

# The AND Staff

*"Preach the Word." (II Timothy 4:2)*

*"Feed the Flock." (I Peter 5:2)*

## "What was the early church really like?"

By ROGER DEYS

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IN THE WESTERN SKY, the Almighty once again painted an awesome picture by blending the hues of reds, yellows, and pale blues. Over the barren, rocky paths many sandals scurried for the warmth of home. Evening had come and men leaving their work in the vineyards and fields to eat their supper meals.

The habitual routine of life continued in each small village as the sun slowly moved behind the hills leaving only the silhouettes of scattered trees here and there on distant knolls.

Night finally settled over the land and there behind the walls of the city could be seen the lighted windows sending their flickering beams across the well traveled streets.

A knock echoes quickly down an empty street. The door opens and betrays the forms of several figures entering the home of a friend. Minutes later, several more arrive also to be admitted into the house. Here in the midst of a large, populous city was a small group of people who were willing to break away from the habitual routine of life and to learn of a greater way of living. They were no longer living without purpose, caught up in the trends of the time to have the



greatest vineyard, the most attractive house, the best set of oxen, but satisfied with their necessities met and the peace and joy in their hearts. Here, over 1,000 years ago, met a group of Christians to learn more of Christ.

Yes, in those early years, Christianity was a simple bond of faith that

drew thousands together in a unified belief. Jesus had lived and died for them and they were willing to live and die for Him. The question still arises, "What was the early church really like?"

Thousands of lives have turned from God because of the mess Christianity is in today. We were once a

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PROVERBS of TODAY

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*Sound preaching must have more than sound to it.*

"The tragedy of the church is not so much that there are empty pews all over the place but that so very many of the pews are filled with empty people."

*A person can come to church and not be a Christian, but one thing is for certain, he can't stay away from church and be a Christian (if he is well and able-bodied).*

CHRISTMAS? "You can ask someone if he is ready for Santa Claus and get a cheerful answer that he is either ready or not quite ready; but ask him if he is ready for Jesus Christ and you get a blank stare!"

*If it makes no difference what you believe, it makes no difference whether you believe.*

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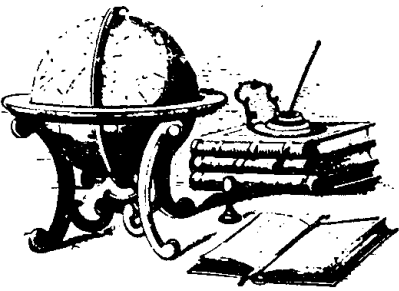
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EDITORIAL  
COMMENTS...

NEW USUABLE TRACT-BOOKLET NOW READY

THIS may be just what you can make good use of. We have just finished printing what we believe to be a very valuable and usable tract-booklet (8 pages, size 5½ by 8½ inches) titled, "Objections to the Necessity of Baptism Answered." We believe it satisfactorily and completely answers the primary arguments against baptism, i. e., the "thief on the cross," "baptism is a work," and "believe and be saved." This tract is ideal to place in the hands of the denomi-nationalist who is sincere and respects the Bible as the inspired Word of God. It sells for 5¢ a copy. Why not send for a free sample copy? or why not order a good supply right now? You can use this tract to good advantage.

**OBJECTIONS**

**to the necessity  
of baptism  
ANSWERED**

By James E. Gibbons

SYSTEMATIC SCRIPTURAL STUDIES-A BOOK?

Many have expressed appreciation for the "Systematic Scriptural Studies." Someone writes that they think this material should be made into a book for wider use. Your opinion on this will be appreciated.

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ANSWERS TO "KNOW-YOUR-BIBLE" BIBLE QUIZ

1. (1) Gold-Ophir, 1 Kings 22:48; 1 Chronicles 29:4; Job 22:24; (2) Cedars-Lebanon, Ezekiel 27:5; (3) Oaks-Bashan, Ezekiel 27:6; Zechariah 11:2; (4) Fine linen-Egypt, Ezekiel 27:7.
2. Genesis 4:23, 24; Lamech.
3. Job 2:11; 4. Moses; 5. Jeremiah 1:1; Ezekiel 1:3; 6. Micah 5:2; 7. Judas Iscariot-ISCARIOT is commonly thought to be from the Hebrew ISH KERIOTH ("a man of Kerioth") and this town is situated in the south of Judah.
8. Mark 16:9; 9. About 40 years, Acts 4:22; 10. Onesimus, Philemon 10-18.

RENEW YOUR SUBSCRIPTION

It is time for many who receive THE SWORD AND STAFF to renew their subscription. We will be looking to hear from you. Thank you!

# SYSTEMATIC

## *Scriptural Studies*

### THE COMING OF THE PROMISED ONE

#### Introduction:

##### I. The theme of the Bible.

- (1) Old Testament—Someone is coming.
- (2) New Testament—Someone has come and is coming again.
- (3) That someone is the Lord Jesus Christ.

##### 2. The theme of the Bible is the Lord Jesus Christ

- (1) Truly the theme of the entire Bible is Christ.
- (2) The nation of Israel furnished the vehicle of his arrival and the background scenery to hold the story of the theme together.

#### I. THE LINE OF DESCENT OF THE PROMISED ONE PROPHESED.

##### A. The Seed of Woman (Genesis 3:15).

##### B. The Seed of Abraham.

1. Speaking of Abraham.
  - (1) Genesis 12:1-3.
  - (2) Genesis 18:16-18.
  - (3) Genesis 22:15-18.
2. Speaking of Isaac (Genesis 26:4).
3. Speaking of Jacob (Genesis 28:10-14).
4. Reference to Israel (Numbers 24:17).

##### C. From the Tribe of Judah.

1. "The scepter or leadership shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet until Shiloh (the Messiah, the Peaceful One) comes to whom it belongs, and to Him shall be the obedience of the people" (Genesis 49:10, Amp. O. T.).
2. Bethlehem of Judah (Micah 5:2).

##### D. From the Family of David.

1. The stem and root of Jesse (Isaiah 11:1-10).
2. The Righteous Branch of David (Jeremiah 23:5, 6; 33:14-17).
3. The seed of David (Psalms 89:3, 4).

#### II. THE NATURE OF THE BEING OF THE PROMISED ONE PROPHESED.

##### A. The Seed of Woman.

1. Of human nature, Jewish, and of the tribe of Judah and family of David.
2. A virgin birth anticipated.
  - (1) He would come of the "seed" of woman without the instrumentality of man in the conception (Genesis 3:15).
  - (2) A virgin to conceive and bear a son (Isaiah 7:14).

##### B. Diety is Attributed to Him.

1. Immanuel: God with us (Isaiah 7:14).
2. He is called "the mighty God, the everlasting Father" (Isaiah 9:6).

##### C. He would Rule upon the Throne of David Forever (Psalms 89:3, 4).

1. His rule would be a time of conquest (Psalms 2: 7-12; Isaiah 9:7).
2. His rule would be a time of judgment and justice.
  - (1) Isaiah 42:1-4 (9:7; 11:1-5).
  - (2) Jeremiah 23:5, 6.
  - (3) Jeremiah 33:15, 16.
3. His rule would be a time of peace.
  - (1) "Shiloh" (Genesis 49:10).
  - (2) Isaiah 9:6, 7.
  - (3) Isaiah 11:6-10.
  - (4) Micah 4:1-5.
4. NOTE: The Jews in the day of Christ stumbled over such Scriptures, expecting an earthly king and kingdom, whereas it turned out to be spiritual.

##### D. A Prophet like unto Moses (Deut. 18:18, 19).

##### E. The Suffering Servant.

1. Isaiah 53:1-12.
2. Jeremiah 23:6.
3. Zechariah 13:1.

##### F. Referred to in Prophecy in Many Ways.

1. The seed
2. Shiloh.
3. The star of Jacob.
4. The prophet.
5. The rod of the stem of Jesse.
6. The Righteous Branch of David.
7. The seed of David.
8. The Lord our righteousness.
9. My servant the Branch.
10. The suffering servant.
11. The ruler of Israel.
12. The sun of righteousness.
13. The faithful servant.
14. Immanuel.
15. Wonderful Counsellor.
16. The mighty God.
17. The everlasting Father.
18. The Prince of Peace.
19. And referred to in many other ways.

#### III. THE PROPHECIES CONCERNING THE COMING ONE FULFILLED.

##### A. Prophecies of the Line of Descent Fulfilled.

1. The seed of woman.
  - (1) Prophecy (Genesis 3:15).
  - (2) Fulfilled (Galatians 4:4).
2. The seed of Abraham.
  - (1) Prophecy (Genesis 12:3; 22:18).
  - (2) Fulfilled (Acts 3:25, 26; Galatians 3:8, 16).
3. From the tribe of Judah.
  - (1) Prophecy (Genesis 49:10; Micah 5:2).
  - (2) Fulfilled (Hebrews 7:14; Matthew 2:1-6).
4. From the family of David.
  - (1) Prophecy (Isaiah 11:1; Jeremiah 23:5, 6).
  - (2) Fulfilled (Matt. 1:1; Acts 13:22, 23; Romans 1:3).

##### B. Prophecies of the Nature of His Being Fulfilled.

1. The seed of woman.
  - (1) Prophecy (Genesis 3:15; Isaiah 7:14).

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# What was the...

(Continued from Page 1)

nation built on God given principles but now Bible reading and prayer in school is banned. Criticism is made because God is given glory by those experiencing the awesomeness of space. Moral degradation is on the rise on the rampant and theological leaders have dismissed all standards of right and wrong. Why? Because Satan has been successful in destroying the simplicity of the early church.

When lost souls, wandering in the darkness of sin, come in contact with the superstructures of modern religion and see its confusion, division, and vanity, they are repulsed and return to sin. In contrast, when they learn of the simplicity of Christ, the strength of His teachings, and the feel of his converting power, they come to know what it means to be a new creature.

Let's notice the 2 basic characteristics of the early church that has been lost to modern Christianity.

## I. POVERTY

Believe it or not, poverty was a great asset to the early Christians. It brought about true reliance upon God. They were truly thankful for the bare necessities of life. Even Paul had to show admiration to the churches of Macedonia when they gave of their necessities to help the church in Jerusalem (II Cor. 8:1-5). Jerusalem was undergoing a famine and the church was in need. Paul had turned to the brethren in Macedonia with hopes that they could help in some small way. He knew that Macedonia had just come through hard times and was in poor condition. When Paul's letter reached their area, true Christian love moved in each heart. They didn't draw out of their savings account to send. They did not send the money they had set aside for entertainment. No, Paul says they gave "beyond their power." Philips (in his translation) gives us a greater insight of the verse, "I can guarantee that they were willing to give of the limit of their means, yes, and beyond their means, without the slightest urging from me or anyone else." Friend, those early Christians knew the meaning of hunger. They experienced chilly days without proper clothing. Above all, they knew what it meant to trust

in God for survival. But when the plaintive cry for assistance came from beyond the shores of the Mediterranean Sea, they took of their own necessities to help a Christian brother.

I challenge you to be truthful with yourself as you read of those early Christians, is it the same today? We find churches with large bank accounts refusing to share with struggling congregations. We find families complaining because they were asked to help supply food in the work of the church. We find Christians with all the necessities of life and much more, grumbling because of extra giving for a needy work. The truth is very clear. Christians have secretly rejected Christ's teachings on riches and are caught up in the traditions of the world. We have been brainwashed by

Satan himself into believing that electric can openers, floor stereoes, wall to wall carpeting, and many other fancies are the necessities of life!

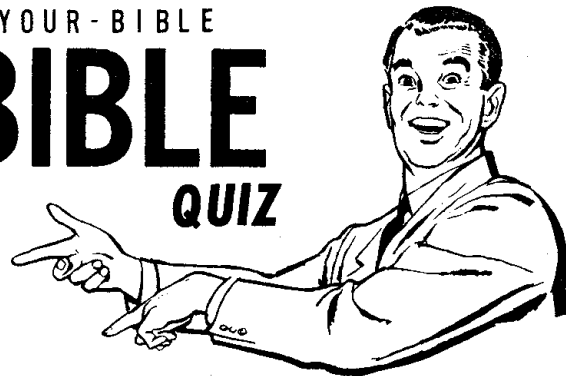
Christ taught to "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33). But Christians today live as though they were to go to church first and then add all they can to their personal possessions! I have been appalled at the number of churches who cannot support their preachers because so many of the Christians are too busy fixing up their homes and paying the bills on their luxuries.

Christians need to view the church like they do the department store, the more money they spend there, the more they will receive. If you have trouble

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## KNOW-YOUR-BIBLE

# BIBLE QUIZ



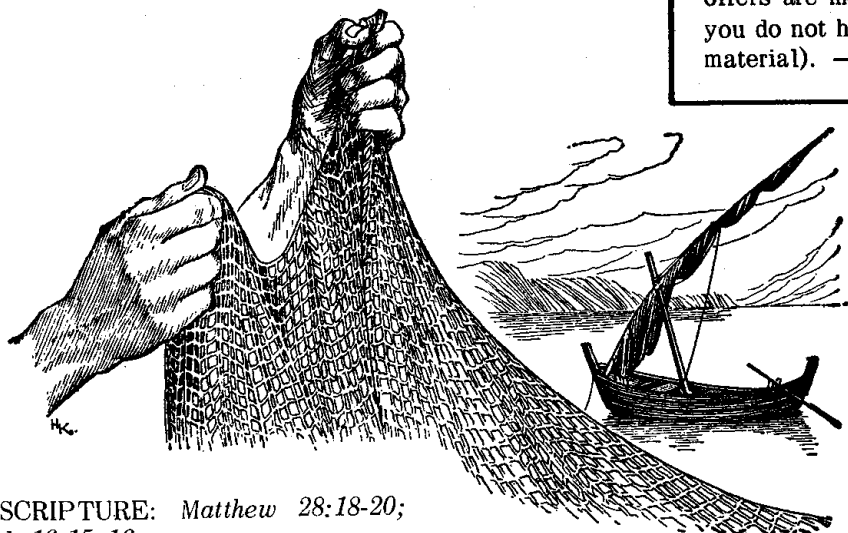
1. The following things are associated with what ancient countries?  
(1) gold; (2) cedars; (3) oaks; (4) fine linen.
2. Where is the first poetry found in the Bible and who uttered it?
3. What were the names of Job's three friends who came to visit and advise him during his affliction?
4. Amram and Jochebed were the parents of what outstanding son?
5. Give the names of two old Testament prophets who were also priests.
6. Which prophet identifies Bethlehem as the place where Christ would be born?
7. All of the disciples of Jesus were Galileans with the possible exception of one—what was his name?
8. Who was the first person to see Jesus after his resurrection?
9. About how old was the lame man Peter and John healed at the gate called Beautiful of the temple?
10. What was the name of the converted run-away slave Paul sent back home to his master?

(Answers found elsewhere in this issue)

# The WHY of Evangelism!

By JAMES E. GIBBONS  
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This message appeared as the lead article in the first issue of THE SWORD AND STAFF that ever was printed, January, 1957. Since that issue is not available in our bound volumes (2 or so issues are missing), we are herewith reprinting it for your edification. Bound volume offers are mentioned elsewhere in this paper (if you do not have this valuable and usable Bible material). -J.E.G.



SCRIPTURE: Matthew 28:18-20;  
Mark 16:15, 16.

The word "gospel" and "evangelism" are closely related in their meaning. The word gospel literally means glad tidings. Evangelism, to Christians, is bearing the glad tidings of the truths about Christ, soul saving! This hits upon our theme: The WHY of Evangelism! What makes this evangelism so needful and urgent? The WHY of evangelism is implied in the great commission!

## I. WE SEE THERE IS A UNIVERSAL NEED.

The state of fallen man cries out the universal need! God had said to our original parents in the garden of Eden, "The day that thou shalt eat thereof thou shalt surely die." He was talking about the fruit of that forbidden tree in the midst of the garden. We know the sad story of how Adam and Eve fell from God's grace. "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). And God cannot lie! Oh, how man wandered away from God! "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Man was lost and in confusion before the Saviour came. Job cried out in desperation, "If a man die, shall he live

again?" (Job 14:14). The apostle Paul later says in Romans 8:22, "For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain until now." The whole human family was lost! They needed a Saviour! We need a Saviour!

The inability of man to save himself shows the universal need. Man could not save himself by complete compliance to legalistic law. He could not attain righteousness this way. It was about impossible for him to live up to all parts of the Old Testament law. He stood condemned unto death. Listen to Paul. "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Roman 7:24). Paul makes it clear that those who try to be justified by the law are fallen from grace (Gal. 5:4). The Gentile World aside from the Old Testament was proving that man could not save himself by himself. As the saying goes, "Man could not lift himself by his own bootstraps." Man could not find God without a revelation from heaven. The monument and altar that Paul found on Mar's Hill in Athens of

ancient Greece might well mark the climax of all the Gentile World seeking after God. The inscription on the altar read, "TO THE UNKNOWN GOD" (Acts 17:23). The apostle said to the people gathered there, "And the times of this ignorance God winked at (overlooked); but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." (Acts 17:30). Man as his own saviour is a failure! We see the why of evangelism!

The universal need comes home to us when we behold this sinful age in which we live! Yes, there is much talk about an increase in the religious population, but the crime rates go up! All kinds of religion, but not the New Testament brand! There is war and rumors of war! (James 4:1). Drinking, dancing and divorce, the 3-D's of the devil, flood the land today! Drinking and Drunkenness certainly must be added! Money, modernism and movies are the craze of the age! The sin of denominationalism is rank! Two-thirds of the world, I am told, have never heard the name of Christ! There are more Catholics in the world than Protestants! There are more Protestants in the world than Christians! Oh, my dear friend, everything points to the why of evangelism! This old world is lost in sin!

## II. WE HAVE THE ONLY ANSWER TO THE UNIVERSAL NEED!

Yes, there is a universal need, and the gospel of Christ is the answer to that universal need! Paul says, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation" (Romans 1:16). What a wonderful truth to declare! The death, burial and resurrection of Christ are

the core of the gospel (I Cor. 15:1-4). The Word is called the gospel (Eph. 1:13). Christ is the Word that became flesh; thus, Christ is the gospel! Christ is the gospel personified in the flesh.

Christ truly is the gospel! The word gospel simply means glad tidings. Then this certainly fits the Lord Jesus Christ. Notice what he did for man. He lived a perfect life which man can not do. He conquered death which man could not do. What does this mean for us? We could not live a perfect life, and now by the grace of God, Christ has become our righteousness! (I Cor. 1:30). We were doomed to death and hell, because of sin, but Christ free from sin has become the first fruits of those who slept! This means we have a resurrection from the dead! "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin...But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Cor. 15:55-57). "We have heard the joyful sound, Jesus Saves, Jesus Saves, spread the tidings all around, Jesus Saves, Jesus Saves!" Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift!

Christ is the only answer to this universal need too! When it says in the Bible "THE gospel" and "THE faith," it implies this. Christ makes it clear that he is the only hope when he says that he is the door to the sheep fold (John 10:1). He also said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). The apostle Peter makes emphatic that Christ is the only hope when he said that He was the only name under heaven whereby we must be saved! (Acts 4:12). Paul exclaims this on Mar's Hill of Athens. Truly Christ is the only answer! We must preach and present Christ! Preaching Christ involves preaching baptism too! Notice Acts 8:35,36! If we aren't preaching about the church of Christ we aren't preaching Christ because the church is the body of Christ! Christ most certainly is the answer to the universal need! That is another why of evangelism!

**III. WE REALIZE THE VALUE OF A SOUL!**

Man is created after the image of God. Notice Genesis 2:7, "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the dust of the ground, and breathed

into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." The part of man that is after the image of God is the soul; it is eternal! It couldn't be our physical bodies for God is Spirit. The soul of man can never die (in the sense of coming to an end). It is eternal henceforth like God. It may go to heaven or hell, but it is everlasting (Matthew 25:46). Friends, if the soul (spirit) of man is created after the image of God it must be of extreme value! Such value demands evangelism that we may save precious souls!

Christ came and died for the souls of men. This shows their value. Christ was the only begotten Son of God. Christ left all of the glory and splendor of heaven to condescend to become like man. He took upon himself the form of sinful flesh. He suffered himself to be despised, abused and crucified! He did all of this for man! He didn't have to! Truly the souls of men must be valuable to God! "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).

Listen to Jesus again, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul, or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:26). Here we see the value of the soul! Worth more than all of the world! Think of that! After the money-mad maniac has grown old, health gone, and the angel of death has come, what has he profited? He has lost his soul! All of the money, powers, and great influential men of this world could not keep you from hell if you are lost! Your soul is worth more than the world! So you better give up the world! Don't be conformed to this world! Don't love this world! Here we have seen the need of evangelism! The value of the soul!

**IV. WE MUST EVANGELIZE IN ORDER TO SAVE OUR OWN SOULS!**

The conditional great commission makes this obvious. Read it again and again! (Matthew 28:19, 20). He in so many words, is saying that if you are going, if you are preaching, if you are baptizing, and if you are teaching them to observe all things, I am with you! To put it short: If you

**SYSTEMATIC SCRIPTURAL STUDIES**  
(Continued from Page 3)

- (2) Fulfilled (Matt. 1:18-25; Luke 1:34, 35; John 1:14).
- 2. Diety is attributed to him.
  - (1) Prophecy (Isaiah 7:14; 9:6).
  - (2) Fulfilled (Luke 1:35; John 1:1-5, 14, 18; 20:30, 31; Titus 2:13).
- 3. Rule upon the throne of David forever.
  - (1) Prophecy (Psalms 89:3, 4; Isaiah 9:7).
  - (2) Fulfilled in Christ and the Church (Luke 1:30-33; Matt. 16:18; Acts 2:30, 31; Col. 1:13; Romans 9:6-8; Galatians 6:16).
- 4. A prophet like unto Moses.
  - (1) Prophecy (Deut. 18:18, 19).
  - (2) Fulfilled (John 1:19-21; Acts 3:19-23).
- 5. The suffering servant for sin.
  - (1) Prophecy (Isaiah 53:1-12).
  - (2) Fulfilled (Matt. 1:21; Notice Scriptures on crucifixion; Acts 8:30-35; II Cor. 5:21).
- 6. Even as the Promised One is anticipated in many ways in prophecy, he is now everything to the believer.
  - (1) I Corinthians 1:30, 31.
  - (2) Revelation 1:8, 17, 18.
  - (3) Revelation 5:12-14.
  - (4) THE LORD OF LORDS, AND KING OF KINGS!

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are winning souls I am with you! The implication is that if we are not doing this he is not with us! Think of that! Christ not with us! What folly it is to pretend to be a follower of Christ without Christ! "But" you say, "This commission is not for us; it was given to the apostles." But please notice, "Even unto the end of the world." That was after the death of the apostles! The early church realized that this was their commission. Everyone was a soul winner. All were to have their feet "shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace" (Ephesians 6:15). If I want to go to heaven I must make an effort to take someone with me!

Jesus declared, "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad" (Matthew 12:30). Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost. He came to gather the lost unto himself. He says that if we are not gathering souls for him, we are scattering abroad; thus, we are none of his! Too many so-called Christians are concerned about everything under heaven except soul saving! They feel no personal responsibility toward the lost! Everyone preached the Word in the original church (Acts 8:4). Too many churches are like the one at Sardis. They have a name that they live, but they are dead! (Revelation 3:1). A lot of churches are active, but active doing what? Nothing that pertains to the spiritual life! Not making a deep study of the Bible, not praying in tears, and not winning souls! There is too much playhouse religion! Preachers too many times have stopped gathering souls and have started shepherding the flock, which is the work of the elders! He has become the errand boy for the church, the jack-of-all-trades! His time should be spent soul winning, but too many times he has so much other "stuff" to do that he seldom gets around to the lost!

So, if we would save our own souls we must save others! We are saved to save others! Will there be any stars in your crown? This is the why of evangelism!

**V. WE ARE AWARE THAT TODAY IS THE DAY OF SALVATION!**

Another thing that should make us realize the why of evangelism is the

fact that the end of time is coming! Christ is coming back! The angels said that he would come in like manner as he left this earth! (Acts 1:10, 11). Some "modern" theologians think Christ is not coming back, but he is! "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Peter 3:9). Please observe with fear what the inspired apostle Paul said, "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (II Thess. 1:7-9). Oh, my dear friends, soon the season of rescue will be over! God's holding back to let us see what we can do about this sin-sick, lost and dying world! But some day it will roll back like a scroll! Then what a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God!

And just as certain, death is fast approaching for all! (Hebrews 9:27). One little heart beat divides us from eternity! I am informed that every minute about 90 people go out into eternity! There are over two billion people on the face of this old globe, and only a handful are Christians! To think of the number in Asia overwhelms our mind! Just look at India. I am told that if Christ had stayed in the world from the first century until now, and had visited a different village every day in India from then until now, there would still be villages not visited yet! But death is fast approaching for all of us! I have looked into the faces of dozens of people as their cold, dead forms have been planted into the ground, some to arise to everlasting life and some to everlasting shame and contempt! Oh, today is the day of salvation!

TO SUM IT UP, THE WHY OF EVANGELISM is emphatically evident! We see there is a universal need! We have the only answer to this universal need! We realize the value of the soul! We are aware that today is the day of salvation! We need to open our eyes! The fields are white unto harvest! It

is evangelize now or maybe not at all! God, give us a burning zeal and passion for this sin-sick, lost and dying world! Hold back your impending wrath, and give us a little more time with this fallen race! □

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**WHAT WAS THE EARLY . . .**

(Continued from Page 4)

getting interested in church then just start putting your money there and I guarantee you will solve your problem.

I am afraid that many a modern day Christian is going to be shocked on that great judgment day when the books will be opened and we are judged according to the things written in those Books. They are going to tell Christ that they have kept His commandments from their youth up but He will answer, "One thing thou lackest, you would not surrender your all for the church, and many shall go away because they had great possessions. The same sin that kept that young ruler from accepting Christ will cause many Christians to miss heaven.

Another way where we are not like the early church is in poverty of spirit. Christ said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for their's is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:3). "Poor in spirit" or as Goodspeed puts it, "those who feel their spiritual need." Those early Christians were constantly in search of greater spiritual perfection.

Our souls are in a dangerous position when we cease to feel the need of greater spiritual perfection. Paul, himself, knew the need to go on to perfection. Paul would buffet his body daily to keep it in subjection lest after he had preached to others he, himself, would become a reprobate (I Cor. 9:27). Also, he wrote the Philippians and said, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect, but I press on..." (Phi 1.3:12). The following two verses even verify it more that Paul was continually striving for better spiritual perfection. May God help us today to begin to strive harder for true perfection. May our eyes be opened to the spiritual poverty that each one of us possess and cause us to edify and minister one to another "till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God; unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature

(Continued Next Page)



**WHAT WAS THE EARLY . . .**

**(Continued from Page 7)**

of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13).

**II. POWER**

The poverty of the early church is missing today but a greater void has been caused by the power that is lacking. A younger generation is arising around us that have turned their backs on religion in search of an ideology that will fill the emptiness they have in their souls. No greater power could transform these lives, fill that emptiness and produce strong moral beings than the teachings of Christ but these have been diluted and buried in the coffin of indifference, constructed by modern day Christians.

Where are those courageous followers of Christ who hold the truth in their hands and lift their voices as trumpets, telling the good news to the world? Stand up and testify to this nation of standardless individuals that there is a God and Judge of this world! A well-known news commentator once asked, "I beg you, show me what your religion will do. What's it good for? Show us frightened, frustrated, foolish folk how the product you represent is put to personal use: changes lives, cures addiction to drugs and drink, revitalizes family relationships, counteracts the toxicity of crime, and erases face lines like no cosmetic can. Life hereafter is a bonus you cannot yet prove, but you can prove what Christian faith can do to improve life here." There is a voice coming from every empty pew, saying, "Show me!" Our churches are full of empty pews because so many, yes, millions, have not seen nor felt the power of the gospel. Paul says, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation..." Paul's life stands as a witness to the power the early church experienced. Behind his witness stands examples as Peter, John, Stephen, Philip and even the well-known couple, Aquilla and Priscilla.

The early church had power in prayer. We find the Apostles in the very first chapter of Acts in prayer. We read through the book of Acts and every time a burden or problem arose, they prayed. One of the greatest examples of a prayer meeting takes place in Acts 20:36. Paul was on his way to Jerusalem and had stopped at

the coastal town of Miletus. Here he spoke to the elders of the church and as he left, they knelt together and prayed. You can almost feel the prayer on their hearts as you read how they cried on one another's shoulders. Paul, with heavy heart left these men behind and traveled on to Tyre. Finding disciples there, they pray again (Acts 21:5). There huddled together on that lonely shore, a group of men, women and children lift their voices in prayer to the great Creator of the universe. There the burden of their hearts was lifted by the loving hand of an Almighty God. Yes, they experienced the true power of prayer as the waves of the seas rolled across the white sand. Today, we huddle in our large, man-made dwellings to mumble a dutiful prayer to an uncertain God. Many today have never felt that true power that comes in prayer. Maybe even you are one of those many who are lacking power in your prayer life. Let me encourage you to step outside some clear night and there under the canopy of twinkling lights, meditate on the greatness of God and the weakness of man. Then kneel in the solitude of the night and really talk with the One who can take away every fear.

Ethel Fuller once wrote these fitting words:

*If radio's slim fingers can pluck  
a melody*

*From night and toss it over con-  
tinent or sea*

*If the petalled white notes of a  
violin*

*Are blown across the mountains  
or city din*

*If songs, like crimson roses, are  
culled from thin blue air*

*Why should mortals wonder if God  
hears prayer?*

Let us put back into our hearts and lives the power that belongs in prayer. And along with this power, let's put back the power that belongs in the proclamation of God's word. Those early Christians overcame great adversity in spreading the gospel of Christ. Many suffered cruel deaths at the hands of merciless rulers who sought to stop the spreading of this good news. Today we quiver and shake at the thought of knocking on a stranger's door to tell them of Christ. Did you know that reaching the lost is a necessity if we expect to inherit heaven? There are about

twenty-two verses that show the necessity of taking the Lord's supper and approximately one hundred twenty verses that teach on the subject of baptism. In contrast, there are more than one thousand times in the New Testament that exhorts us to teach His word. Now stop and think a minute. Is it not inconsistent that we will refuse to accept a person who is afraid to be baptized but will accept Christians who have set in pews for years and have never called on lost souls because of fear? I'm afraid the church is full of a lot of church members who are satisfied with their Christianity but God is far from satisfied with them.

I pray that this article will help you to see just a little how far we have wandered from God's word. We've been so wrapped up in following the reasonings and philosophies of this world that the church has suffered from it. Let's quit putting our desires and longings before the church! Let's quit losing sight of our goal by allowing others to pull our aim down! As Jesus simply put it, "Love God with all your heart, soul, body and mind!"

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