

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 YOUTH PROGRAM DO YOU OFFER TO YOUR YOUNG PEOPLE?"

Ronnie Whittemore

Upon occasion, brethren inquire of the preacher or elders concerning the youth program that the church provides for the young people. They may typically ask, "What youth program do you offer to your young people?" This particular topic is toward the top of the list of concerns that parents have regarding the church and its roles and responsibilities. This writer knows this because there is much money and energy being spent nowadays by churches for youth rallies, retreats and recreational activities. These activities may be church sponsored trips to amusement parks such as Opryland or Six Flags. It may be in the form of a summer youth series in which several congregations take turns providing a guest speaker, the place of assembly, recreation and refreshments.

There is a growing concern among rural churches about the families that move their membership to large city churches regardless of the strength or weakness of the church, where perhaps a "youth minister" is employed or various youth activities are provided and that is what is important to them.

This writer cannot defend what other congregations do for their young people, but he can make suggestions in light of what the Bible authorizes.

WHAT THE CHURCH PROVIDES FOR ITS YOUTH

1. Gospel Preaching. Now this may seem odd to many, but this is something that many churches with large bank accounts and enormous recreational activities are not providing. It is the obligation of the elders of every church to feed the flock. *"Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind"* (1 Peter 5:2). *"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the 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).


Young people need preaching too. Solomon exhorted long ago, *"Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them"* (Eccl. 12:1). They must know about God, the Father, Jesus, the Son, and the Holy Spirit who compose the Godhead. They must know about the church for which Jesus died. They must know what to do to be saved and what to do to keep saved. They must know what it means to live the Christian life. They must prepare themselves to

battle the temptations and false teaching that face them each day. And, gospel preaching prepares them for such tasks.

2. Bible Classes. Preaching and teaching, of course, came from God. But we owe a great deal to the person that suggested Bible classes. Nearly every Old Testament story that we know was first learned in a Bible class. The Biblical principles that govern our lives were probably learned in a Bible class. The names, places, events, facts, details and even applications of the various stories of the Bible were probably learned in a Bible class. The study habits that we have as students of God's Truth were probably developed as a result of attending Bible classes. Never underestimate the value and importance of attending and participating in Bible classes. Many questions are answered in Bible classes which could not be answered in the format of pulpit preaching. Many positive principles and truths are learned in the Bible class.

3. Boys' Training Class. There is a great need in this generation to teach, train and encourage the boys and young men in the congregation concerning their service unto the

(Continued on page 3)
Youth Programs...


The A.D. 70 System of Kingism #6
The Real Significance Of A.D. 70
 Garland M. Robinson

Even though there is a great deal of error being circulated, believed and taught relative to the destruction of Jerusalem which occurred in A.D. 70, that does not mean that sincere Bible students should seek to avoid what the Bible *does say* relative to that event. The destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. is an historical event that cannot be denied. What significance did it have for those who lived in that day; and, what significance does it have for us today, if any? The fact that it is prophesied of in both the Old and New Testaments reveals that it does hold importance in God's scheme of things (cf. Zech. 14; Matt. 24:4-34; Mark 13:5-30; Luke 21:8-31; 1 Pet. 4:17-18).

In Genesis 12:1-7 God made a promise to Abraham that was three-fold: 1) "I will make of thee a great nation" (v.2), 2) "in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (v.3), 3) "unto thy seed will I give this land" (v.7). Through Abraham's grandson Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel, the "great nation" of Israel was born. God was carrying out His promise to Abraham in them. After leaving the bondage of Egypt, they were caused to possess the "land of Canaan" and live under the Law of Moses received at Mt. Sinai. Even then, there would come a day when the law given by Moses would end and a new prophet and law would be established (cf. Deut. 18:15; Jer. 31:31-34; Acts 3:19-24). The Gentiles would be brought in as God's people along with the Israelites (cf. Isa. 62:1-2; 65:1; Deut. 32:21). A new law would be established that would encompass all tongues, peoples and nations and cover the whole world. God sought to protect and provide for the nation of Israel through whom the promised Messiah would come. When the nation of Israel had accomplished its

purpose, it would cease to have significance. The law of Moses is plainly described as a "...*schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.* For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:24-26).

Through the centuries of the nation of Israel, there were those who grew to love and count as their whole existence the fleshly nation of Israel. They clung so closely to it they could not conceive of it ending. They could not dream that it was only temporary. Even after God made known His will through the revelation of the Gospel (cf. Rom. 16:25-26; Eph. 3:1-11), the majority of Jews refused to let go of fleshly Israel with its law, sacrifices and temple worship. God, in His infinite knowledge and wisdom, knew that such would be the case. There would, of necessity, have to be a cataclysmic event that would ultimately and finally cause the Jewish political, civil and religious system to crumble and fall. The destruction of the city of Jerusalem along with the temple and its sacrifices was that devastating event. Through this means, God put a stop to all that the devout fleshly Jews held dear. No longer would any Jew be able to trace their lineage to Abraham. No one would be able to confirm from what tribe they descended. No priest could establish his right to offer sacrifices. All genealogical records had been destroyed!

The nation of Israel under the law of Moses was unique in that the Israelites comprised the religious, political and civil governments. Unlike today, the religious, political and civil are each distinct and separate. The Lord's church is not a part of the political or civil system — and vice versa. But under the law of

Moses, such was not the case. Every Israelite was a child of God. Therefore, those who made up the political and civil systems were children of God just as those who officiated at religious services. Each of these systems (political, civil and religious) under the law of Moses would end.

The death of Jesus on the cross in 33 A.D. marked the end of the religious system of the Law of Moses which was boldly proclaimed on Pentecost in Acts 2; and, the destruction of the city of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. ended the political and civil system of the Jews. Beyond A.D. 70, all hope of a future Messiah and an earthly political regime among the Jews was finally and forever crushed!

The destruction of Jerusalem was certainly a significant event. It impacted every facet of the Jewish political, civil, economic and religious systems. It showed once and for all, to those who yet refused to believe, that God had ended His dealings with the Jews. In God's providence, He brought together events to demonstrate to the Jews that His Son's death on the cross had put an end to Judaism.

Another occasion where God intervened to accomplish His Will is at the conversion of the household of Cornelius (Acts 10-11). This event was designed to convince the Jews that the gospel was for the Gentiles also. This actually began on the day of Pentecost but was not fully carried out by the Lord's people until the baptizing of Cornelius. Likewise, the law of Moses, along with all that attended it, ceased at the cross (Col. 2:14) and the proclamation of it was preached on Pentecost, but it took the decisive event in A.D. 70 to convince many people that such was indeed the case.

CONCLUSION

The summary of the whole A.D. 70 system is aptly described by Wayne Jackson.

"So brethren, the whole A.D. 70/King scenario is false. Christ did not effect His second coming in A.D. 70; the dead were not raised in A.D. 70; the judgment day did not occur with the destruction of Jerusalem; and the world did not end in A.D. 70. The entire theory of "realized

eschatology" is false from start to finish.

We deeply grieve that good brethren have been caught up in this foolish movement. It has produced much harm and no good. It is unsettling and divisive. The situation is, however, a commentary upon the extremes to which some will go in an attempt to make a name in history. It is further an example of how ill-informed many members of the church actually are; they are ripe for the picking. The words of the ancient prophet are applicable even today — "My people are destroyed for a lack of knowledge." (*The A.D. 70 Theory, A Review of the Max King Doctrine*, Jackson, Wayne, Courier Publications, Stockton, CA, 1990, p.82)

This doctrinal theory of A.D. 70 is so fantastic, incredible, inconceivable,

that it fits well with other religious systems that are likewise so far fetched and preposterous, they are unbelievable and easily refuted with the Scriptures. Systems such as: Mormonism, with their "God was once a man" doctrine and Jehovah Witnesses, with their idea that Jesus is not deity and man doesn't have a soul. I'm not trying to make light of those who believe the A.D. 70 doctrine, but I am seeking to show the utter nonsense of the doctrine itself.

May this brief study cause those who embrace Kingism to deeply examine and profoundly probe the doctrine they espouse and uphold. May it be the case they will see the error of their way and repent of this most serious error. We pray for the hastening of that day.

OTHER RESOURCE MATERIAL

Varner, Terry W., *Studies In Bib-*

lical Eschatology, Vol. 1, Background Study To The A.D. 70 Theory (Max R. King's, *The Spirit of Prophecy*), Therefore Stand Publications, 1981.

Hansen-Webster Debate on Eschatology, "Does Matthew 24 And 25 Refer Only To The Destruction Of Jerusalem?", Ray Hawk Publisher.

Taylor, Robert R., "*The Spirit Of Prophecy*" — *Past Or Future?*", First Century Christian, Aug. 1973, Sept. 1973, Oct. 1973, Nov. 1973,

Taylor, Robert R., "*The Spirit Of Prophecy*" — *The Real Significance Of Jerusalem's Fall*", First Century Christian, Feb. 1974, March 1974, May 1974

Wiggins, Stephen, *Max Kingism: An Unkingly Heresy*, The Panama Proclaimer, Panama Street Church of Christ, Montgomery, AL, Jan. 13, 20, 27, Feb. 10, June 30, July 7, 1993

6th of 6 parts

Youth Programs...

(Continued from page 1)

Lord. Even at 4, 5 or 6 years old, it is good to get them interested in working for the Master. This writer acknowledges there may be some men who are not capable of participating in a public way in the Lord's work (leading prayers or singing, preaching, teaching classes, waiting on the Lord's table, etc.). Some "fall to pieces" (so to speak) whenever they are asked to participate publicly. However, at the same time, this writer firmly believes that the number is far less than the actual number that do not cooperate. Some men have simply never tried or make excuses. Maybe they hold a grudge against the elders and retaliate in this way. They hinder the growth of the church, yes, but they also will lose their own souls. But regardless of the reason or excuse, if boys would be encouraged and trained at a young age, they will have a better chance of overcoming fears and anxieties. In fact, they may never know about such fears. Therefore, future preachers, elders, deacons, Bible class teachers, etc. would very likely have their start from a training class. Remember Timothy's training from an early age (2 Tim. 3:14-15)? His strength and character

developed as a child and later supported by further teaching from the fearless apostle (1 Cor. 4:17; 16:10) enabled him to be described by Paul as "likeminded" to care for the Philippian brethren (Phil. 2:19-20).

4. Godly examples. Again, this may seem strange to some of our readers, but unfortunately in many places where young people are provided entertainment and recreation by the church, they are not provided with godly examples of Christian living. Their youth may see worldliness, carnality, i.e., "conforming to the world" rather than "transforming by the renewing of the mind" (Rom. 12:2). The apostle Paul admonished his readers to follow him, but notice why: "*Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ*" (1 Cor. 11:1). It is quite rewarding as a gospel preacher to see godly examples in parents.

Young people need the righteous examples of parents. Children of every generation need parents who practice what they teach. It is much easier to tell children what to do rather than show them what to do. The godly examples of Zacharias and Elisabeth stand out in the pages of the Bible. The inspired physician wrote: "*And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the*

Lord blameless" (Luke 1:6). One of the great attributes of Abraham (often overlooked) is: "*For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him*" (Gen. 18:19). Abraham supported those admonishments and teachings with a righteous example. "*So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham*" (Gal. 3:9).

Young people need the godly examples of teachers. Teaching includes great responsibility. "*My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation*" (James 3:1). Youngsters need more than words, commandments and laws cited by their Bible teachers. They need teachers of conviction. How sad it is when some teachers nullify a year's worth of Bible teaching and exhortation by playing the hypocrite during the year. They may forsake the assembly by deeming Sunday evening worship and gospel meetings unnecessary. They may be seen participating in activities unbecoming to Christians. In short, teachers have the grave duty of also practicing what they teach. How encourag-

ing it is to have a host of teachers who reinforce the weekly Bible preaching with weekly Bible teaching and daily Christian living. One of the unfortunate disadvantages of public preaching is the inability to ask for questions in the case of misunderstandings or incomprehensions. Bible class teachers make up for that loss by their ability and willingness to answer the students' inquiries and their godly examples which uphold those Biblical principles and precepts.

5. The care and concern of elders. One of the major obligations of the eldership is to tend the flock of God (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2; Heb. 13:17). Their feeding, guarding and overseeing include the young people. How grand it is for elders (upon occasion when needed) to stand in the pulpit and praise the good works and rebuke the errors of young people. These are marks of a concerned eldership that takes its duties seriously. Parents and youngsters alike should be thankful for men who accept and exercise their charge and responsibility.

WHAT THE CHURCH DOES NOT OFFER

Despite the good things the church offers to young people, there are still those questions that arise as to why the church does not provide other activities which perhaps other churches offer or the parents would like to see included in the list just described. For instance:

1. Recreational and entertainment activities. During the days of the restoration movement, a major point in every discussion (as men were trying to exit denominationalism and get back to the Bible) was AUTHORITY. Respect for Bible authority *must be* at the forefront of every suggestion made or method used. So the question is: Does the church have the authority to provide such suggested activities? The answer is found in what the church is commissioned to do, namely, *evangelism, edification and benevolence* (Mark 16:15-16; Eph. 4:12; Gal. 6:10). If entertainment is edification (as some argue), then where would one draw the line for activities and money spent. If providing recreation were scriptural, then the church

could build gymnasiums (as some have done), build bowling alleys, dig ponds for fishing (after all, some of our elderly members like to fish), build skating rinks, movie theaters, miniature golf courses, etc. Surely the honest reader recognizes the silliness involved in such and the principle behind it. If one is allowed, then the other suggestions are allowed also.

The fact is that the church is not charged in some things. The church is charged to take care of "*widows indeed*" (1 Tim. 5:3), but the church is not charged with the care of other widows (1 Tim. 5:16). Entertainment does not occupy the category of evangelism, edification or benevolence; therefore, if the church becomes involved in such, she has violated the law of God (James 2:10).

2. A divided assembly. In recent years, there has been a movement to separate the adults from the children in public worship. Some brethren may have good intentions in these efforts. They may have been persuaded or deceived by others that children do not learn anything in public worship. But whether their actions were motivated by sincerity or convenience, the "divided assembly" is *not scriptural*.

Sometimes when a person inquires as to whether a congregation has a program for its youth, the "divided assembly" is to what they are referring. This writer does not deny that some degree of good can be accomplished by a class for youngsters ("divided assembly"). However, that is not the point. Training classes can be advantageous to youngsters. However, to conduct these classes during the worship IS NOT THE PROPER TIME! The apostle Paul wrote concerning the brethren coming together to partake of the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:33-34). He also plainly stated, "*If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in [those that are] unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad*" (1 Cor. 14:23)? How can all the **whole church** be gathered together into one place if the brethren are divided into classes during the time of worship?

Besides these clear statements in Scripture, this writer denies vehe-

mently the claim that children cannot learn how to worship or how to behave in the worship by assembling with the saints. One learns by teaching, observation (example) and experience. How many of us have seen children "playing church" by imitating the preacher, the song leader, and partaking of the Lord's Supper? Children can and do learn the "hows" and "whats" in worship, *not out of worship!* This writer fears some parents simply do not want to be bothered with the care of their children during worship. Parents, examine your motives? By the way, parents, how did you learn to behave and conduct yourself in worship?

THE BASIS OF THESE DECISIONS

Why does the church offer gospel preaching, Bible classes, training classes, godly examples, a concerned eldership, etc.? These are things that are AUTHORIZED AND PERMITTED BY THE SCRIPTURES. These things fall into the realm of the work of the church (evangelism, edification, benevolence). It seems many brethren have forgotten what the church is to do.

Why does the church not offer entertainment and recreational activities or a "divided assembly?" Such would be a violation of the scriptures and the authority of God! The Almighty has designed the work of the church and the work of the home. And, they are not always the same! God is the designer, not man or another church!

The church must be careful not to assume the duties of the home. Wholesome recreation and entertainment are good for children and adults. But let us remember to provide those things through the home, not the church. Parents and other interested individuals should take an active role in making such opportunities available to their children. However, the church has not been charged with those responsibilities. More elders, deacons, preachers, teachers, and parents need to ask the question: "*By what authority doest thou these things*" (Matt. 21:23)? Friend, what about where you worship? Is that question being asked?

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BE YE HOLY FOR I AM HOLY

H. D. Simmons

How long has it been since you read the book of Leviticus? We might respond as the Wolf brand chili TV commercial, "Well that's too long." This neglected book of the Bible contains many beautiful themes that are so important for God's people in every age.

In the book of Exodus, God's people had been released by God from Egyptian slavery. After this release they wandered toward their beautiful promised land. At this time they needed laws to guide them on their way to Palestine. Many of these laws are found in Leviticus.

In Numbers 5:3 we read of God dwelling among the Israelites during this journey. But for God to dwell among them, certain requirements had to be met. Imagine if a famous dignitary were to dwell among us. Many things would have to change such as security precautions and many other things. However, this was not a dignitary dwelling among the Israelites, it was the holy God of the universe.

From the tent of the meeting God spoke to Moses (Lev. 1:1). Over that tent there appeared a cloud and fire which signified God's dwelling and guidance among the people (Exodus 40:34-38). The laws in Leviticus were given as a result of the fact that God would be dwelling among them. What a privilege for God to dwell among them. For this to occur, changes and sacrifices had to be made. Since God, being holy, dwelt among them, they had to be holy (Lev. 11:45; 19:2; 20:7-8,26). They had to be holy or God would cut Himself off from them (Lev. 20:6). They had to be holy or they would profane God's holy name (Lev. 20:3). In Numbers 25:1-9, 24,000 of them died because of unholiness. They had to be holy to prevent disaster. Peter quotes from these verses, and applied these thoughts to Christians (1 Peter 1:15-16).

How can people in any generation be holy? God told Moses that He wanted His people to put a fringe on their garments. This was to be done so, "*That ye may remember, and do all my commandments, and be holy unto your God*" (Num. 15:37-40). It is clear that God's people were to be holy by obeying His commands. This was how they were to be holy. Note these words, "*Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the LORD your God. And ye shall keep my statutes, and do them: I am the LORD which sanctify you*" (Lev. 20:7-8). God made it clear that holiness and obedience are directly connected. There can be no holiness without obedience. Think about it! The only way for us to be holy is for God to reveal His law to tell us what is holy and how we can be holy by submitting to that law.

In the New Testament, these same principles apply. God now dwells in His people, the church (1 Cor. 6:19-20; Eph. 2:22; 3:17; 4:6). The church is called a holy nation (1 Peter 2:9). God dwells in His church and tells the church, "*Be ye holy; for I am holy*" (1 Peter 1:16). The church must be holy in all manner of life (1 Peter 1:15). Now tell me how we can be holy in all manner of life? The answer is by submitting to God's law which tell us what is holy living. We must live holy lives for God dwells among us. And remember, God has connected holiness and obedience. You may only be holy as you submit to His holy law.

Two ugly words among some circles today are the words obedience and law. How unfortunate, for this is the only way to holiness. For God to dwell among His people, holy lives must be lived. Therefore, when you hear a religious teacher belittle obedience and law, remember he is destroying the very basis for God being with us. God said, "*Be ye holy for I am holy.*"

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BY WHAT SHOULD THE COMMUNITY KNOW US?

Richard Carlson

Recently, I saw a notice in a church bulletin which announced that the congregation was offering a "Managing Family Finances" class. This announcement was also made on a local radio station. The class was to be taking place at 7:00, Wednesday night, during Bible class time. The article stated that this was a way for the community to become acquainted with the church.

There are at least two questions that are in order: 1) What does a finance class have to do with Bible study? 2) Shall the church use things other than the gospel of Christ (Rom. 1:16) for the community to "know" the church? Let it be understood that I see nothing wrong in a person learning better ways to manage their money, but when the church assembles, it must be to study God's Word and worship Him (John 4:24; 2 Tim. 2:15).

Yes, the Lord's church must have an interest in the local community. We must "let our light shine" (Matt. 5:14-16). We are to "sow the seed," which is the Word of God (Luke 8:11).

Many brethren today look to the denominational world for ideas on how to fill the building. They will stop at nothing to "draw a crowd." When we depend upon meeting the social needs of people through gimmicks and gadgets to draw a crowd, we are the same as saying that the gospel is not powerful enough to bring people in. The truth is compromised when congregations resort to these tactics. Sadly, today there is very little difference between some congregations and denominations.

By what should the community know the Lord's church? First, I would suggest they should know us by our **faithful worship to God**. They must see we worship God "*in spirit and in truth*" (John 4:24).

Second, we should be known by

our **good works**. Are we known as a benevolent congregation? While it is true we must be very careful whom we help because of the dishonesty of many who seek help, however, people should know that we care about them. When such tragedies as a fire causes a family to loose their home, we should seek out ways in which we can help so Christ may "receive the glory." Are we known for being hospitable? What do we do when a new family moves into the community?

Third, we should be known for our **Bible knowledge**. At one time, members of the church were known as "walking Bibles." Is that the case today? Many people who have been Christians for years and years cannot recognize error when they see or hear it. Many members of the church fall into the category of those spoken about in Hebrews 5:12. They need to be taught first principles.

Fourth, the church should be known for its **intolerance of sin**. Do we openly oppose immorality when it comes to our community? Do we take a stand against gambling, alcoholic beverages, etc.? I once

heard a member of the church comment that she would rather see businesses in town sell alcohol than for her property taxes to be raised. The church should be known for the practice of church discipline (1 Cor. 5; 2 Thess. 3:6). When discipline is practiced the community is aware of the church's intolerance of sin.

Let it be said that we depend on

the gospel and its saving power. Yes, many will reject it. However, when that seed is sown in honest and good hearts, people will be converted to Christ, not some man-made gimmick. Let us be very careful in regard to those things by which the community knows us.

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Dear Ann Landers,

I read with much interest your column of Nov. 12, 1996 in the Marion Star regarding the different religions and who started them. You were right on the mark on all but one. Ann, Jesus Christ did not start the Roman Catholic religion!

The Roman Catholic religion began developing around 325 A.D. by apostatizing men with the writing and binding of man-made religious creeds. (See NICENE COUNCILS, World Book Ency., Vol. 14, p. 318; also, APOSTLE'S CREED, Catholic Ency., Vol. I, p. 629-630.) The Roman Catholic Church continues to evolve even to this day.

Jesus Christ established his church on the Day of Pentecost, A.D. 33, in the city of Jerusalem (Acts 2). Jesus said in Matthew 16:18, "...I will build my church" (Challoner-Rheims RV, with Catholic Imprimatur; KJV; ASV; RSV; NIV; etc.). Ann, all of the inspired writers of the New Testament testify to the fact that he did just that. Just fifty days after Jesus ascended back to Heaven, Luke recorded, "and the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved..." (Acts 2:47 NKJV). The inspired apostle Paul wrote in Romans 16:16, "...the churches of Christ salute you" (Challoner-Rheims RV, with Catholic Imprimatur; KJV; ASV; RSV; NIV; etc.). So you see, Ann, the Roman Catholic religion was founded almost three-hundred (300) years too late for Jesus Christ to have had anything to do with it.

Ann, the Bible teaches us that Jesus Christ is the seed of Abraham (Gen. 22:18; Gal. 3:16). Jesus lived and died under the old Jewish Law, "yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15). He fulfilled the old Law (Matt. 5:17-18), taking it out of the way by nailing it to his cross (Col. 2:14). Jesus shed his blood to purchase his church (Acts 20:28) which is still in existence today. Ann, the Lord's church is as different from the Roman Catholic Church and her off-spring (religious denominations), as day is from night. For the church of Christ abides by the Bible only, and only the Bible in matters of faith and doctrine (1 Peter 4:11). This is why her members are called Christians only, nothing more or nothing less (1 Peter 4:16). We call on all men everywhere to unite with us on these sound biblical principles (John 17:17-21; 1 Cor. 1:10-15).

It is interesting to note, Ann, these men who started the different religions are all dead, buried and still in the tomb, with the exception of Jesus Christ, who arose from the dead (Matt. 28)! This is further proof that the Law of Christ, the New Testament, is in force today (James 1:25; Heb. 8:6-7) and men and women who obey the Lord are saved from their sins (Mark 16:15-16) and added to his church, the church of Christ (Acts 2:47; Rom. 16:16).

P.S. Ann, I believe you to be fair. I have written to you without bias, using substantiated facts. I only hope you will treat me the same and print my letter without deletion. Thank you!

William H. Farley Jr.
4384 Baer Road, Marion, Ohio 43302
December 4, 1996

PRESS RELEASE

AUSTIN, TX — The Southwest church of Christ is pleased to announce that the 16th annual Southwest Lectureship will be held April 13-16, 1997. The theme for this year's lectureship is "The churches of Christ Salute You." Speakers from several states have been invited to come and lecture to an expected record number of brethren who will gather in Austin from across the nation to attend this year's lectureship series.

The sermons and lessons delivered during this series will be published in hard-back book form and will be available during the lectureship along with audio and video tapes of this year's as well as past Southwest Lectureships. The annual Southwest School of Bible Studies Supporters' Dinner will also be held on lectureship Tuesday. For further information regarding this dinner, please contact Joseph D. Meador, R.V. and camper spaces are available at the Southwest building. For additional information and accommodations, you may contact: Gary Colley, Lectureship Director at the address below.

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In the days of Christ the temple was the center of all religious activity of God's people. It was a type of spiritual temple, the church. John records that Jesus found the temple and its worship polluted. In John 2:13-16 we read, "And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem, And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise." Jesus cleansed the temple.

In this example we learn the temple was not to be defiled. It was to be kept clean. So the spiritual temple, the church, must not be defiled, but kept clean. There were those who objected to Jesus cleansing the temple in Jerusalem. He cleansed it anyway. There are those who object to the cleansing of the church today. We must do it anyway.

John records that the disciples observed Jesus cleansing the temple (John 2:17) and thought of a statement in Psalm 69:9: "For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me." The Lord's zeal in serving God was obvious. This caused hatred of Him by His enemies. They began, in earnest, their efforts to defeat Him and His Kingdom.

When faithful elders today follow the example of Jesus and began a cleansing of the spiritual temple, the church, they may expect the enemies of God to react as did those enemies of Jesus in the long ago. Indeed, this is what will happen — enemies of truth will attack the faithful men who follow Jesus! Nevertheless, we should follow Jesus' example and strive to keep the church today free from the innovations of man. We must never fear to speak up for the Lord. We must never fail to do what we know He commands. Too many seem fearful of offending people. We must not try to offend anyone; but we must not be afraid to earnestly contend for the

Elders COLUMN

CLEANSING THE TEMPLE

Glenn B. Ramsey

faith and for purity of worship, despite what we may deem to be the costs.

Jesus surprised the Jews by His bold act of cleansing the temple. Today, when we follow His lead and cleanse the church of a variety of sins, people are surprised. We should not wonder that they react to us as they did to Him.

The Bible commands us to have no fellowship with false doctrine and/or false teachers. "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather prove them" (Eph. 5:11). We are to avoid such.

Paul said, "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them" (Rom. 16:17). Elders are supposed to guard the flock of God. The Ephesian elders were commanded: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:28-30). Regrettably, many elderships today, instead of guarding the flock against the "wolves," invite the wolves (false teachers) into the flock to devour it!

These unfaithful shepherds will answer to God in the final day. We are instructed: "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit your-

selves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you" (Heb. 13:17). The sad situation is that both the unfaithful elders and those who follow them will be lost! Both those who lead blindly and those who follow blindly will be in the same ditch!

Jesus' zeal for pure worship of God is our example. We must see that our worship and service are according to God's Will.

The church, the spiritual temple today, in many places needs cleansing! Where are the elders, preachers, teachers and others who have enough courage to cleanse the spiritual temple of the Lord?

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You have made yourselves Pharisees" ...Earl & Melinda O'Quinn, Tyler, TX.

[EDITOR'S NOTE:] The previous note confirms the fact that so many today have no idea what the Lord's church is all about. Not only did the Lord say to teach the alien sinner so he may hear and obey the Gospel, but also teach those who have obeyed the Gospel to "observe all things the Lord has commanded" (Matt. 28:19-20). This is what we sometimes call "keeping the saved, saved." It is amazing how many have drifted (or might we say have run) from the "old paths" and need to be taught the Truth, rebuked, and brought back to it. When we seek to carry out this part of the Great Commission through **Seek The Old Paths**, some want no part of it. My question is, "Is there anything a person may teach and/or practice that would cause him to be out of fellowship with God?" From the above letter, it does not appear so. The only ones such people will not fellowship are those who love God and keep his commandments! According to 1 John 2:3-6 and 5:2-3, the one who says he loves God and does not keep his commandments is a liar. Rebuking those in error (Titus 1:13; 2 Tim. 4:2-4; 1 Tim. 5:20), informing brethren of their error (Rom. 16:17-18; 1 Tim. 1:19; Eph. 5:11) and exhorting brethren to be sound in the faith (2 Tim. 4:2-4; Titus 2:2; Col. 1:23), is a very big part of living the Christian life! **The lost includes both those who have never obeyed the Gospel and those who have strayed away from it.** So, in reality, we are spending our time and money on teaching the "unsaved." The point is, so many are not seeking to reclaim the wayward. They are a part of the problem we now face, not the solution. Dear reader, which are you?

Let me ask another question. **What are you doing to combat error, whether in the church or out of the church?** How, Where and When are you "contending for the faith once delivered" (Jude 3)? My experience says that those who criticize the faithful for "contending for the faith" are not "contending for the faith" at all. If you do not like the way we obey Jude 3, Ephesians 5:11, Romans 16:17, 2 Timothy 4:2, Titus 1:13, Titus 2:1 and 2 Peter 1:12, then tell us the way you are obeying them. Since you are not obeying them, then I like the way we are obeying these scriptures better than the way you are not obeying them! When you start rebuking error and those teaching it, then, and only then, will you be in a position to call into question the way we oppose error.

Are we Pharisees? Who is a Pharisee? Will the "real" Pharisees please stand up and repent?! God did not condemn the Pharisees because they kept his commandments. He condemned them for demanding that people keep their "traditions" and "commandments of men" (Matt. 15:1-9). The Pharisees of the Lord's day made laws that God did not make and demanded men keep them. When the truth is told, those today (elders, preachers, deacons, members) who are against those who obey God's commandments to oppose and expose error have made themselves Pharisees. Such persons have made a law that God did not make in that they have made a law that says "God is not pleased with those who oppose error." Therefore, the only thing they are ever against are those who obey God and keep his commandments. They are the ones who have made themselves Pharisees! Are you going to be a Pharisee or are you going to obey God? Are you going to stand with Elijah (a man approved of God) or are you going to stand with the 450 prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:17-21)? I suspect the self-made Pharisees of today will do as the people did to Elijah — "and the people answered him not a word!"

"Please do not send this garbage to me. Your paper is nothing but negative. Your energy would be better spent converting the lost to Christ. Why not spend your money and time promoting Christ to the unsaved rather than trying to save the saved?"

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