all saints of all ages.

These last day prophecies must concern every child of God because of the perilous times in which we are now living. One may well imagine that many of those who are reading these lines may be soon taking part in the fulfillment of scriptural predications concerning the two cities. Even though no one knows the day nor the hour when the Lord will come, or the times and seasons which the Father has fixed by His own authority, events are moving rapidly toward a climax on the international and Middle East scenes and with regard to Jerusalem itself.

The hope and calling of both Israel and the Church of God are seen epitomized in these two cities of Jerusalem.

Israel will inhabit the earthly Jerusalem. The saints of all ages will inhabit the heavenly Jerusalem. There are similarities between both cities, but there are also important distinctions. Here are some of them described:

The earthly Jerusalem was the city of David. The new Jerusalem is the city of David's greater heir, Jesus.

One city is earthly. The other city is created in heaven and will come down to us in the atmosphere.

The earthly Jerusalem rejected her King at His first coming. The new Jerusalem will crown her King Lord of all and King of Kings at His second coming.

The earthly Jerusalem has been under Gentile domination for many years. The new Jerusalem will always be free under the control of God Almighty.

The earthly Jerusalem became the city of warfare. The new Jerusalem is the true city of peace and safety.

The earthly Jerusalem will be the capital of the earthly kingdom. The new Jerusalem will be the bride of Christ and the capital of the universe.

The earthly Jerusalem is the type. The new Jerusalem is the antitype.

Question: What did Jesus mean when He said, "Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting?" (Matthew 17:21)

Answer: This statement of Jesus came in answer to the "certain man" (vs. 14) who said the disciples couldn't heal his son. After Jesus had healed the certain man's son and removed the devil from him, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Why could not we cast him out?" (verse 19) Jesus pointed out that the Power of God (His Holy Spirit) is more energetic when fasting and praying was done for a certain purpose. Some biblical purposes were: for ordi-

nations to offices, for healings, for liberation from a certain habit, and cleansing from sin and the author of sin.

It usually should be done privately and due to a spontaneous inspiration. Fasting brings about personal discipline and a preparation for prayer. Many people undervalue its usefulness and its necessity. Some say it is superfluous and reject it. But they do not realize it is a command of God and His Son. It has great spiritual consequences. The Spirit of God is released and can create a breakthrough of the prayers brought by the individual fasting. If you are led to fast, do not deny the fast.

Also do not talk about it to others. There is great danger to becoming a Pharisee. Jesus said in Matthew 6:16, "Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward."

Question: How important is the resurrection of Christ?

Answer: It is very important! The Apostle Paul said, "And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain (I Corinthians 15:4). If the resurrection did not really happen, the apostles were false witnesses, our faith is futile, we are still lost in our sins, the dead in Christ have perished, and we are the most pitiful and miserable people on the face of the earth, to say nothing of the fact that there is no hope for any of us beyond the grave.

Question: What is "theistic evolution"? Is it Biblical?

Answer: Theistic evolution involves the notion that God initially created and then used evolution to produce the universe as we know it. God allegedly entered into the process of time to modify what was developing. Many who hold to this view generally attempt to reconcile the findings of science with the Bible.

There are a number of serious problems with the doctrine of theistic evolution. For one thing, it must make a complete allegory out of Genesis 1:1-24, for which there is no warrant. The suggestion that humanity is derived from a nonhuman ancestor cannot be reconciled with the explicit statement of man's creation in Genesis 2:7. Man did not evolve but rather was created from the dust of the ground. Also, if Adam was not a real historical person, then the analogy between Christ and Adam in Romans 5:12-21 breaks down!

We know that Christ believed in a literal creation of Adam and Eve. "And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the begin-

ning MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE" (Matthew 19:4). "But from the beginning of the creation GOD MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE" (Mark 10:6). If His words cannot be trusted in this matter, how can anyone be sure His words can be trusted in other matters?

Question: Will you please comment on the "swoon theory" of Christ's resurrection?

Answer: This theory suggests that Jesus did not really die. He was nailed to the cross and suffered from loss of blood and went into shock. They say He didn't die! He merely fainted (or swooned) from exhaustion. The disciples mistook Him for dead and buried Him alive in a tomb. They were easily fooled, living in the first century as they did.

Suddenly, the cold tomb woke Jesus from His state of shock. When Jesus emerged from the tomb and was seen by the disciples, they knew He must have resurrected from the dead. This theory is highly imaginative. It requires more faith to believe this theory than it does to believe that Jesus really resurrected.

BE TRUTHFUL

"For my mouth shall speak truth; and wickedness is an abomination to my lips" (Proverbs 8:7).

At one time or another, it seems that almost everyone will distort or twist the truth. By rationalizing or making excuses, we try to spread the blame around or even absolve ourselves of any responsibility. It increasingly seems more difficult to admit that we have made a mistake or have done something wrong because of poor judgment. Perhaps this is partially due to the fact that we live in a society that at times can be so unforgiving. However, even in the early days of the Bible when God asked Adam if he had eaten the fruit he was told not to eat, Adam answered that the woman who was put there with him gave him the fruit, and he ate it. Perhaps, Adam thought that by involving the woman God gave him, he could spread the blame around or that this would be a good excuse for his disobedience.

Admitting the truth and accepting the responsibility for our inappropriate actions is often difficult, and it requires honesty and integrity. Everyone makes mistakes, and God is aware of our frailties. Improving our character and living a virtuous life is necessary to be a part of God's family.



Hawaii

This photograph was taken on Sabbath, June 11th, during our trip to Hawaii and then on to the Philippines. The brethren were wonderful and the hospitality was great.



The Philippines

The photograph below was given to me while we were in the Philippines by Brother Rey Ramos. It is one of the churches in Mindoro in Barangay of Bayotbot..



This photograph was given to me by Brother Bennie P. Momo of their church in de Oro City. They need funds to complete the building.



LESSON I

DAVID FLEES THE COUNTRY

Scripture Reading: I Samuel 21:1-15.

Golden Text: I Samuel 21:10.

"And David arose, and fled that day for fear of Saul, and went to Achish the king of Gath."

NOTE: We learned in our last lesson how Jonathan warned David with the arrows that Saul was still angry. Jonathan was heir to the throne, but he had learned that God had ordained David to be king. Now we shall see why David flees to Ahimelech.

1. David went to Ahimelech, the priest. What did he tell Ahimelech? I Samuel 21:1-3.
2. What was the priest's answer to David's request? I Samuel 21:4.
3. Did David receive the hallowed bread? I Samuel 21:6.
4. What servant of Saul was there that day? I Samuel 21:7.

NOTE: Doeg will play an important part in the story of David as we will learn in future lessons.

5. What did David ask Ahimelech to give him? I Samuel 21:8-9.
6. Why did David flee, and where did he go? I Samuel 21:10.
7. Was David afraid of Achish? I Samuel 21:11-12.
8. Why did David pretend to be insane? I Samuel 21:13-14.
9. Was Achish doubtful then about accepting David in his presence? I Samuel 21:15.

LESSON II

DAVID A FUGITIVE

Scripture Reading: I Samuel 22:1-11.

Golden Text: I Samuel 22:1.

"David therefore departed thence, and escaped to the cave Adullam: and when his brethren and all his father's house heard it, they went down thither to him."

NOTE: We studied in our last lesson how David escaped to the Philistines and feigned insanity. It was at this time that he composed Psalm 34. David senses danger among the Philistines, so let us see where he goes now to get away from it.

1. To what place did David escape, and who gathered there with him? I Samuel 22:1.
2. How many men were with him? I Samuel 22:2.
3. Where did David then go? I Samuel 22:3-4.
4. Where did the prophet Gad advise David to go from there? I Samuel 22:5.
5. Did Saul discover where David was? I Samuel 22:6.
6. What did Saul say unto his servants in I Samuel 22:7-8?
7. Did Doeg, the Edomite, who saw David with Ahimelech, tell Saul what he had seen? I Samuel 22:9-10.
8. For whom did Saul then send? I Samuel 22:11.



LESSON III

SAUL SLAYS THE PRIESTS

Scripture Reading: I Samuel 22:11-23.

Golden Text: I Samuel 22:21.

"And Abiathar shewed David that Saul had slain the Lord's priests."

NOTE: We learned in our last lesson that David hid from Saul in a cave. He now has about 400 men under his command. King Saul learns that the priest, Ahimelech, helped David by giving him food and the sword of Goliath. We will now study what King Saul does out of his anger towards David.

1. Saul called for Ahimelech and all his father's house to come before him. What did Saul say unto him? I Samuel 22:11-13.
2. What was Ahimelech's answer to Saul? I Samuel 22:14-15.
3. What did Saul then decide to do with Ahimelech and his family for helping David? I Samuel 22:16.
4. What did Saul instruct his footmen to do, and did they follow his command? I Samuel 22:17.
5. Who then did Saul order to kill the priests, and how many were slain that day? I Samuel 22:18-19.
6. Did anyone escape? I Samuel 22:20.
7. Did Abiathar tell David that Saul had slain the Lord's priests? I Samuel 22:21.
8. Did David know immediately who had told Saul? I Samuel 22:22.
9. What did David advise Abiathar to do in I Samuel 22:23?

LESSON IV

DAVID SPARES SAUL'S LIFE AT ENGEDI

Scripture Reading: I Samuel 24:1-22.

Golden Text: I Samuel 24:12.

"The Lord judge between me and thee, and the Lord avenge me of thee: but mine hand shall not be upon thee."

NOTE: We have been studying how David has had to flee from King Saul as he was trying to kill David. In chapter 23 you may read of David's flight to Keilah, Ziph and Mason. Now David is in the wilderness of Engedi, and we are going to see how Saul is trapped, and David refuses to come to the throne by blood.

1. When Saul returned from following the Philistines and found that David was in the wilderness of Engedi, what did he do? I Samuel 24:1-3.
2. What did David do to Saul in I Samuel 24:4?
3. Was David sorry he had done this to Saul? Did he have mercy on Saul? I Samuel 24:5-7.
4. David arose and went out after Saul. What did he say to him? I Samuel 24:8-11.
5. Tell what David said to Saul in I Samuel 24:12-15.
6. What was Saul's reaction in I Samuel 24:16-20?
7. What did Saul request David to do? I Samuel 24:21.
8. Did David promise to let Saul go home without harm? I Samuel 24:22.





MAKING MISTAKES

I am sure each boy and girl is busy at this time of the year. What a lot of things there are to learn about in this world. If we were to live for hundreds of years and study all that we could, we would still be learning and still making mistakes. Some one has said, "that is what erasers on pencils are for, to erase our mistakes." But the real mistakes we make cannot be erased with an eraser. When you are young is the best time to learn, and the best part of it is our mind is clean then and we never forget the things we learned in our youth.

Now what does the Lord Jesus teach us? The way to eternal life, of course, because He wants us to have a home on this beautiful earth made new. It is a wonderful thing that the Lord Jesus, who could not make a mistake, offers to teach us Himself.

Sometimes teachers do make mistakes, and it's very awkward when they think you have been talking when you haven't. I remember the first day of school one year. I had used my own money to buy me a gingham dress and a new red sweater. I never did know just how it really happened but the first thing I knew the teacher was around the back of my seat and was shaking me up and down. I didn't mind the shaking so much as I did the stretching my new red sweater all out of shape.

Human teachers do make mistakes, but the Lord Jesus never makes mistakes, for He is the Son of God. We can safely follow Him all the way. He is ever ready to

forgive our mistakes if we ask Him, and will never remind us of them again.

One day a little boy named Johnny was playing with his blocks under the table. In the same room his Mother was talking to his two older brothers, but as Johnny was only four years old, Mother did not think he was taking notice of what she was saying.

She spoke of the Lord Jesus dying on the cross for them, and told them that they must believe it for themselves, belong to God, and become His children. As she finished speaking she said, "Yes, and Jesus died for Johnny, too, little as he is."

It would seem that Johnny had taken no notice, but the words sank deep into his little heart, and when he knelt to say his evening prayer, he whispered, "Thank you, Jesus, for dying for me."

Johnny is now a grown man, and for years has been a faithful worker for Him. He says he knows without a doubt that he was converted at the age of four.

Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not to come unto me: for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matthew 19:14). Why not accept him now and say to him as Johnny did, "Thank you, Jesus, for dying for me."

TOOLS IN THE BIBLE

People who lived in Bible times didn't have electric lights or modern conveniences, but they did have certain tools. Some of their tools are listed below. The vowels have been removed. Can you fill in the missing letters? See how well you can complete them without looking up the text.

1. P-TT-R'S WH--L Jeremiah 18:3
2. SL-NG I Samuel 17:40
3. SP--R II Samuel 1:6
4. H-MM-RS Psalm 74:6
5. -XG--D Judges 3:31
6. P-G Isaiah 22:25
7. THR-SH-NG SL-DG- Isaiah 28:27
8. S-WS I Kings 7:9
9. Y-K- Matthew 11:29

"FIND THE STORY"

Using the clues below, tell the rest of the story.

1. A dove. A raven. A boat. A rainbow.
2. A knife. A load of wood. A ram. A thicket.
3. A bow and arrows. A blind man. A boy who put on his brother's clothes.
4. A fine coat. A dry pit. Two dreams. A seventeen year old boy.
5. A food shortage. A long journey. Spies? Refunded money.
6. Flies. Lice. Frogs. Hail and other unpleasant things.
7. Some stalks of flax. Three days' hiding. A scarlet thread in a window.
8. Seven priests. Seven horns. Seven days. A great shout. A captive city.
9. Soldiers. Lamps. Trumpets. Broken pitchers.
10. A bee's nest. A wedding. A fight with a lion.
11. A royal visit. A camel train. Spices. Precious stones.
12. A sleepless king. A history book. The king's horse. The king's clothes. A triumphal procession.
13. A tall tree. A tree stump. A dream. The king who ate

grass.

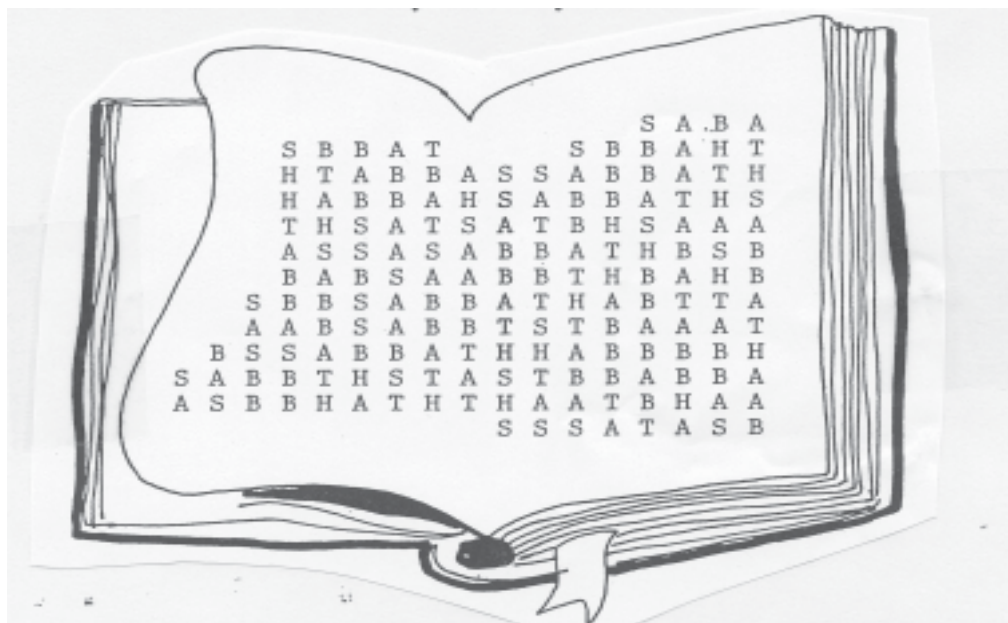
14. A ship. A storm. A man asleep. A great calm.
15. Two fish. Five loaves of bread. Twelve baskets.
16. Two servant girls. A rooster. A man who snore.
17. Three women. Sunrise. Sweet spice. A great stone.
18. An upper room. Weeping woman. Many coats.

SCRAMBLED BIBLE CHARACTERS

Do you recognize the following Bible characters? Looks hard, but here's a tip: each name begins with the letter "S."

1. Olsema
2. Hasra
3. Lsis
4. Oolmsno
5. Asnasnu
6. Umslae
7. Laus
8. Isomn
9. Petnseh
10. Neosmi

FIND THE SABBATH - How many times can you find the word SABBATH on this page?





BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU SAY

"There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword: but the tongue of the wise is health" (Proverbs 12:18).

When is the last time you told someone that they made your day? When we give someone an honest, well deserved compliment such as this, it is also a blessing to us. It makes us aware of those who have been a positive influence in our daily lives. Ironically, the best way to "make someone's day" is to tell them how helpful they have been to you, and that you appreciate their friendship. It seems we often forget to tell those who are closest to us that we value and enjoy their company. When it comes to praising people, there is usually nothing wrong with doing it in the presence of others. It usually will give them encouragement.

If you must speak frankly to someone, it is always best to do it private. Make sure the other person knows that you still value them, despite your dialogue. God wants us to use kind words which validate our fellow human beings. In doing this, we practice the instruction of Jesus, "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them..." (Matthew 7:12).

