

Seek The Old Paths

"Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths...and walk therein."

(Jeremiah 6:16)

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WHAT IS THE "GOSPEL?"

Sidney White

One might ask why such a question is raised by the title of this article. It should be noted that some would limit the meaning of "gospel" as a reference to the first four books of the New Testament. Others would use the word "gospel" only to refer to the acts of obedience by which one is saved from past sins (or alien sins), by which they are referring to faith, repentance, confession and baptism. Still others define "gospel" as the facts of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, and will cite I Corinthians 15:1-5 as their proof text. In addition to these views of "gospel", some of our liberal brethren will try to distinguish between "gospel" and "doctrine", suggesting that we preach the "gospel" to the alien sinner, by which, if he obeys, he can become a child of God (saved), and then "doctrine" is preached or taught to the individual after one becomes a Christian. Those who hold this view would tell us that "gospel" is not to be preached to the Christian, and "doctrine" cannot be preached to the alien sinner. The real difficulty in all of this is a matter of fellowship. We are told that fellowship is based on one's acceptance of the "gospel" and has nothing to do with "doctrine." Such a position will allow fellowship with individuals regardless of their belief and teaching on matters such as: the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship to God or that those who are unscripturally divorced can remain, and other such false teachings.

Let us briefly examine these matters in the light of the use of the word "gospel" in the scriptures. The word "gospel" (noun form) is from

euangelion. The word originally denoted a reward for good tidings, but later stood for the good news itself, according to Vines Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words. Thayer says the word refers "to the proclamation of the grace of God manifested and pledged in Christ." The verb form (*euangelizo*), according to W. E. Vine, means "to announce glad tidings." The word "gospel" in both forms appears over 100 times in the New Testament. Do all of these references refer only to the facts of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, or do they include a much fuller sense to include Christian living (the whole of the New Testament)? While we will not explore all of the 100+ verses where the word "gospel" is used, a sampling of these verses should resolve the problem.

In Romans 1:9 Paul writes, "For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers..." I am reminded of Paul's words in Acts 20:19-24 as he describes what it means to serve the Lord. How could this possibly be limited to the facts of the death, burial and resurrection, except as to how those facts affect our daily lives on a continuing basis?

The Roman letter was written to those in Rome who are "beloved of God, called saints" (v.7). Then, as he further addressed these brethren (saved ones), he stated in verse 15, "I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also." According to

our liberal brethren, one does not preach the gospel to the saved. Did Paul forget what he was to preach, or are we being led astray by some of our brethren?

In Romans 1:17, Paul further states that in the gospel is the "righteousness of God revealed." While God is righteous, Paul is not here speaking of one of the characteristics of God, but describing the means by which man is righteous in the eyes of God. Is one made righteous by only obeying the form of doctrine involving the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, or is one righteous as he continues to obey "all" the commandments of God? The Psalmist said, "...for all thy commandments are righteousness" (Psa. 119:172). Also noted in this connection, as per Romans 6:17, these brethren had "obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine" (not gospel), which was a reference to their becoming children of God.

In Galatians 2:14, Paul mentioned some who "walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel." What was the occasion? Peter, Barnabas and some of the Jews withdrew themselves from eating with the Gentiles "fearing them which are of the circumcision." These brethren were among the saved, yet it is said of them that they were not walking "according to the truth of the gospel." This had nothing to do with their becoming children of God, but

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What is the "Gospel?"...



Editorial...

HOW WE KNOW THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IS RIGHT

Garland M. Robinson

Christ knew people would be confused and divided over religion and that it would be their own fault and not his. “And there shall be *one fold and one shepherd*” (John 10:16), “*one body and one faith*” (Eph. 4:45), “*one church*” (Matt. 16:18). The Bible is plain enough. If among men there are more churches than the ONE established by Christ, there are too many!

God hates division for it is recorded, “*mark them which cause division*” (Rom. 16:17). Since God hates division and the Bible says there is only one body, this certain fact must be pointed out: either one of the many religious bodies is correct and the others wrong, or none of them are correct. There’s no other conclusion to be reached. How then does one go about determining which one (if any) is correct? The answer is not as difficult as some suppose. This determination is made the same way we identify every other thing in life, by certain marks or traits which are its characteristics. When your car is stolen you give the police its identifying marks. People are identified the same way. Why not use this same method in regards to the church we read about in the New Testament? What are some of the identifying marks of the church in the Bible?

The church of Christ in the New Testament had a certain beginning **PLACE, TIME and FOUNDER.** Jerusalem was the place (Isa. 2:2-3; Acts 2). During the Roman Empire (33 A.D.) was the time (Daniel 2:44; Luke 3:1-2). Jesus was the founder (Matt. 16:18). These are certain marks of identity characteristic of the Lord’s church. We must examine all religious bodies to see if they match these identifying marks by noting *who, where, when,* and by *whom* were they started. A short list of denominations that currently exists are these: **Roman Catholic,** Rome, 606 A.D., Boniface III

(assumed first universal title of pope); **Lutheran,** Germany, 1520 A.D., Martin Luther; **Presbyterian,** Switzerland, 1536 A.D., John Calvin; **Baptist,** Holland, 1607 A.D., John Smythe; **Methodist,** England, 1739 A.D., John Wesley; **Jehovah’s Witness,** America, 1872 A.D., Charles T. Russell.

The church of Christ was started in Jerusalem, 33 A.D., and its founder was Jesus the Christ (Acts 2). If you are a member of a denomination, where did it begin, when and by whom? Unless it has the same marks of identity as the New Testament church, it is not the church of Christ. When Jesus comes again, he will come to save his body, the church, and no other (Eph. 5:23).

The church of the New Testament **Wore The Name** given it by God. It was called: “*the church of God*” (I Cor. 1:2), “*the body of Christ*” (Eph. 4:12), “*the church of the first-born*” (Heb. 12:23), “*the church*” (Acts 2:47; 5:11) and all the congregations collectively were referred to as “*churches of Christ*” (Rom. 16:16). Look at the names of the religious groups today: Catholic, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, Jehovah’s Witness, etc. Rarely do you find one wearing the name God gave it. If a religious body has the wrong name, there’s no need to look any further, it does not fit the pattern. If you think there is nothing in a name, try stocking the grocery shelves with grandma’s favorite vegetable soup with the name “Campbells!” The church of which I am a member wears the name God gave it, which is the *church of Christ*.

The church of the New Testament was **Guided Solely By The Authority Of Christ.** We will be judged by the word of Christ (John 12:48); therefore, everything we do in word or action must be in the name (by the authority) of Christ (Col. 3:17). Among the denominations we

find: creed books, manuals, disciplines, councils, conventions, and conferences. Each of these either legislate doctrine or policy to be used by that group. The churches of Christ use only the Bible. It is our sole guide. There are no councils, synods or creed books!

The church of the New Testament taught **Certain Things Were To Be Obeyed** in order to have salvation. One had to **believe** in Christ (John 8:24), **repent** of sins (Acts 2:38), **confess** Jesus is the Son of God (Rom. 10:9-10), **be baptized** for the forgiveness of sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16), and **live faithful** unto death (I Cor. 15:58; Rev. 2:10). A survey of the denominations reveals many differing ideas. None of which I am aware teach the plan outlined in the Bible. For most, faith is all that is required. However, the church of Christ teaches exactly the plan of salvation described in the New Testament.

The church of Christ in the Bible (Rom. 16:16) worshipped God **In Spirit And In Truth** (John 4:24). There were specific acts of worship in which those early Christians engaged: **Singing** without the accompaniment of mechanical instruments of music (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16); **Prayer** directed to the Father in the name of Christ (Acts 12:5); **Lord’s supper** each Sunday as a memorial of Christ (I Cor. 11:23-26); **Giving** free-will offerings each Sunday, no sales or business actions to raise money (I Cor. 16:1-2); **Hearing the gospel preached** and nothing but the gospel (Rom. 10:13-17). Any departure from this God-ordained pattern is sinful, whether it be adding to or taking from God’s Word. The churches of Christ participate in each of these acts of worship just as they are outlined in the pages of the New Testament.

Notice the practice of denominations. They *sing* but add to it mechanical instruments of music. Many songs are clearly not taken from the Bible and are actually anti-biblical! Many make the song service a party-type atmosphere. They *pray* but address their prayers to Jesus, Mary, dead people, etc. The *Lord’s supper* is observed, but on any day of the week. Some observe it monthly, quarterly, semi-annually or even annually. Some partake of the bread

only, some think the elements actually become the body and blood of Christ. They *give* but require tithing (10%). Collections are taken other than the first day of the week. Some have bake sales, bazaars, rummage sales, bingo, and even operate liquor distilleries. *Preaching* is done, but never the whole gospel proclaimed. Many things are left out and many things are added in. Many are preaching a social gospel attempting to meet the social needs of the community.

The church of the New Testament practiced **baptism as immersion for penitent believers in order to have forgiveness of sins.** Philip and the eunuch “went *down into the water*” and “came up *out of the water*” as recorded in Acts 8:36-39. The word “baptize” means “to immerse, plunge, dip.” The word bap-

tism always means immersion and never means anything else! Jesus commanded that those who would be saved must “believe and be baptized” (Mark 16:16). Who are we to argue with the Lord? This commandment was given to those on Pentecost when they asked what to do to be saved. “*Repent and be baptized, every one of you...FOR the remission of sins*” (Acts 2:38). Saul of Tarsus had to be baptized before he received forgiveness of sins (Acts 22:16). Though some want to argue with God about it, I Peter 3:21 says that baptism saves us!

To look at the denominations today is to find them teaching everything but what the Lord said! They go to great lengths in an attempt to avoid plain Bible teaching. The majority of the denominations do not immerse people in water; instead,

they substitute something else such as sprinkling or pouring. Some teach that *nothing* is required while others teach that *works alone* will save. Many believe that “*faith only*” will save when the Bible plainly says it will not. Men are not saved by “faith only” (James 2:24).

The churches of Christ practice baptism as immersion and for the forgiveness of sins just as the Bible says. If the church of which you are a member does not practice baptism as immersion and for the forgiveness of sins in order to go to heaven, then your church is not identified with the church we read about in the New Testament.

Why am I a member of the church of Christ, because it matches the identifying marks of the church of the New Testament.

What is the “Gospel?”...

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had everything to do with how they were living after being saved from their alien sins.

In Romans 16:25, Paul speaks of “...him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ...” Here, the Christians (saved) at Rome were to be strengthened (“to make firm, to render constant, confirm one’s mind, Thayer) by the gospel. This is contrary to what we are being told by some of our brethren.

Even in one of the passages mentioned as a proof text for such false doctrine (such as I Cor. 15:1-4), note what is really stated. Paul plainly states that he had preached unto them the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ (the gospel, according to false teachers). He further states “...wherein ye stand.” They were standing firm in their adherence to the truth which had been preached to them. It would seem apparent that the thing preached to them was also the thing in which they were continuing. What had been preached to them not only enabled them to become children of God (saved from alien sins), but was also affecting their lives on a continuing basis. The phrase “...by which also ye are saved...” is literally “being

saved.” Salvation is a continuing process; otherwise, once saved, always saved would be true; but, it is not true. It is a false doctrine. Paul also says “...if ye keep in memory”, which means “to hold fast, keep secure, keep firm possession of” (Thayer). In other words, allow what has been preached to you to affect the way you live. Such statements would strongly indicate that the preaching of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, and their obedience thereof, would allow one to be free from alien sins, but would also continue to keep one saved, so long as there is continued obedience to the same. That is exactly what the majority of the New Testament is all about; that is, teaching us how to live so as to continue in a saved relationship with God.

In order to further understand the “gospel”, a word study will be helpful. Those who try to limit the meaning of “gospel”, tell us that the preaching of the “gospel” (*kerugma*) calls one to Christ. After one has been called to Christ, then that individual is taught “doctrine” (*didache*). Those who advocate such would further contend that this distinction is sharply made throughout the scriptures. But an examination of these words in passages such as Romans 16:25, Acts 20:25; I Corinthians 9:27; 2 Timothy 2:22 and others, will show this argumentation to be false.

The gospel does in fact include the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, but also encompasses all the word of God that affects how we live our lives to be pleasing to God. A serious study of this matter will conclude with the truth that “gospel” and “doctrine” refer to the same body of material, the word of God which liveth and abideth forever.

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WHAT IS THE CHURCH OF CHRIST ALL ABOUT?

Roderick L. Ross

The church of Christ is all about Christ. It is all about Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus is the Anointed One of God (that is what Christ means). He is the Messiah (the Hebrew equivalent of Christ) (John 1:41). He is the LORD, the Lord of lords, the King of kings (1 Tim. 6:15). He is God made manifest in the flesh (1 Tim. 3:16). He alone, of those born of woman, is worthy of the worship of men and of the worship of angels (Rev. 5:5-14). He is the Savior of the world (1 Tim. 1:15). He is our High Priest (Heb. 4:14-5:10). He is our Advocate and Comforter (1 John 2:1). He is our Propitiation (1 John 2:2). He is our Sacrifice (Heb. 9:1—10:23). He is our sin offering (1 Cor. 5:6,7). He is our Shepherd (John 10:14; 1 Peter 2:25). He is the Head of the church (Eph. 1:20-23; 5:22-33; Col. 1:18). He and He alone, has been given all power and all authority in heaven and in earth by the Father, as the only begotten of the Father (Matt. 28:18).

It is the purpose of the church to make known the manifold wisdom of God in Christ Jesus our Lord to all authorities and powers in this world (Eph. 3:9,10). Thus, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen (Eph. 3:21). That is what the church of Christ is all about: making known the wisdom of God, and giving glory to God by Christ Jesus. This is done by following Him and Him alone: by being Christians and Christians alone (1 Peter 4:13-19).

Being a Christian means that we follow Jesus and that we are to become like Him (John 8:31,32; Acts 11:26). That is accomplished by following only His teaching, His doctrine, and placing all other doctrines aside. The words, the traditions and the laws of man are set aside for the words of Christ, the traditions of the apostles and the laws of God (1 Cor. 14:37; Gal. 1:6-9; 2 John 9). Even the apostles were not allowed to bind or loose anything unless it was first bound or loosed in heaven (Matt. 16:19; 18:18). Neither does the church of Christ bind anything other than what has been bound in heaven, nor loose anything other than what has been loosed in heaven.

Following only the teaching of

Jesus means ignoring the years of traditions, doctrines, creeds, manuals, disciplines, etc. that have been added to the doctrine of Christ over the past almost 2,000 years. It means going back to the original doctrines and practices of Christ and His followers in the first century. It means being willing to put aside any doctrine that is not the doctrine of Christ, being willing to put aside any doctrine that has originated with man, and being willing to put aside any tradition that has its origin some place other than in the New Testament. That is what the church of Christ is all about: going back to the original doctrine of Christ and following it alone.

Following Christ means not being a “sect of Christians,” but simply Christians. Not being hyphenated Christians of a Catholic variety, or Protestant variety, or Evangelical variety, or Baptist, or Methodist, or Holiness, or Wesleyan, or Four-Square, or Presbyterian, or Nazarene, or any other variety (1 Cor. 1:10-19).

Following Christ means committing our lives to God through Jesus Christ as a living sacrifice, willing to obey any and all of His commandments (Rom. 12:1,2). It is not a buffet to pick and choose. It is all or none (Matt. 28:19-20).

Do you want to know what the church of Christ is all about? That’s it. It is a group of people, imperfect people, who rely upon the blood of Jesus Christ to cleanse them daily. They are not different from me and you, except that they have been forgiven. They struggle through the same difficulties. They face the same temptations. They experience the same tribulations. Yet, through it all, they rely upon their faith in Jesus of Nazareth to see them through. Their dedication to obedience to the word of God, and zealotry in doing good, along with their love for one another, characterizes them; but, they are people just like you and me. And, you can be one of them.

Visit the church of Christ, and see what it means to serve and glorify God through Jesus Christ.

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WHOSE CHURCH IS IT, ANYWAY?

Tom Wacaster

It has been a few years since I passed that little church building, but the sign certainly caught my attention. It read: “*Evangelical Spirit Filled Orthodox Catholic Church of St. Thomas the Apostle.*” It was likely a spin off from the Catholic Church that had been influenced by the charismatic movement of the 60s and early 70s. Eleven words without a single reference to God or Christ. One can only wonder what they believed, and since my schedule would not allow it, I did not take the time to inquire. Were I a “non-Christian,” I might read the title on that church sign and wonder, “Whose church is it, anyway?”

While that particular title may be a little out of the norm, so far as the number of words used to identify the “church” that meets in that place, there are many “names” and “designations” being used to “denominate” the large number of small, independent, and novel churches cropping up all across our land. We now have the “Cowboy Church,” the “Community GLBT Church” (in case you did not get the GLBT, it stands for “Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender”), and the “Liberated Theological Free Thinkers” church (which by the way, is an amalgamation of atheists who have banned together to form a church for non-believers...really!). I have seen the “Harvest Church,” the “Palm Tree Church,” the “Fruit of the Spirit Church,” the “Little Country Church,” and the “Holy Spirit Filled Church” (all here in east Texas). In the past twenty years or so there has been a virtual “explosion” of independent churches cropping up and with them an attempt to come up with a unique name for a banner of identification. The most recent count of denominations in America has exceeded the imagination, not to mention the strange doctrines being taught and the so-called “worship” that takes place on any given Sunday. In fact, our society has become so inundated with these new churches that one wonders if the Lord has a church at all.

The Bible tells me that Jesus clearly promised, “upon this rock I will build my church” (Matt 16:18b). I am interested right here in three simple, but important words. The “I” suggests the builder. Any

religious institution designed, organized, and built by someone other than Jesus is bogus and exists without divine authority. The word **“church”** translates the Greek word *eklesia*, and means the “called out.” Those who make up the church are no more and no less than the saved and redeemed. One is added to that church upon obedience (Acts 2:41,47). The most impressive word among the three is the word **“my.”** The church belongs to Jesus. He planned it, purchased it with His blood (Acts 20:28), and

will save it in that final day (Eph. 5:23). If it is the case that it is HIS church, would it not be proper to say it is “Christ’s church”? Who would suggest otherwise? By the same token it is proper to speak of those congregations that are made up of the saved as “the churches of Christ” (Rom. 16:16). Where, then, is the authority [either by example, inference, or command] for any designation the likes of which we see on church buildings in our city, not to mention across this land and throughout the world? Dear reader, will

you take just a moment, pick up your Bible, and search its pages? Is there just ONE reference in the Holy Book that contains the name of that religious organization to which you have entrusted your immortal soul? Why not pick up your Yellow Pages, turn to the section on “churches,” and put a scripture by every name that you can find in the New Testament. You may find yourself asking the same question I have asked: “Whose church is it, anyway?”

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WHEN I HAVE A CONVENIENT SEASON, I WILL...

Roger D. Campbell

Do you remember this quotation from the Bible? Consider the setting in which someone said it. The apostle Paul was taken into custody in Jerusalem then transferred to Caesarea. During the first two years of his imprisonment there, he was under the care of “Felix the governor” (Acts 23:24). Paul had the opportunity to teach Felix and his wife, Drusilla, reasoning with them of the faith in the Christ, righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come (Acts 24:24,25).

In response to Paul’s message, “Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee” (Acts 24:25). The Bible tells us that after that, Felix often sent for Paul and conversed with him (24:26). Sadly, there is nothing in the Bible or annals of secular history that would cause us to think that Felix ever obeyed the faith.

Some people of our day are like Felix in that they are visibly moved by the words of the Gospel. Felix trembled, but trembling and being shaken are not the same as being saved. Trembling and shaking do not have the same result that believing and obeying do. The demons believe that there is a God and they tremble (James 2:19), but that does not put them in a good standing with the Lord.

Others are a lot like Felix in the way that they, too, often hear what Paul and other inspired men said and wrote. Many fine people there are throughout the world who frequently attend the worship services and Bible classes of God’s church. They hear, and hear, and hear some more. Hearing and learning the truth is essential in order to come to God’s Son (John 6:44,45), and faith comes by hearing (Rom. 10:17). Some of our regular visitors have more Bible knowledge than some members of the church who

have warmed the pews for decades. However, knowledge without submission to the Christ and His word is of no saving value (James 1:22-25).

Felix’s claim that he would call for Paul at a more convenient time serves as a reminder to one and all that there is no guarantee that we will still be alive five minutes from now, let alone five weeks, five months, or five years from now! Tomorrow may never come, so let us not boast of our plans for the day after this one (Prov. 27:1). Because today is the day of salvation (2 Cor. 6:2), we must appeal to the lost to submit themselves to the Lord and obey the Gospel while they still have the chance. Taking the right action now is the difference between heaven and hell!

Go back and look at what Felix told Paul: “*When I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.*” Something needed to be done (obey the Gospel), but Felix was content to put it off with an attitude that said, “I’ll take care of that later.” Do you and I ever do the same in our service to the Lord? Do we know that we need to “step it up” in our personal prayer life, and we really would like to do so, but are we always waiting on a convenient season to come around?

Do we say that if our schedule ever gets a little bit less hectic, then we will start going to visit and see to the needs of our widows? Does that convenient season ever come? Probably not, as long as we are waiting on other people to clear our schedule for us.

Do we say that we really intend to spend more time in serious, productive, personal Bible study? Do we convince ourselves that we are going to do just that when we get a convenient season?

“When I have a convenient season, I will” try and contact some of those mem-

bers that have been missing services. Really? And just when do you suppose that will happen? By the time we find ourselves a “convenient” time six months or a year from now, those wavering saints may have become so set in their ways and hardened in their hearts that you and a stick of dynamite could not budge them.

“When I have a convenient season, I will” talk to some of my lost family, friends, and neighbors about the Light of the world. And what happens if they move away or even die before I find that convenient time?!

I believe that some wellintentioned parents take an approach with their kids that says, “When I have a convenient season, I will” diligently teach them the Bible. Beloved, are you aware that in the Mosaic age Jehovah commanded the Israelites to teach His laws diligently to their children, and that they were to do it when they were walking, sitting, getting up, and going down? I am not making it up (Deut. 6:6,7). We applaud sincere parents who want their kids to learn the Book. But what kind of plan is it to wait for “a convenient season” to do so?! God told His people to discipline their kids “while there is hope” (Prov. 19:18). Would not that same principle apply in the matter of teaching kids the Bible?

When I read that Felix heard the truth and responded by telling Paul that he would call for him when he had a convenient season, I sort of shake my head and think, “What a fool.” Let us take heed lest we adopt a Felix-like approach to our service to the Lord and fellowman by saying, “We’ll do that later when it is more convenient.” If we are not careful, the old devil will see to it that such a time never comes. Think about it.

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DOES IT MATTER?

Marvin L. Weir

There seems to be no end today to what is done and said in the name of religion. Sad as that is, it is even sadder that multitudes believe anything they hear if it comes from a religious group. Does it matter? Christ knew that it mattered and thus admonished His disciples, “Take heed therefore how ye hear...” (Luke 8:18). One who desires to please the Lord today will hear His

Word humbly (James 1:21), reverently (1 Thess. 2:13), lovingly, (1 John 4:19) and obediently (John 14:15).

The mind-set of the religious majority is that there are many different ways to get to Heaven. This is the reason for the popular plea to “attend the church of your choice.” Everyone realizes that there are different churches that believe different

doctrines but this doesn't matter to most because they believe there are many different ways to get to Heaven. Yet, Christ said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). Does it matter or not whether one follows “the way” or just any way devised by man?

The following advertisement is typical of the emphasis and appeal most religious groups are using to lure people to their services. A specific church is mentioned and the ad says: “So come as you are and enjoy our mix of upbeat worship and relevant teaching. ... where the coffee is hot, the people are warm, and the donuts are, well, cold. (But still yummy!)”

I know someone is thinking, “Does it matter? What is wrong with hot coffee and donuts being made available to the congregation?” It is the attitude that is manifested towards things spiritual that is cause for alarm. There is nothing wrong with peanuts, popcorn, cokes, candy and coffee at a movie theater. People attend the movies to be entertained and to view a film that is appealing to them. Thus it may be that this explains why coffee and donuts are so popular in today's assemblies everything is geared towards entertainment and what is appealing to the audience!

It is God who is to be worshipped and not man or man's “felt needs.” Acceptable worship must come from a heart that is filled with reverence, respect and awe for the Almighty. If the food, fun and games were no longer available in many churches, the members would cease to attend. Is our assembling together on the Lord's Day for the purpose of pleasing ourselves or pleasing God? Does it matter?

The Saturday, March 23, 2002 Dallas Morning News carried the story of the new “all female ministerial team” for the Woodhaven Presbyterian Church located in Irving, Texas. The headlines for the continued column said, “Women take helm at Irving church.” The newspaper

I STAND AMAZED

It is not uncommon to have brethren come to me after hearing a sermon preached, saying: “I haven't heard a sermon like that in forty years.” What can be inferred from such a statement, or, what can be said when one declares: “I didn't know that was in the Bible?”

Evidently, some folks are not studying and are not being fed from the pulpit and/or classroom. What has happened to God's people? The time was when members of the church of Christ had their hearts and heads full of the Word of God. We laugh at the old saying that “If the Bible was to be lost in a courtroom, just find a member of the church of Christ, lay your hand on his head, there's enough Bible in his head to swear in any court of law.” Laugh as we may, there was a day when such was true!

What has happened? Here are a few suggestions:

1) *Many folks have replaced their Bibles with the television and computers!* Television is one of the greatest and worst of inventions. The Bible gathers dust while the television is watched endlessly. Adults and children spend countless hours on computers while the Bible lies closed on the table.

2) *Children grow up with little or no spiritual training.* We get upset because prayer and Bible study is denied in most schools, yet public schools are not to be blamed if Johnny and Susie do not pray or if they do not have a knowledge of the Bible! Our homes have turned their backs on their Godgiven responsibility (Read: Deut. 6:48).

3) *Many of the churches have failed.* Weak pulpits lead to weak churches. The past four or five decades elders have hired preachers who “speak to us smooth things” (Isa. 30:10). In Hosea 4:6 we have a modern truth: “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.” But, if you go on to Hosea 13:9, he tells us the one at fault: “O, Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself.” And, the way Israel did it was to forget God's law (Hosea 4:6), thus they rejected hearing God!

I am saddened when invited for meetings or speaking engagements (I have been preaching 45 years), to have God's people, some with tears, say: “Brother Carter, I haven't heard preaching like that in forty years!”

Now what is the answer?

Rededicate, repent and return to God! A revival is needed in our land. The prophet Amos cried to his people long ago: “Behold, the days come says the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of the hearing of the words of the Lord” (Amos 8:11).

Let me close with one final passage. *The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will you do in the end thereof?* (Jer. 5:31)?

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stated a truth that they probably did not intend to state. These women “took” these positions of leadership, the Lord did not give it to them! Neither does the Savior give the right to one to be a member of some man-made religious body (Matt. 16:18). Does it matter? The Bible teaches that men are to assume the leadership role in the church. This principle is affirmed by Paul in saying, “But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God” (1 Cor. 11:3). The apostle taught the Corinthian brethren that women were to “keep silence in the churches” (1 Cor. 14:34). To Timothy Paul said, “Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence” (1 Tim. 2:11-12). One will search the Bible in vain looking for examples of apostles, preachers or elders who were women! Does it matter?

Many people who are not faithful in their “church attendance” put forth every effort to attend on two occasions. Much ado is made by the religious world over “Christmas” because it is alleged to be the birthday of Christ. Many folks attend some special “Christmas service” to honor the Lord that they refuse to honor throughout the year. Where in the Bible are we told that Christ’s birthday is December 25th? Where does the Bible authorize us to celebrate the birthday of Christ? The Bible is silent in regard to these matters.

God’s Word authorizes members of the Lord’s church to remember the Lord’s death every week as they observe the memorial called the Lord’s supper (1 Cor. 11:20-26). Man-made religion has decided, however, that celebrating what has not been commanded, such as Easter, is more important than obeying what has been commanded. Does it matter? The Lord’s supper was instituted to remember Christ’s suffering and death, but no such institution was instituted to remember his resurrection. So many choose to neglect what is in the Bible while emphasizing what is not in the Bible. Does it matter? Yes!

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WHEN THE LORD RETURNS

Marlin Kilpatrick

The Lord’s return will be a surprise to many. The atheist and agnostic will be surprised. The atheist is sure there is no God, and the agnostic didn’t believe there is enough evidence to prove God’s existence. However, the apostle Peter summed up the whole matter when he declared, “*But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night...*” (II Peter 3:10). No thief ever announces his coming, and those who think there are signs of the Lord’s return misread the signs of Matthew 24. The signs of Matthew 24 pointed to the destruction of Jerusalem and were observed by the generation that was then living (Matt. 24:34).

When the Lord returns it will be too late to make adequate preparation for his coming. Our Lord’s parable of the ten (10) virgins illustrate this truth (Matt. 25:1-13). The five (5) foolish virgins learned this sad lesson, and so will the majority of mankind. In God’s vocabulary it is always today, not tomorrow, for our salvation (2 Cor. 6:2). Satan wants all to put off obeying the gospel. He knows, if he can keep you putting off obeying the truth, he has you firmly in his grasp. God’s only power to save man is his gospel (Rom. 1:16). Among those people who failed to make adequate preparation will be the lukewarm Christian. Just as lukewarm water, if sufficiently ingested, will make one sick, so it is with the lukewarm Christian; he makes the Lord sick. To the lukewarm church at Laodicea the Lord said, “So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth” (Rev.3:16). The church of Christ is saturated with lukewarm members, who will be surprised to hear the Lord say, at the last day, “...I never knew you...” (cf. Matt. 7:23).

When the Lord returns it will be too late for those folks, sincere as they may be, who are in denominationalism. Sadly, they never learned there is but one true church which belongs to Christ (Matt. 16:18) and it’s not made up of all denominations who are simply branches of the true vine (John 15:1-8). Denominational preachers have “argued” this for years, but they,

along with their brethren, will discover how mistaken they have been. The “branches” in Jesus’ parable are individuals, not churches. Jesus said, “If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned” (John 15:6). Salvation is in Christ (2 Tim. 2:10). To be saved, we must be baptized for the forgiveness of our sins (Acts 2:38). When one is baptized he enters into Christ (Rom. 6:3,4). He then must “abide” in Christ, which means he must remain faithful, even unto death (Rev. 2:10), in order to enter heaven. No denominational preacher ever tells his audience this. Denominational preachers are deceived and, in reality, are nothing more than Satan’s agents who are leading multitudes to hell (cf. 2 Cor. 11:13-15). Not only is this so, but it is past time that preachers who are Christians begin calling the hand of sectarian preachers and informing their people of these truths.

When the Lord returns, those who truly belong to Him will he overcome with joy. Contrary to what premillennialists claim, we will “...meet the Lord in the air and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thess. 4:17b). There will be no rapture of the saved, as is claimed by the premillennialists. No man of the seed of Coniah (Jeconiah, MK) will prosper, sitting upon David’s throne, and ruling any more in Judah (See Jer. 22:28-30). Christ is of the “seed of Coniah” (Matt. 1:11). Therefore, Christ will not rule on David’s throne for 1000 years, in Judah or anywhere else! The premillennialists are simply mistaken. When the Lord returns, time will be no more.

Dear friend, to be ready for the Lord’s return, you must obey the gospel of Christ (2 Thess. 1:7-9). Have you obeyed the gospel? If you haven’t, please contact the nearest church of Christ so we may assist you in your obedience. Do it today, tomorrow may be too late. Think about it.

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SEEK THE OLD PATHS

“Keep sending the *Seek The Old Paths*. I love reading every one of them. Thank you” ...**Leonard Wroblewski, Grovetown, GA.** “Enjoy STOP so much. We are sending a list of names we would like you to add to the mailing list. These people need TRUTH because they are moving toward the liberal side. We have tried but can’t get

anywhere with them. Maybe STOP can. We are sending a small contribution to help toward the cost of printing. We know it will be used wisely and postage to rise again in May. May God bless the work you are doing. So many of us appreciate the truth” ...**name withheld by request.** “Please put this donation toward the expenses of *Seek The Old Paths*. I enjoy all the articles. God bless you all. We need this paper very much. Keep up the good work” ...**Steve & Sue Siligato, Millville, NJ.** “Dear ones at East End, Finally getting around to sending a contribution to help with *Seek The Old Paths*. Please keep it True to the Book. Good sound material is getting scarcer all the time. What is more scary, is the way some of our older preachers who may not be teaching and preaching error themselves, will hold up and support preachers who do, or who will not make it clear just where they stand. Keep up the good work, A Sister in Christ” ...**Geneva Stark, Eufula, OK.** “Dear Brother Robinson, You are doing a great work there and the January 2009 had wonderful articles in *Seek The Old Paths*. I’m sending you some money to mail one to each of the people I’m enclosing. I have reason for you to do it now. One is a Christian and in prison and will accept it from you. The other two are not. I also want 6 or 8 or even a dozen if you have them. I cannot do much but can use these to help. God Bless and Thank-you” ...**name with-**

held. “I am sending my new address so I can continue receiving STOP. Thank you” ...**Franklin Bell, Paris, TN.** “Dear members of church and minister. I wish to thank whoever sent me the January 2009 issue of STOP. I am a mother of a young man inside a correctional center named Douglas A. Kirk. He was wrongly found guilty, feels it’s God’s will as he has done a lot of work for God there with other inmates. He ordered your church pamphlet for me. I understand he gets them monthly and as I am a Christian and haven’t gone to the church of Christ here for a while as I am 70 and in not best of health. I am a shut-in. I would truly love and appreciate it if someone would send me a copy of the November 2008 issue. I believe that to be the one my son did an article and sent to you and it was published in that pamphlet. I am too far from where my son is here in Virginia to visit him and have no one who will take me, sad to say, the church of Christ here is not able to even send the minister or a member to visit shut-ins like myself or visit people in prison. I recently got a very nice book called “Don’t Ever Give Up” from M/M Gene & Audrey Pegg and a very nice note she wrote me. Maybe they are the ones who also sent the pamphlet. I am going to write back and thank them for the wonderful book. It is helping me so much. If someone can send me that issue with my son’s published article, I’d love to read it. I miss my dear beloved son so much. We can only communicate by writing weekly letters to each other. How I wish your church were here instead of Tennessee. I would be so blessed. I feel blessed that God made sure my son found out about your church and he told me he and Gene Pegg write back and forth. I pray for all who belong to such a nice church and maybe whoever reads this will find out who sent me the January issue and will send me the November issue. In Christian love” ...**Melva Farley, Staunton, VA.** “I have moved. Please change my address. I so enjoy your paper. Thank you” ...**Waymel Smith, Sugar Land, TX.**

A PERSONAL NOTE AND REQUEST FROM THE EDITOR

In last month’s issue, I announced a new emphasis in my work of preaching the Gospel. I so much appreciate the positive response received in such a short time. Thank you so much. With the help of faithful brethren like you, this new endeavor will become a reality. As was announced last month, this is being done with the full cooperation and endorsement of the elders of the East End church of Christ. If you have not yet read last month’s issue (Feb. 2009), we invite you to do so. If you need a copy, we’ll be glad to mail you one or you can read it online at seektheoldpaths.com/stop209.htm.

This work involves teaching and preaching God’s Holy Word by use of the *radio, internet* and the *printed page* through *Seek The Old Paths* and other study materials. God’s word will not return unto him void (cf. Isa. 55:11). It is our task to proclaim it from the house tops and in every corner of the earth (cf. Matt. 28:18-20). This is done through the use of our *mouaths* and also through the use of our *pens*. Much and lasting good can be done in proclaiming God’s Word. His Word will judge us in the last day (John 12:48).

To do this work, it is necessary for me to raise financial support. I humbly ask your assistance to do this most important and needed “labor of love.” Any amount will help and will be greatly appreciated. **Would you consider putting me in your budget for monthly financial support? If you cannot help monthly, one time contributions would also be of great help. Be sure to earmark your check with the words: PRINTING WORK.**

You may contact me or the elders at 102 Edison St., McMinnville, TN 37110 or by email: mail@seektheoldpaths.com.

We would like to get this new work started as soon as possible. Please let us hear from you soon.

Seek The Old Paths is a monthly publication of the **East End Church of Christ** and is under the oversight of its elders. It is mailed **FREE** upon request. Its primary purpose and goal in publication can be found in Jude 3; II Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:13; Titus 2:1; II Peter 1:12. All mail received may be published unless otherwise noted. Articles are also welcomed.

Editor: **Garland M. Robinson**

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