

# The Sword AND Staff

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

## PRINCIPLES GOVERNING THE PUBLIC ASSEMBLY OF THE CHURCH



• By **JAMES E. GIBBONS**

*Post Office Box 147—Mt Airy, NC 27030 USA*

**T**HE CHURCH is called "the church" in an assembled sense in the New Testament (I Corinthians 14:34; Colossians 4:16; etc.), as well as in other ways. In fact, "assembly" would be a good translation of *ekklesia* (the Greek word commonly rendered "church").

It is the Lord's plan that the community of believers come together for worship and edification. In the early days of the church, they came together on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7; I Corinthians 16:2; etc.), as well as more frequently some times (Acts 2:46; Acts 11:26). In fact, they were (and we are) commanded, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching" (Hebrews 10:25, NKJV).

There are certain principles that can be gleaned from the Scriptures which should govern the public assembly of the church. The public assembly of the church should be carried on in keeping with the high and holy purpose of the church as taught throughout the New Testament.

This article will not have to do with the particulars of what is to be done in the public assembly, but principles that should govern what is done.

### I. THE PRIMARY PURPOSE OF THE PUBLIC ASSEMBLY IS FOR THE BELIEVERS

It is good to keep in mind that the public assembly of the church is for believers, the saints, not for the world. This statement may sound very elementary, but it seems many do not have this understanding today (and what is implied). In too many places the assembly has become the primary (if not only) tool of evangelism. The gospel is not personally taken into the community. Then, forgetting the assembly is for Christians, some have non-Christian singing groups "perform" religiously before the church (as well as having denominational speakers). We could go on.

Acts 20:7 states that "the disciples came together to break bread" upon the first day of the week. Disciples, we remind you, are Christians (Acts 11:26). The admonition in Hebrews 10:25, "not forsaking the assembling" of themselves together, was for Christians, not non-Christians. Likewise, the admonition in Colossians 3:16, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord," was (is) to Christians. Certainly we would not prohibit non-Christians from informally taking part in the congregational singing (that is between them and the Lord), but to have them stand before the church "teaching and admonishing" in "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" is another thing. Christians are the teachers in the church, and how can a sinner admonish us spiritu-

(Continued on Page 10)

**THE SWORD AND STAFF**  
Post Office Box 147  
Mt. Airy, N.C. 27030 U.S.A.

E-Mail Address:  
*JGibbons@InfoAve.Net*

### **INFORMATION:**

■ We are totally dependent upon your financial backing in the publication of this religious paper. To get on the mailing list, send a contribution. Subsidizing gifts are definitely needed along for us to continue this unselfish labor of love for God and truth. You may use the date affixed beside your address as a reminder to send an offering (perhaps annually). No notices are sent. Make out your checks to CHURCH IN MOUNT AIRY. The extent (and frequency) of publication is determined by incoming support. James E. Gibbons is editor. (Money received for printed material is all considered as an offering). We do not assume responsibility for material from other sources and writers beyond that which appears in this paper. This publication is available in English and Spanish. Please indicate preference. □

—**THANK YOU**—

## Proverbially **SPEAKING..**

*PEOPLE who have learned to live need not be afraid to die.*

Living is like playing an instrument of music and learning how to play it as you go along.

*Sometimes we have to get flat on our backs before we can be level headed.*

Be such a person, and live such a life, that if every person were like you, you would be glad to have them as a neighbor.

*Caution assures that we do the right thing and that we do it well.*

Having scaled the lofty heights of truth and then to fall away is disastrous (and few recover, having fallen from such a high and exalted position).

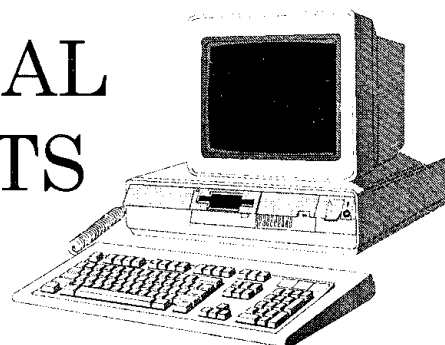
*Lies have no legs on which to stand, but they have wings and can fly both near and far throughout the land.*

If you want to be on "fire" about the things of God, then realize that "our God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:28,29), and at the same time have your heart warmed by the love of God.

*If your life is filled with good things, it will be fulfilling.*

Hope begets cheerfulness.

# EDITORIAL COMMENTS



## **ADDRESS FOR WORLD WIDE WEB CORRECTED**

**WE ARE** very sorry about a major mistake in the last issue of this paper. After telling about posting our Web Page, we gave an incomplete address. This resulted in many not accessing it, and quite a few e-mailed their dismay to us. A sampling of some of the e-mail responses follow, as well as words from some who did access our Web Page. But, first, here is the correct address:

**<http://web.infoave.net/~jgibbons/index.htm>**

### **RESPONSE:**

- *"Attempted to find you on the Web; unable to get through."*
- *"Can't find your Web Site. Please furnish the address. The one in THE SWORD AND STAFF does not seem to work."*
- *"I enjoy reading THE SWORD AND STAFF. I find it very informative and helpful. I have been a reader since 1974."*
- *"I found your Web Site Address in the last issue and was unable to access it. Are you sure it is correct? I even tried to access it many different ways and was unable to do so. Please help me!"*
- *"Thanks for e-mailing me the correct information as to how to reach your Web Page. I located it and will continue to do so from time to time. It is most interesting and informative."*
- *"I have tried on several occasions now to try and find you on the Internet, but to no avail. The address I have is...If this is the correct address, then I don't understand what is wrong. You have a wonderful publication and one that is sorely needed in the brotherhood today. What a great sense of relief to know that there are such publications such as this. Please I hope you can help me reach you on the Internet."*
- *"Thanks for information on your Internet address. It is a blessing to be able to see God's truth on the Internet. I have read THE SWORD AND STAFF for many years and appreciate your work. May God bless you for your stance on the truth and continued faithfulness."*
- *"Just received Vol. 35, No. 2 of THE SWORD AND STAFF and noticed the announcement concerning your Web Site. After visiting I was wondering if I could have your permission to put a link from our 'links' Web Page to yours..."*
- *"I really like this page—it is clean, simple, 'classy.' The articles that I scanned are strong and to the point. I have bookmarked it and will be back again..."*
- *"I am curious to know what your take on Baptists is. I am a Southern Baptist. Having read some of your commentary has left me intrigued. Thank you, and God bless."*

(Note: An attempt to answer this inquiry, as well as some others, failed because of an insufficient return address on the e-mail. Always be certain your address is correctly included). □

## THE TRADITIONS OF GOD AND THE TRADITIONS OF MEN (AND APOSTASY)

**T**HE WORD "TRADITION" as used in the New Testament signifies a giving over or handing down. It is used in a good sense; it is used in a bad sense. There are the traditions of God (I Corinthians 11:2; II Thessalonians 2:15; 3:6). There are the traditions of men (Colossians 2:8; Matthew 15:1-9; Mark 7:1-13). We have received the traditions of God from the apostles and other holy men inspired and guided by the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 11:2; 14:37; Ephesians 3:3-5). These traditions are now embodied in the Holy Scriptures (II Timothy 3:14-17). The traditions of men are simply that, traditions of *men*. They come from an extra-scriptural source, from uninspired men, and not the Holy Scriptures. Consequently the religious traditions of men are found to be at variance with the Scriptures. This conflict is seen in the words of the scribes and Pharisees as they confronted the Lord: "Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders?" And in how he forthwith replied with his own prodding question: "Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?"

The Bible ends with these words of warning: "For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book" (Revelation 22:18,19, NKJV). Paul, years before, had solemnly written to the Galatians, "But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8, NKJV). Apostasy and departure from what they had been taught, the traditions of God, ever loomed before the early church (Acts 20:26-32; I Timothy 4:1-5; II Timothy 3:10-4:5). This impending apostasy is graphically portrayed in II Thessalonians 2:1-12. Paul even said in his day that "the mystery of lawlessness is already at work" (2:7). It is no surprise then that serious departures from the faith surfaced in the second century. The extra-scriptural writings of the second century cannot be trusted.

We live today in the midst of falling away when the doctrines, commandments, and traditions of men fill the land in varying degrees (as evidenced by so many denominations and their diverse teachings). The great falling away, as prophesied in II Thessalonians 2:1-12, came with the bishop (pope) of

Rome asserting his authority over the church that was becoming increasingly apostate. The councils (and counsels) of men with the traditions of men were exalted over the traditions of God, the Holy Scriptures (and what they taught). With the decline and fall of the Roman Empire the Dark Ages really set in. The apostate church, with its superstitions, filled the vacuum. But in time, leaders of the Protestant Reformation arose and sought to correct the religious ills of their day. Some of their efforts were good, while others were simply reactionary, producing additional traditions of men. Then, generally, many simply modified many of the traditions of the apostasy and carried them over into their denominations in varying degrees. Today we have a mixture of all of this in denominationalism (along with modern-day sects and cults), plus modern unbelief that sets aside the basic tradition of the Word of God itself. Most have a musty mentality when it comes to even considering religious truth. Indeed, these are perilous times in which to live.

As always, God has His remnant. As always, God's people are in the minority (Matthew 7:13,14). And we would address these words to them (to you). Let us not be taken up into apostasy again, forsaking the holy traditions of the Lord. The danger is very real; it is ever before us, and especially in such a world as we live today. We point you to the antidote for apostasy that the apostle Paul and others kept before the early church. It is a sure way not to stumble into the doctrines and traditions of men.

First, then, we point you to God. We point you to Christ. Don't belong to a denomination, belong to Christ. Know Christ. The apostle Paul wrote, "Beware lest anyone cheat [plunder] you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power" (Colossians 2:8-10, NKJV). The same message is found in II Peter (II Peter 1:2-4; 3:17,18). We are not a candidate for apostasy if we really know the Lord (and appreciate the unsurpassed relationship that we have in him). The epistle of I John stresses this same truth.

(Continued on Next Page)

### REFUTING UNSCRIPTURAL DOCTRINE

**FOR SOME PEOPLE** who really believe an unscriptural doctrine, it is hard to refute it with Scripture as far as they are concerned for they are not dependent upon Scripture for their convictions (and, thus, the Scripture does not impress them). □

## EDITORIAL COMMENTS

*(Continued from Previous Page)*

Finally, we point you to God's Word. This is the mighty bulwark of truth. Believe it. Know it. Keep it, and it will keep you. Paul warned the Ephesian elders of the coming apostasy, then pointed to God and the Word of God. He said, "So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified" (Acts 20:32, NKJV). Likewise, II Timothy chapter 3 speaks of falling away. To get the full picture read the whole chapter and part of the following chapter. Timothy was told that "evil men and imposters will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived" (3:13). To deal with the situation personally, he was told, "But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures...All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (3:14-17, NKJV). And to safeguard the church, he was solemnly charged, "Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables" (4:1-4, NKJV). Yes, we point you to the Word of God. Being the truth of God, there is nothing like it to put false teachers to flight with their traditions of men. But when the Word of God is not preached in all of its fullness, we are already on the road to apostasy.

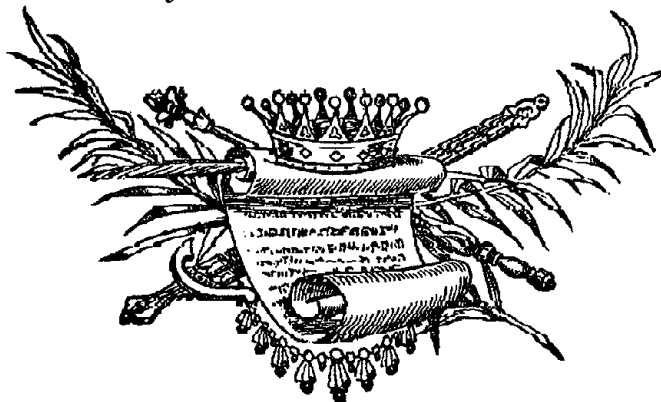
Yes, we live in perilous times wherein the spirit of apostasy permeates the air and the traditions of men are all about us. With the apostle Paul we seriously admonish you "that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine..." (Ephesians 4:14, NKJV). Let us love and appreciate the truth. If we don't, we are in grave danger (II Thessalonians 2:10-12; II Timothy 4:3,4). And with Paul we further admonish you, "Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle" (II Thessalonians 2:15; 3:6). Not only that, go a step further and with Jude let us "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). Amen! □



*A Series Involving the Bible and Prophecy...*

## "The Son of David"

● By DAVID VAUGHN ELLIOTT



**I**T WAS a very large crowd. As they made their way from the Mount of Olives to the city of Jerusalem, they spread garments and palm branches on the ground. Who was this who came riding on a donkey? The multitudes cried, "Hosanna to the Son of David!"

When they arrived in Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and wanted to know who it was. "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee." All this was to fulfill the prophecy: "Behold your King is coming to you, lowly, and sitting on a donkey." (See Matthew 21:1-11.)

What an emotional time for the Jews! Here was Jesus, the King, the Son of David, riding triumphantly into their capital city! Prophecy was being fulfilled before their eyes. The long-awaited Messiah had arrived! The long-awaited "Son of David," King of Israel, was in their midst.

### **From Matthew to Revelation**

The first way the New Testament identifies Jesus is as "the Son of David." Matthew opens his book this way: "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David." To a Jew of the first century, such words were full of meaning. They proclaimed Jesus to be the fulfillment of numerous prophecies. They proclaimed Him to be the long-awaited King, descendant of David.

The final way the New Testament identifies Jesus is of like nature. These words are found only six verses from the end of the Bible: "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. **I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star.**"

Jesus' Davidic ancestry was one of the basic prophetic themes of the Old Testament. Proving that Jesus descended from David is one important way to prove that He is the promised Messiah.

### The Gospel Genealogies

With proof of Messiahship in mind, Matthew begins his Gospel with a long list of names. The list does not say so; but, like so much of Matthew, the list is saying, in effect, "Thus was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophets."

Luke, also, contains a genealogical list, longer than Matthew's. It reaches back to Adam (Luke 3:23-38). From Abraham to David, the two lists are identical; but, from David to Jesus, they differ. How can that be?

Both Joseph and Mary are involved here. As for Mary, she was Jesus' physical mother. Luke tells the account of Jesus' conception from Mary's viewpoint. For example, Luke records the angel Gabriel's appearance to her.

Luke's genealogy begins: "Now Jesus Himself began His ministry at about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, the son of Heli" (Luke 3:23). With the Jews, the legal ancestral line was that of the father. Thus Joseph is mentioned. But the key is in the words "*as was supposed*." Jesus supposedly, to the world's eye, was Joseph's son. But in reality, He was not. He was Mary's son. Mary was the daughter of Heli. The ancestral line of Luke is that of Mary.

Matthew writes from Joseph's point of view. He records the angel's appearance to Joseph. The ancestral line is that of Joseph. "And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ" (Matthew 1:16). Jacob (not Heli) was the father of Joseph. Joseph was *not* the father of Jesus. Rather, he was "*the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus*."

Both Mary and Joseph were thus of the house of David. Jesus was doubly the Son of David: physically through Mary and legally through Joseph, his step-father.

Apart from the genealogies, both Matthew and Luke seem to put more emphasis on the legal ancestry. The angel addresses Joseph as "Joseph, son of David" (Matthew 1:20). Even Luke, who writes from Mary's viewpoint, makes the point of Joseph's ancestry. "And Joseph also went up...to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David" (Luke 2:4). (Note:

in Luke 1:27 "house of David" seems to refer also to Joseph. In Luke 1:32 and 69 the Davidic lineage could be through either Joseph or Mary or both.)

Matthew and Luke thus give the factual details of what the New Testament declares many times from Matthew to Revelation. Jesus is of the line of David. For example, Paul begins Romans with these words: "concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh" (Romans 1:3). To be the Messiah (Christ), Jesus had to be of the seed of David.

### God's Promise to David

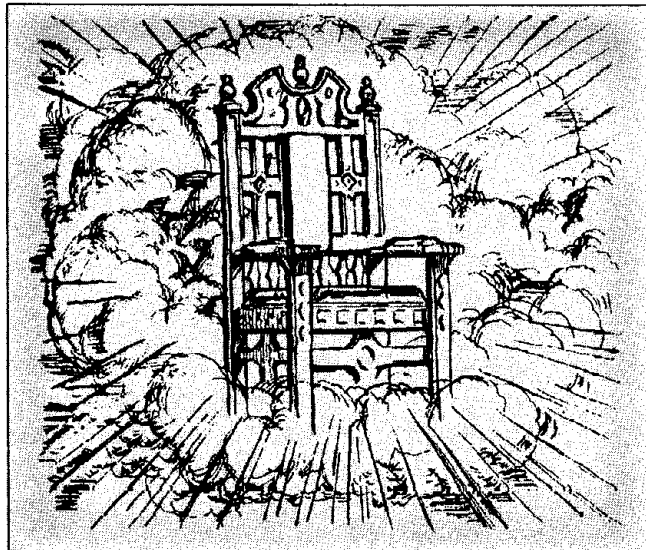
One thousand years before Jesus' birth, the promise was made to King David. God promised that even if David's son fell into sin: "My mercy shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul" (2 Samuel 7:15). Previously, because of Saul's sins, God rejected Saul's offspring from kingship. Now God promised not to do the same with Solomon. Thus, when Solomon later fell into grave sin, God did not take the kingdom from his family.

God's promise to David went even further. "And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever" (verse 16).

Psalms 89 expands upon this wonderful covenant with David. "I have made a covenant with My chosen, I have sworn to My servant David: 'Your seed I will establish forever, and build up your throne to all generations.'... I have found My servant David; ...my covenant shall stand firm with him. His seed also I will make to endure forever, and his throne as the days of heaven. If his sons forsake My law and do not walk in My judgments ...then I will punish their transgression with the rod...Nevertheless My lovingkindness I will not utterly take from him, nor allow My faithfulness to fail. My covenant I will not break, nor alter the word that has gone out of My lips. Once I have sworn by My holiness; **I will not lie to David: his seed shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before Me.**" (Psalm 89:3,4,20,28-36).

God's promises are very often conditional. The Bible is filled with such conditions. However, God's

(Continued on Next Page)



## “The Son of David”

*(Continued from Previous Page)*

covenant with David is **unconditional**. God would punish David’s sons individually for their sins. Nevertheless, “I will not lie to David: his seed shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before Me.” *Regardless* of the sins of David’s descendants, God would fulfill His promise.

What a tremendous blessing this is for us! Were it otherwise, the blessed Son of David would never have walked this earth. We would be without a King, without a Savior. God’s plan to send Jesus into the world did not depend on man’s faithfulness. It depended on God’s faithfulness. God would send His Son into the world *regardless* of what men would do. Praise God!

### David’s Line Unbroken

In the latter days of his reign, David’s own son, Solomon, fell into grave sin. As a result, God severely punished the line of David. Most of Israel was taken from the control of the house of David. “However,” said Jehovah to Solomon, “I will not tear away the whole kingdom; I will give one tribe to your son **for the sake of my servant David**, and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen” (1 Kings 11:13).

The prophet Ahijah later explained to Jeroboam that he (Jeroboam) would take away ten tribes from Solomon’s son. “But I will take the kingdom out of his (Solomon’s) son’s hand and give it to you—ten tribes. And to his son I will give one tribe, **that My servant David may always have a lamp before Me in Jerusalem**” (1 Kings 11:35,36).

The ten tribes that broke away from the house of David became known as Israel, the Northern Kingdom. Their dynasties did not last. During two hundred years of existence, there were nine dynasties. In at least some cases, God directly intervened to blot out a dynasty because of the family’s great wickedness.

The Southern Kingdom, called Judah, was ruled by the house of David. Over and again, even though there were wicked kings, God would not blot out David’s seed. “Yet Jehovah would not destroy the house of David, because of the covenant that He had made with David, and since He had promised to give a lamp to him and to his sons forever” (2 Chronicles 21:7). (See 1 Kings 15:3-5; 2 Kings 8:18,19; 20:6.)

At one point, the royal family of Israel, the North, tried to put an end to the royal family of David. That wicked king of the North, Ahab, had a daughter as evil as himself: Athaliah. She married

Jehoram, king of Judah. Their son Ahaziah reigned for one year. “When Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the royal heirs” (2 Kings 11:1).

Not quite! An infant son of Ahaziah escaped, carried off by his aunt. They hid him in the temple for six years while Athaliah reigned. Had the lamp of David gone out? It looked like it. However, when Joash (Jehoash) was seven years old, the priest Jehoiada made plans with all Judah. In the midst of great security precautions, the people proclaimed Joash king. Athaliah was slain.

In the process of making Joash king, Jehoiada explained: “Behold, the king’s son (Joash) shall reign, **as Jehovah has said of the sons of David**” (2 Chronicles 23:3). God kept His word! The house of David did not fall. For over 300 years, Judah had only one dynasty: the house of David.

### The Prophets Narrow the Promise

The promise as seen thus far stresses the continuity of kingship in the House of David. Years later, with the House of David still ruling, the prophets begin to point to one particular ruling descendant of David.

“There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse (David’s father), and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. The Spirit of Jehovah shall rest upon Him...And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, who shall stand as a banner to the people; for the Gentiles shall seek Him” (Isaiah 11:1,2,10). A Branch of Jesse would come “in that day” not only to rule over Israel, but also, “the Gentiles shall seek Him.”

The House of David ruled in Jerusalem for 300 years. The last king, Zedekiah, was carried captive when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem. The rule of the House of David seemed to end.

Hosea had foreseen this time. “For the children of Israel shall abide many days without king or prince...Afterward the children of Israel shall return, seek Jehovah their God and David their king” (Hosea 3:4,5). For some 600 years the children of Israel were without a king. At the end of that time they would seek “David their king.” The prophet Ezekiel also speaks of a time following the captivity and return when “My servant David shall be their prince forever” (Ezekiel 37:25). See Ezekiel 34:1-31; 37:15-28.

Do these prophecies, which were made centuries after David, refer to David himself? One reason for answering negatively is the way Peter interprets “David” prophecies (Acts 2:25-35). Peter quotes a Psalm in which David speaks in first person, as if speaking of himself. Then Peter explains: “the pa-



triarch David...is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Therefore, **being a prophet**, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that **of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh**, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ."

Thus, when Ezekiel, in prophecy, seems to refer to David himself, Peter's example suggests this explanation: David is dead and buried, but God made promises of a *descendant* of David. When Ezekiel says "David" prophetically, he is in reality referring to the promised descendant.

Jeremiah speaks both ways: of "David" directly and of the Branch of David. In Jeremiah 30:9: "But they shall serve Jehovah their God, and David their king." However, in 23:5 he says, "I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; a King shall reign and prosper." See also 33:15. The first says "David"; the other two say "a Branch" of David.

The texts cited in Ezekiel and Jeremiah refer to a time of captivity, return and a new King. Taking Peter as an inspired guide, and considering the parallel nature of these texts, it seems clear that the prophecies concerning "David" and concerning David's "Branch" are one and the same. "David" in prophecy is Jesus, the Son of David.

Jeremiah confirms this viewpoint in 33:17. Jeremiah does *not* say that David will arise from the dead to sit again on his throne. *Rather he says*, "David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel." This is just two verses after referring to "a Branch." Verses 19-21 affirm that if someone can stop day and night, only then can God's covenant with David be broken "so that he shall not have a son to reign on his throne." The covenant, then, does not refer to a future reign of David himself, but rather of *a son of David*.

**Fulfillment**

Centuries pass. Then, one day in the temple in Jerusalem, the Jews are debating whether Jesus is the Christ. Therefore, "some said, 'Will the Christ come out of Galilee? Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the seed of David and from the town of Bethlehem, where David was?' " (John 7:41,42). They knew the Old Testament prophecies

and were correct in what they affirmed. What they did not know was that Jesus indeed was born in Bethlehem and that He was, indeed, a descendant of David!

Another time, when Jesus miraculously healed a man both blind and mute, "all the multitudes were amazed and said, 'Could this be the Son of David?'" (Matthew 12:22,23). They had been awaiting Him for centuries. Jesus' great healing powers gave testimony to being someone very special, *perhaps the Son of David himself!*

Later, a woman with a demon-possessed daughter cried out to Jesus: "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David!" (Matthew 15:22). Sometime after, near Jericho, when two blind men heard Jesus was passing by, they cried out, "Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!" (Matthew 20:30).

Shortly thereafter came the triumphal entry. Multitudes surrounded Jesus and cried out, "Hosanna to the Son of David! . . . Blessed is the kingdom of our father David that comes in the name of the Lord!...Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!" (Matthew 21:9; Mark 11:10; Luke 19:38).

All this is in agreement with what Gabriel had told Mary about her coming son: "He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end" (Luke 1:32,33).

Is this "throne of David" physical or spiritual? There are several ways to answer the question. One way is to notice in Matthew 1:11 that Jesus is a descendant of king Jeconiah (also called Coniah), who was the second last king in Judah.

Jeremiah prophesied of Coniah: "none of his descendants shall prosper, sitting on the throne of David, and ruling anymore in Judah" (Jeremiah 22:30; see 22:24-30 and 24:1). "*None!*" And yet, Jesus is his descendant, and Gabriel told Mary that Jesus was to sit on the throne of David.

How can this apparent contradiction be harmonized, except to say that the key is: "anymore in Judah"? Coniah would have no descendants who would sit on a literal throne in Judah. However, since the various prophecies of the seed of David sitting on his throne forever, *must* be fulfilled, they then must be fulfilled spiritually. A careful study of Acts 2:25-35 leads to the same conclusion.

David's kingdom, soldiers and throne were very much "of this world." However, Jesus' kingdom is

(Continued on Next Page)

HEATHENISM, JUDAISM, AND  
CHRISTIANITY

HEATHENISM was the seeking religion; Judaism, the hoping religion; Christianity is the results of what heathenism sought and Judaism hoped for.—*Christoph Ernest Luthardt* □

# “The Son of David”

*(Continued from Previous Page)*

“not of this world” and his subjects are not materially armed soldiers (John 18:36). Thus, Jesus’ throne is not of this world, either.

Jeremiah 33:18, the next verse after a “throne” prophecy, speaks of Levites offering burnt offerings before God continually. This should warn any careful Bible student not to always press for a literal fulfillment. In the case of Levites and burnt offerings, a literal fulfillment would deny the Gospel. That’s the subject of Hebrews chapters 7 through 10. “The priesthood being changed” (7:12). “In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure” (10:6). This calls for a spiritual, symbolic interpretation of Jeremiah 33:18. Verses 17 and 18 (of Jeremiah 33) form a single sentence. Since the second half of the sentence is symbolic, there is good reason to believe that the first half, about the throne, is also spiritual and symbolic in nature.

## “Son of David” Not Enough

“Son of David” was an inspiring concept to the Jews of old. However, they were mislead. They had the idea of an earthly king, earthly throne and earthly kingdom, all like David’s. They were thinking of military action and political solutions. Once, indeed, “they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king” (John 6:15). Jesus escaped from their materially minded hands! To conceive of Jesus as *only* or *principally* the physical Son of David is quite inadequate. It misses the mark.

We cannot proudly blame the Jews of Jesus’ day for their materialistic viewpoint. Given the “flavor” of many Old Testament prophecies, we would surely have had the same views as they. Today, however, we have the New Testament interpretation of the Old Testament prophecies. Certainly, we must look at the Old through the eyes of the New, *not visa versa*. Just as Peter on the day of Pentecost interpreted the “Son of David” and “throne of David” prophecies in the light of Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection, so must we.

When Paul preached about Jesus being the Son of David, he did not refer to an earthly kingdom. Rather he referred to Jesus as Savior. “He (God) raised up for them David as king...From this man’s seed, according to the promise, God raised up for Israel a Savior—Jesus” (Acts 13:22,23).

Jesus, himself, dealt with the “Son of David” prophecies. Shortly after the triumphal entry, there was a great day of questions in the temple. This was Jesus’ final week before his death on Calvary. The Pharisees, Sadducees and scribes challenged

Jesus with difficult questions. Jesus’ replies to these “clergy” were so brilliant, that “after that no one dared question Him” (Mark 12:34).

Then it was Jesus’ turn to ask them a question. “What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?” They said to Him, “The Son of David.” He said to them, “How then does David in the Spirit call Him “Lord,” saying: “The Lord said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool’”? If David then calls Him “Lord,” how is He his Son?” And no one was able to answer Him a word” (Matthew 22:41-46).

*(Continued on Page 10)*

## BIBLE QUESTIONS

*(Random Questions Over the Bible)*

1. What cities were given to Caleb and Joshua (the spies who gave a good report) as an inheritance in the land of Canaan?
2. When and where was Joseph buried?
3. What were the three annual feasts when every male Israelite was supposed to appear before the LORD?
4. Which judge of Israel made a rash vow to God that he promised to fulfill if God delivered their enemies into his hands, and what was this vow that he later regreted?
5. According to the Scriptures, what prompted (or provoked) David to “number” Israel (take a census)?
6. Which is the longest chapter in the Bible?
7. What proverb is stated twice in the book of Proverbs?
8. “The glory of young men is \_\_\_\_\_; and the beauty of old men is \_\_\_\_\_.”
9. What miracle was the beginning of miracles performed by Christ?
10. Where were Jesus and his disciples when Peter made the great confession that he was the Christ the Son of the Living God?
11. Where are the only two places in the four gospel accounts that the term “church” is found?
12. Of what is the term “church” (*ekklesia*) used two times in the New Testament not referring to Christians?
13. What two martyrdoms are recorded in the book of Acts?
14. How many times is an account of Paul’s conversion found in the book of Acts (and in what chapters)?
15. What chapter in the Bible is primarily about love?
16. What chapter in the Bible is primarily about the resurrection?
17. What chapter in the Bible is primarily about faith?
18. In the letter to the Philippians, what seems to be the only problem in the church addressed by the apostle Paul?
19. What does the apostle Peter admonish his readers to have among themselves which he said would “cover a multitude of sins”?
20. Where and who were some people called a “synagogue of Satan” in the New Testament?

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



# READERS'

## ...Response

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

### FLORIDA:

■ *"Please send me 5 books of POEMS OF THE SOUL by James Gibbons. Thank you."*

### MARYLAND:

■ *"Enclosed is check...for your publication. I have been receiving it for 2-3 years. It is very good. Keep up the good work..."*

### PENNSYLVANIA:

■ *"Please mail requested 2 volumes and accept the balance as a donation for your work. You had previously sent me some tracts which I have in my insurance agency for who-so-ever wants. Continue to keep up your great work."*

### OHIO:

■ *"I greet you as a brother in the faith of the Lord!  
"I am concerned, because I have yet to be able to access your Web Site."*

*"It is my sincere hope that it is simply under construction, and nothing has happened to keep you off the Web with the message of the gospel. I will await its arrival with great anticipation."*

■ *"I really like your SWORD AND STAFF, and agree with your work on so many subjects. Keep up the good work, and may God grant his healing...Here's a check for help with your work, and also I want a volume of your POEMS OF THE SOUL AND PROVERBS by James Gibbons"*

### INDIANA:

■ *"Please remove my name from your mailing list."*

■ *"...The enclosed is not what I would like to send you, but perhaps it will serve to help pay some of your constant costs of your ever effective ministry. In addition, I can continue to pray that your ministry becomes more and more the effective instrument for bringing us sinners to Christ."*

### IOWA:

■ *"May we have 10 copies sent each month to...Thank you, and we appreciate your stand for the Lord! Keep on for Christ!"*

■ *"Thank you for sending me THE SWORD AND STAFF...Would you pray for me that I may live and serve God? If you would, I would appreciate it. I will pray for THE SWORD AND STAFF being sent out. Thanks so much for everything."*

### MISSOURI:

■ *"Enclosed is a check...for the magazine that I enjoy reading very much...my father...had this sent to me many years ago and I have enjoyed it all this time."*

### ARIZONA:

■ *"We really enjoy receiving THE SWORD AND STAFF (since 1977)."*

### CALIFORNIA:

■ *"Please cancel..."*

■ *"Thank you, brother Gibbons, for your many hours of work put into the publication. Keep up the good work. God bless your efforts."*

### MEXICO:

■ *"Today for first time I read in my mother language THE SWORD AND STAFF in Spanish, and I enjoy."*

*"I enjoy because for many years I believe we are only Christians and belong to the body of Jesus, but many fellow preachers are saying we are another denominational church; I feel like I am preaching in the desert..."*

### NIGERIA:

■ *"I beg most respectfully to apply for copies of your religious materials THE SWORD AND STAFF published by you (old and new issues). I happened to glance through the paper a week ago, and noted the contents with keen interest and found it to be very useful in spiritual education. I am happy to see that such a publication is in existence. I want to be a regular reader of THE SWORD AND STAFF..."*

■ *"Calvary greetings in his most Holy Name. Please, I will be very glad if you will allow for God to use you in equipping me more for the battle ahead through your publication THE SWORD AND STAFF. Please put me on the mailing list of THE SWORD AND STAFF. Please, this desire developed in me after reading...your publication in \_\_\_\_\_ office this afternoon. I will be very grateful to God if my humble request is granted. God bless you." (Continued on Next Page)*

# READERS'...Response

(Continued from Previous Page)

## AUSTRALIA:

■ "God bless you. Please may I request a sample, and subscription info regarding your publications? Sea-mail delivery is fine, to cut costs.

"Thanks. I look forward to joining your mailing list."

## PHILIPPINES:

■ "...Thanking EL YAHWEH for all things and for His people as you who've been of much blessing to us. YEHWEEH bless you and have mercy on us." □



# "The Son of David"

(Continued from Page 8)

Jesus was not denying that He was the "Son of David." That would be to contradict Scripture. Rather, Jesus put this difficulty to them so that they (we) could think more deeply. Is the Messiah the Son of David or the Lord of David? They did not know. Christians from Pentecost to the twentieth century *do* know. Jesus is **both!** It is just as Romans 1:3,4 says: "Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David **according to the flesh**, and declared to be the Son of God with power **according to the Spirit of holiness.**"

Jesus was striving to get them (us) to understand that there is more to Messiahship than a physical relationship to David. That physical relationship did indeed exist. However, Jesus is divine! His Kingship is far above any mere earthly kingship of David. He was indeed the Son of David; but He is also the only begotten Son of almighty God! □



# What is Money?

**YEARS AGO**, one of the great London newspapers sponsored a contest for the best definition of money.

The prize went to a crippled girl living somewhere in rural England. From her country home, she wrote this definition:

"Money is a commodity that will buy anything—but health and happiness. It is the universal passport to everywhere—except heaven."

Money is necessary to live today. But God wants us to put Him first. God wants us to understand that money is a mere temporary item. Earth and all the elements therein shall one day be destroyed. Then the only thing that will matter will be IF we obeyed God and completely followed His instructions. Money will not be able to buy our way into heaven!—**Selected** □

# PRINCIPLES GOVERNING THE PUBLIC ASSEMBLY OF THE CHURCH

(Continued from Page 1)

ally? That which should be worship is reduced to entertainment.

Other things could be said. But let us remember the simple truth that the assembly is for the saints, and let us keep the high level of spirituality that should be there. Too many times today in more ways than one there is no boundary line between the church and the world. Forgetting its role, the church becomes civic oriented and is little more than a social organization in the community.

## II. MEN ARE TO TAKE

### THE LEAD IN THE PUBLIC ASSEMBLY

Paul wrote his young associate, Timothy, "These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly; but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (I Timothy 3:14,15, NKJV). Some translations represent what is said to Timothy as being so that "men" might know how to conduct themselves in the church. Whether Timothy or men generally speaking, the message is the same. The epistle of I Timothy regulates the public life of the church.

In I Timothy, chapter 2, Paul deals with praying and teaching in the church. Having given instructions about praying, he sums it up by saying, "I desire therefore that the **men** pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting" (I Timothy 2:8, NKJV). The word "men" has the Greek word **aner** behind it. **Aner** means a male as a male in contrast with a female. The next verse, I Timothy 2:9, puts the woman in contrast with the male. Men are to take the lead in prayer everywhere, including the public assembly, which women are not to do. Men as men are to do this, to pray, leading out in the public assembly.

Having said, "in like manner," focusing in on their responsibility in relationship and contrast to the man, Paul gives instructions about the woman's modest adornment in the assembly (which we will notice in the next point) and the woman not teaching or usurping authority over the man. Paul wrote, "Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence [the reasons for this follow]. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman

being deceived, fell into transgression" (I Timothy 2:11-14). This teaching is further verified in I Corinthians 14:34 when Paul said, "Let your women keep silent in the churches [assemblies], for they are not permitted to speak [teach over men]; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says" (NKJV).



**Confused About Which Way to Go?**

GO BACK TO THE BIBLE AND THE LOCAL,  
UNDENOMINATIONAL NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH,  
AND YOU WILL BE RIGHT ON COURSE.

In this day with homosexuals overtly and unashamedly asserting themselves, and with the breaking down of the distinctive roles of male and female in our society, what Paul said is not very popular. Few believe and accept it, let alone practice it. But God has placed the responsibility on man to take the leadership in the public assembly (as well as in the home).

**III. MODESTY OF DRESS SHOULD  
PREVAIL IN THE PUBLIC ASSEMBLY**

It is rather interesting after saying that men as men are to take the leadership in praying, Paul writes, "In like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works" (I Timothy 2:9,10, NKJV). Then he continues about women not teaching or having authority over man. Although modest apparel is appropriate everywhere (I Peter 3:1-6), it is especially desirable in the public assembly. There should be no detraction and distraction from true worship and God receiving the glory.

This problem is somewhat dealt with in James chapter 2. Here apparently a non-Christian visitor comes to their assembly. He gets all of the attention, with his gold rings and fancy clothes very

much in evidence. The poor are slighted. The chapter starts out by saying, "My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, *the Lord of glory*, with partiality" (NKJV). Notice it calls Christ, "the Lord of glory." This is in contrast with the dude in the fancy clothes. Christ should be the one getting the attention (he is "the Lord of glory"), and the poor should not be neglected and discriminated against.

And while we are at it, let us add another needed thought. We are living in casual times when men are not dressing up; they are dressing down. This is not all bad, but the assembling of the church should be looked upon as a very special and sacred occasion. How revolting to see people even wearing shorts to church today in some places! Modest apparel is needed any way that you look at it.

**IV. "LET ALL THINGS BE DONE FOR  
EDIFICATION" IN THE PUBLIC ASSEMBLY**

Paul wrote in I Corinthians 14:26, "How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. *Let all things be done for edification*" (NKJV). This section of Scripture involves the exercise of charismatic gifts in the early church. Although these spiritual gifts as such are not available to us today, the principle of what he said here solidly holds true: "Let all things be done for edification." The words edification, edify, and edifice all carry the same idea—that of building, building up. Of course he is talking about spiritual edification. Everything in connection with the public assembly should be toward that end.

The "pulpit" is no place for carnal levity. Singing, while joyful and jubilant, should really be spiritual, Scriptural and conducted in an atmosphere of respect. Non-Christian and professional singing groups do not fit into the context of true spiritual edification. Entertainment and edification are not necessarily the same thing. Then, do the teaching programs and literature used really teach? Or, are they just entertainment and baby sitting devices? Are the activities with the young people just play programs void of emphasis on that which is spiritual with edification being nil for all practical purposes? Are they taught to be any different from the world? Are they different?

Paul wanted edification accomplished in the exercise of their spiritual gifts at Corinth. And the Word of God must be gotten across to really bring about spiritual edification. Paul admonished the Ephesian elders, "So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is

(Continued on Next Page)

# PRINCIPLES GOVERNING THE PUBLIC ASSEMBLY OF THE CHURCH

*(Continued from Previous Page)*

able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified" (Acts 20:32, NKJV). Let us be satisfied with nothing less than true spiritual edification.

## **V. "LET ALL THINGS BE DONE DECENTLY AND IN ORDER" IN THE PUBLIC ASSEMBLY**

That is what Paul said in I Corinthians 14:40, "Let all things be done decently and in order." This is at the climax of the chapter dealing with the abuse of spiritual gifts. They are given guidelines about people speaking another language and then someone interpreting it. Without an interpreter, they were to keep quiet. They are told about how to pray. The prophets were to speak orderly in sequence by two or three and then sit down. God is a God of order and he wants it in the church. Paul asserts, "For God is not the author of confusion [disorder] but of peace, as in all the churches [assemblies] of the saints" (I Corinthians 14:33).

Today a generation brought up on "Rock 'n' Roll" music seems to have brought it over into the church. The loud and blustery sounds drown out what Paul has to say here. Elderly saints in the church have been seen to cringe at such irreligious noise. Then certain denominations are characterized by excessive noise making in their worship. One would think that they thought the Lord was hard of hearing. And they all pray aloud (and loud) at the same time. This seems to be in violation and contradiction with what Paul teaches in I Corinthians 14:16. Paul asks, "How will he who occupies the place of the uninformed say 'Amen' at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say?" (NKJV). If a man was praying in a language foreign to those who heard it, they could not intelligently say "Amen." They would not know what the man said. It seems to have been their practice back then for one to lead out in prayer and others to say "Amen" at the end of the prayer. And today how can people say "Amen" at the end of prayer when everyone is praying aloud at the same time? No one can understand what is being said, and it is not "done decently and in order."

Yes, let everything be done decently and in order by the hymns being selected and the worship being planned out in advance. Let everything be done in a context and an atmosphere of respect. We are approaching the great God of eternity. We come in

awe before Him. But at the same time may our worship not degenerate into lifeless formalism and ritualism. As we direct our worship "decently and in order," let us worship the Lord in spirit and in truth as it comes from our hearts.

Perhaps there are other principles that could be called to your attention involving the public assembly of the church. However, these are enough for us to seriously ponder upon now with a view to putting them into practice. Yes, there are definite principles that govern the public assembly of the church. And they are what the Lord wants. □



## **THE GREAT CENTRAL FACT IN HISTORY**

**CHRIST IS** the great central fact in the world's history; to him everything looks forward or backward. All the lines of history converge upon him. All the march of providence is guided by him. All the great purposes of God culminate in him. The greatest and most momentous fact which the history of the world records is the fact of his birth.

*—Charles Haddon Spurgeon*



## **Christianity**

**CHRISTIANITY** everywhere gives dignity to labor, sanctity to marriage, and brotherhood to man. Where it may not convince, it enlightens; where it does not convert it restrains; where it does not renew, it refines; where it does not sanctify, it subdues and elevates. It is profitable for this world, and for the world to come.

*—Sir George St. Patrick Lawrence*



## **The Bloody Sheep Dog**

**THE STORY** is told of the farmer who returned and found a dead sheep. His sheep dog was covered in blood. He jumped to the conclusion that his sheep dog had killed the sheep, so he got his gun and shot the dog. On his way to the barn to get a shovel to bury the dog and the sheep, he discovered a dead wolf. The sheep dog was bloody from the blood of the wolf he had killed.

How easily we can listen to bits of gossip and draw conclusions about someone. Many a decent and good man or woman, like the sheep dog, has been wrongly accused and hurt because someone jumped to conclusions without checking the facts. How much damage and hurt could be avoided if we would take the time to ascertain the facts before we do irreparable harm to an innocent person.—*Selected* □

# The Springtime of Life

**BESTOW** thy youth so that thou mayst have comfort to remember it, when it hath forsaken thee, and not sigh and grieve at the account thereof. Whilst thou art young thou wilt think it will never have an end; but behold, the longest day hath his evening, and thou shalt enjoy it but once; it never turns again; use it therefore as the springtime, which soon departeth, and wherein thou oughtest to plant and sow all provisions for a long and happy life.—*Sir Walter Raleigh*      □



## BARBS... with a Point

**LET** your speech be better than silence or be silent.

*“Soft soap” will not take away the stain of sin.*

It is our conviction that truth is not to be made the vehicle of sectarian wrangling, but is to be preached and enjoyed simply for what it is.

*Before you jump on the “bandwagon” make sure it is going in the right direction.*

Our aim is not to write anybody “up” or write anybody “off,” but to be right with the Lord, walk in the paths of righteousness, and try to get as many others as we can to do the same.

*When there is irregular behavior, there usually is something irregular going on.*

A woman may wear a long dress and have long hair, but if she has a long tongue, she is a long way from being right with the Lord.

*Are you the problem, part of the problem, or the solution to the problem?*

If we do not assemble with God’s people down here, it is a foregone conclusion that we are not going to be assembling with them up there in the hereafter.

*You cannot backslide without it working havoc and devastation in the lives of your children too.*

Parents, if you compromise and give in to your wayward children, they will not have anything to come back to when they see the error of their way.

*Much of television feeds the carnal mind about like putting gasoline on a fire.*

The *highmindedness* of some “ministers” of religion can easily be detected in their showy display of degrees from institutions of “higher learning.”

*To live only in the past is to make all accomplishments in your life past tense.*

People who are not with “one accord” in the church are loose stones (not in the structure of the Lord’s house) that are stumbling blocks to others.

*An idle person with time on his hands will end up in the devil’s hands if he is not careful.*

The experience of suffering can clear the air and settle the dust in a person’s life, but then again with some it only leaves them stuck in the muddy mire.

*We may throw out the baby with the bath water when we are more concerned about the dirt than we are the baby.*

When your children have memories and mental pictures of their dad, do they see a flashy dude dressed like a California playboy, or a God-fearing man whose very countenance and demeanor emanate godliness?

*Yelling at children is no substitute for discipline.*

When the fervor and impetus of a religious movement wears off, it becomes history and solidifies into a denominational monument.      □



## Blessed is the Man

**BLESSED IS THE MAN** who can criticize himself before criticizing others.

**BLESSED IS THE MAN** who always puts God first.

**BLESSED IS THE MAN** who is as pleasant at home as he is when the world is watching.

**BLESSED IS THE MAN** who realizes that God meant him to live eternally and act accordingly.

**BLESSED IS THE MAN** who is quick to apologize for wrongdoing.

**BLESSED IS THE MAN** who knows right from wrong and indomitably sticks to the right.

**BLESSED IS THE MAN** who is easy to live with.

**BLESSED IS THE MAN** who can say “NO” to temptation and stick with it.

**BLESSED IS THE MAN** who loves God supremely.

**BLESSED IS THE MAN** who fears God for he need fear nothing else.—*Selected*      □

### OBNOXIOUS SINS

Sodomy, Drunkenness,  
Partiality, Conceit, Selfishness,  
Greed, Self-righteousness,

And the list goes on. Actually all sin is an abomination and obnoxious to God.      □

## Excuse **Busters**

**F**OR EVERYTHING that needs to be done, there are always dozens of excuses for not doing it. Doubt and fear will paralyze you if you let them. Resolve to bust your excuses by turning them on their head. Your goals, your dreams are too important to be stopped by lame excuses. The next time you feel an excuse coming on, fight back with this list of excuse busters.

*I don't know how*—Then make the effort to learn.

*It's too hard*—Anything worth having, or doing, or being, requires effort.

*It will take too long*—Then that's all the more reason to get started right away.

*What will people think*—That's their problem. Let them think what they will. It doesn't matter.

*I'll do it as soon as I get back on my feet*—Taking positive action toward your goals is precisely what will GET you back on your feet.

*I might fail*—Yes, when you try you might fail. However, if you don't try, then you'll certainly fail.

*I'm too busy*—What are you accomplishing with all that busy-ness? Simply being "busy" gets you nowhere. Stop being busy, evaluate your priorities, and start taking focused, directed action.

*I don't know where to start*—Envision the ultimate goal, and work backwards, step by step, until you arrive at something that can be done right now. Then do it. "The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." Take that step, and then the next one. Repeat until done.

*I have too many obligations*—In order to be of service to others, you must first be true to your own purpose in life. Your obligation to yourself is what enables you to fulfill your obligations to others.

*These things never work out*—That is correct. "Things" never do work out. You must work them out. The various situations you encounter provide you with opportunities, not sure bets. You must recognize those opportunities and do the work necessary to take advantage of them.

You deserve the best from yourself—no excuses. Spend your energy taking action, rather than thinking up excuses. —**Daily Motivator** □

---

## Sell the Ox, or Fix the Ditch

**D**ID YOU ever try to soothe your conscience for missing a gospel service by saying, "The ox fell in the ditch, and I just had to pull it out," or maybe you tried to cover up some other misdeed with the same saying?

This expression originated when Christ was criticized by the Pharisees for healing on the Sabbath

day. He asked, "Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the Sabbath day?" (Luke 14:5) Jesus was trying to show them how unreasonable their criticism was. They would not hesitate to rescue an animal from a dangerous situation. Human life is much more valuable than animals.

But here is where the parallel ceases. Some have seized upon this incident to excuse themselves from doing the Lord's will. Some have said, "Sunday is the only time I have to rest. I worked soooo hard last week." "They offered me double pay for working on Sunday. You wouldn't expect me to turn that down, would you?" "The old car just quit. Sunday was the only day. You know, the ox fell in the ditch and I just had to pull it out." One man even went so far as to say, "I am sure the Lord will understand."

To those who so misuse and misapply this Bible incident, we suggest at least three things.

1. Do not deliberately push the ox into the ditch, so you will have an excuse to pull it out. For shame, what hypocrisy!

2. Sell that ox! If you had an ox that looked for a ditch to fall into, you would sell him—*fast*! If your business or job takes so much of your time that you cannot serve Christ, *sell it*. Change jobs, whatever...

3. Fill the ditch! No sensible farmer would leave an "ox trap" around very long. He would take no chances that valuable animals would be destroyed. Why not use the same good judgment about your soul? Why constantly expose your soul to the devil's destructive ways?

For the sake of your soul's salvation, either sell the ox, or fill up the ditch!—**Good Reading** □



## Are You A Winner?

The winner is always part of the answer;

The loser is always part of the problem.

The winner always has a program;

The loser always has an excuse.

The winner says, "Let me do it for you.";

The loser says, "That's not my job."

The winner sees an answer in every problem;

The loser sees a problem in every answer.

The winner says, "It may be difficult, but it's possible";

The loser says, "It may be possible, but it's too difficult."

The winner feels responsible for more than his job;

The loser says, "I only work here."

Are you a winner? Be a winner!—**Adapted** □





# Spiritual Food for Thought

~By J. Andrew Gibbons~

THAT WHICH 'PASSETH ALL UNDERSTANDING'



Forget the slander that you hear before you repeat it;  
Forget each slight, each spite, each sneer, wherever you may meet it.  
Remember every kindness done to you, whatever its measure;  
Remember praise by others won, and pass it on with pleasure;  
Remember every promise made and keep it to the letter;  
Remember those who lend you aid and be a grateful debtor;  
Remember all the happiness that comes your way in living;  
Forget each worry and distress, be hopeful and forgiving;  
Remember good, remember truth, remember heaven's above you,  
And you will find, thru age and youth that many hearts will love you.—**Selected**

Proverbs 4:23, "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life."

As we think about this verse in Proverbs, it is evident that the writer is not talking about our physical heart but our invisible heart, or our mind. The heart is central control of our being.

Matthew 12:34, "...Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks."

Our heart will be made known by our words and actions. The invisible heart is where both good and evil begin. Jesus talked about what defiled a man as being that which comes from the heart.

Matthew 15:18-19, "But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies."

Let us take seriously this matter of our heart. The mind is a terrible thing to waste. □

## PREACHER, WHAT WILL YOU BE REMEMBERED BY AND FOR WHEN YOU ARE GONE?

**P**REACHER, when your life has touched others, and you have moved on, or died, what will you be remembered *by* and *for*? When people think about you, what over-riding thoughts will enter their minds? What lingering thoughts will be there?

Will people remember you for fearlessly and passionately preaching the Word of God?

Will people remember you because you were godly and consistently lived what you preached?

Will people remember you because you carefully and faithfully taught and preached the Word of God?

Will people remember you for your concern for the lost, holy living, and trying to get people to do that which is right?

Will people remember you because you were loving, considerate, and even-handed in dealing with people?

Will people remember you for your compromise, soft-peddling the gospel, and fearfulness of offending somebody?

Will people remember you because of your efforts to impress them with your intellectual superiority and scholastic attainments?

Will people remember you for your wisecracks, corny jokes, and endless silly talk?

Will people remember you for being rude, inconsiderate, and unkind to your wife and others?

Will people remember you for living above your means, being debt-ridden, and not paying your bills?

Will people remember you as the preacher who was always fussing about one thing or another?

We could go on and on. An extended list of questions could be asked. But we hope these are enough to prod our minds into sober and serious thinking.

Consider II Corinthians 6:4-10.—**J.E.G.** □



### Answers to: BIBLE QUESTIONS

1. Joshua 14:6-15; Joshua 19:49,50; 2. Genesis 50:24-26; Joshua 24:32; 3. Exodus 23:14-17; 34:22,23; Deuteronomy 16:16,17; 4. Judges 11:29-40; 5. I Chronicles 21:1; 6. Psalms 119; 7. Proverbs 14:12; 16:25; 8. Proverbs 20:29; 9. John 2:1-11; 10. Matthew 16:13-16; 11. Matthew 16:18; Matthew 18:17; 12. Acts 7:38; Acts 19:32,39,41 ("assembly"=church); 13. Acts 7:57-60; Acts 12:1,2; 14. Three times: Acts 9, 22, 26; 15. I Corinthians 13; 16. I Corinthians 15; 17. Hebrews 11; 18. Philippians 4:2; 19. I Peter 4:8; 20. Revelation 2:8,9. □



The  
**Sword AND Staff**  
**Treasure**

MANY who love the Word of God have discovered Treasure much to their liking when they obtained the bound volumes of *The Sword and Staff*. If you like this current issue, you will likewise be thrilled with the back copies in book form. Notice those still available (while they are still available), and place your order now for good reading. Make them part of your library *and part of your life*. You will be glad that you did. ☐



**The Christian's  
Way of Self-Reliance**  
*"I can do all things through Christ  
who strengthens me"*  
—*Philippians 4:13*

**The Image of His Son**

When we present ourselves to God subdued,  
We are ready then to find ourselves renewed;  
A life laid out by wise design awaits,  
All which God takes and now facilitates;  
He forms in us the image of His Son,  
And living now for him we are as one.

—*By James E. Gibbons*

☐ 1995-1996 bound volume of *The Sword and Staff*—\$7.75

**(CLIP AND MAIL\OR WRITE)**

Gentlemen:  
Enclosed find my contribution. Please put me on the mailing list of *The Sword and Staff*. ☐ New ☐ Renew  
**Name:** .....  
**Address (with zip):** .....

**Check for bound volumes of *The Sword and Staff***

- ☐ 1985-86 bound volume of *The Sword and Staff*—\$6.95
- ☐ 1987-88 bound volume of *The Sword and Staff*—\$7.25
- ☐ 1989-90 bound volume of *The Sword and Staff*—\$7.25
- ☐ 1991-92 bound volume of *The Sword and Staff*—\$7.25
- ☐ 1993-94 bound volume of *The Sword and Staff*—\$7.50
- ☐ *Poems of The Soul and Proverbs* (by James E. Gibbons)—\$5.00; 5 or more copies, \$4.00 each.

*Do You Have Your Copy Yet?*

**Poems of the Soul and Proverbs**

*By James E. Gibbons*

THIS different approach in expressing truth makes for interest and appeal. Many people have ordered and keep ordering this little book of poems and proverbs by the editor. Here are some ways it is being used.

- For personal reading
- For personal gifts to family and friends
- To give to whole churches
- To use in preparing church bulletins
- To give to senior citizens groups
- To give to the sick, the shut in and people in hospitals

It is suggested that you send \$5.00 for a single book, and if you order five or more, \$4.00 per book to help with the printing and mailing cost. Thank you! ☐

**Order Today**

**The Power of Kindness**

I OFTEN WONDER why people do not make more of the marvelous power there is in kindness. It is the greatest lever to move the hearts of men that the world has ever known—greater by far than anything that mere ingenuity can devise, or subtlety suggest. Kindness is the kingpin of success in life; it is the prime factor in overcoming friction and making the human machinery run smoothly. If a man is your enemy, you cannot disarm him in any other way so surely as by doing him a kind act.—*Selected*

● **HELP US REACH OUT TO MORE PEOPLE AND CHURCHES WITH THIS PUBLICATION. Thanks!**

▼ **Check Out Our Web Site:**

<http://web.infoave.net/~jgibbons/index.htm>

**THE SWORD AND STAFF**  
Post Office Box 147  
Mt. Airy, N.C. 27030  
U.S.A.  
Telephone: (910) 789-1044

Non-Profit Organ-  
-U.S. POSTAGE-  
P A I D  
Permit No. 25