

The Sword AND Staff

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

Remembering the Last Words ~ of People in the Bible ~



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MAKING a study of the words spoken by people as they neared the end of their lives is highly interesting and profitable. What really mattered to them at this point in time, and what they said as they were about to leave this world, is very revealing. It tells us a lot. It has been said that if you want some good advice on how to live, ask someone who is about to die (or take note of what they said). We wish to briefly call your attention to the last words of several different people in the Bible facing death. This can be taken from there to make a more detailed study.

Jacob's Last Words (Genesis 48-49)

The last words of Jacob can be found in Genesis chapters 48 (starting with 47:27) and 49. We could say that he was a carnal man, who in his own way appreciated spiritual things, but went about by carnal means to bring them about. Now over the years Jacob the supplanter has become Israel, prince of God. However, even on his deathbed, the practice of favoritism and partiality has not left him. He adopts the two sons of Joseph and pronounces special blessings upon them (and then sets aside the normal procedure for doing this). All of the sons of Jacob who would become the twelve tribes of Israel have the words of blessing and prophecy spoken over them, even looking to the last days (49:1) and to the coming of “Shiloh” (the rest-giver, Christ) unto whom the gathering of the people would be (49:10). God used the old patriarchal blessings in a prophetic way. Even certain traits of Jacob's sons, good and bad, would be lived out in their tribes to come. But this nation of people, faltering as they were, would keep the faith in the one true God alive until the Savior of mankind came into the world through them. The foundation was being laid for the rest of the Bible. And thus, having spoken, Jacob dies, with the understanding that his body would be interred in the cave of Machpelah at Hebron back in Canaan.

Moses' Last Words (Deuteronomy 31-34)

Perhaps all of the book of Deuteronomy could be considered as the last words of Moses. After forty years of wandering in the Wilderness, and now encamped in the plains of Moab, Moses the great emancipator and Lawgiver of Israel, rehearses the law all over to them again before they enter the Promised Land. He will not be able to

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—THANK YOU—

Proverbially **SPEAKING...**

GOOD WORKS do not save us, but we cannot be saved without them.

We have to be in the will of God before God will answer our prayers according to His will (1 John 5:14, 15).

When we fear God, it is then that we can know His comfort (Acts 9:31).

God is holy (1 Peter 1:16) and everything about our worship should be holy, starting with "lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting" (1 Timothy 2:8).

Your energy is uselessly spent unless it is spent on that which is useful.

When you count your blessings and name them one by one, you will run out of time before the day is done.

Motivation, hard work, and frugality are keys to financial success.

When the inner man is spiritually clothed with Christ, the outer person will take steps to be appropriately clothed also (1 Timothy 2:9, 10).

You cannot be a GOOD TEACHER without being a GOOD teacher.

If something is not right, it is not right; and regardless how much we may rationalize and adapt ourselves to the situation, it's still not right.

EDITORIAL COMMENTS



PETER, JAMES AND JOHN

JESUS CHOSE twelve men to be his apostles. A listing of the original twelve can be found in Matthew 10:2-4; Mark 3:14-19; Luke 6:12-16; and Acts 1:13 (minus Judas). There was no mistake in choosing these men, as the Lord had prayed all night long before taking this step (Luke 6:12), and he knew what was in man (John 2:25). Each of them with his respective background, personality and abilities would fit into the Lord's plan in being his official spokesmen and eyewitnesses.

However, in the listings of the apostles, Peter, James and John always head the list (Mark 3:16, 17; Acts 1:13; sometimes with Andrew, Matthew 10:2; Luke 6:14). These men had been the first ones chosen by Christ to make up the twelve. It seems they had been previously associated in the fishing trade (Luke 5:10). Repeatedly, they are mentioned as the three-some who accompanied the Lord in unique situations (Matthew 17:1-9; Mark 5:35-43; Mark 14:32-42). They were leaders among leaders. And of these three, Peter seems to always be in the forefront.

We don't know much about the other disciples (of the twelve), but Peter, James and John were men with strong, robust and assertive personalities. Of them, Peter always seemed to be the first one to speak or to take action in any given situation (Matthew 14:28,29; 15:15; 16:13-16, 21-23; 17:4; 18:21; 19:27; 26:33; John 6:68; 13:6-9,36; 18:10; etc.). They didn't hesitate to let others know what they thought. Sometimes they seemed emotional and impetuous. Sometimes they seemed self-centered and even abrasive (Mark 10:35-45; Luke 9:51-56). It is no wonder that the Lord called James and John the "sons of thunder." And, yet, the Lord chose these men. And they always head the list of the disciples, and that was not without reason.

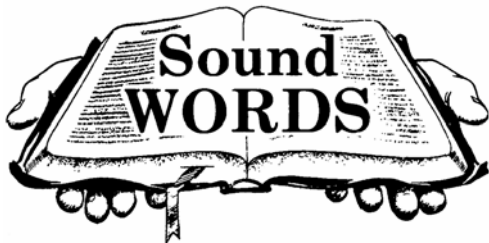
Even in the rough, these kind of men are leaders. They just need to get the "rough" edges "knocked off" so that the Lord can use them. Christianity refines our personalities. Men who have been rude and intrusive can go through a radical change. That driving force is still in them, but they are now unashamedly bold and outspoken in a good way, presenting the message of heaven. The night before his crucifixion, looking ahead, the Lord told Peter, "When thou art converted [when you turn], strengthen thy brethren" (Luke 22:32). The "sons of thunder" would experience the baptism of which the Lord spoke (Mark 10:39). Even in the Old Testament, the impulsive Moses who killed an Egyptian, after forty years of exile in the desert, was a different man. Numbers 12:3 says, "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the

men which were upon the face of the earth.” When one gets all of the “rough” edges “knocked off,” sometimes there’s not much left. And that is the way it should be so that Christ might be all and all (Galatians 2:20). Self just needs to be gotten out of the way.

With the coming of the Holy Spirit and the establishment of the church, Peter, James and John are still in the forefront (with Peter leading, Acts 1:15; 2:14,37,38; 5:3,29; etc.). As we stated, they were leaders among leaders (Galatians 2:9). That fleshly tendency and impulsive urge to be the first to speak up has been turned into boldness and outspokenness for the Lord. That being the case, they became lightening rods, drawing the wrath of those who opposed the gospel. Peter and John are the first to end up in prison, but that did not silence them. Later we read that “Herod killed James the brother of John with the sword. And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also...” (Acts 12:2, 3). However, Peter was spared by the deliverance of the angel. Of the “sons of thunder,” James becomes the first of the twelve disciples to suffer martyrdom. The years mellowed his brother John. We remember him now as the “apostle of love.” He would become the last of the twelve apostles to die, and it would be a natural death.

The Lord has set different kinds of workers in the church (1 Corinthians 12:14-27), and those who have leadership abilities are the ones who should lead. Those were the kind of men the Lord chose. But leaders are to meet certain qualifications (1 Timothy 3; etc.). From conversion, through Christian growth and experiences in life, the “rough” edges are “knocked off.” With the “rough” edges “knocked off,” self is gotten out of the way. Then we are controlled by God. We are refined to channel our energies in an acceptable way in serving the Lord. This is true of leaders and every one of us. Let us comply accordingly. □

“Hold fast the form of sound words...”



“...Sound speech, that cannot be condemned”
(2 Timothy 1:13; Titus 2:8).

HAVE YOU ever heard someone say, “We *baptize* by immersion”? Then, interestingly, in the front of a book in our library we read, “A Directory of the *Congregations* of the Churches of Christ.”

What do these two quotations, just referred to, have in common? Simply stated, *redundancy*. Both

are adaptations and accommodations to the unscriptural usage of religious terms in today’s world, and, we must say, in contrast with the true Scriptural meaning of these words.

“Baptize by Immersion”

In the New Testament, although the word has been regularly transliterated “baptize” through the years, the word (*baptizo*) unquestionably means to plunge, dip, and immerse. But in more modern times, it has been used to refer to sprinkling, pouring, or immersion (either of the three). However, in the light of the New Testament, baptism cannot be sprinkling or pouring, for the simple reason that the word itself literally means immersion. To try to make it refer to sprinkling or pouring is to accommodate erroneous teachings.

Therefore, to say that “we baptize by immersion” is to accept the erroneous use of the term. It is redundant. It is the same as saying, “We immerse by immersion,” a repetitious mumbo jumbo of words.

“Congregations of
the Churches of Christ”

In the New Testament Scriptures, the term translated “church,” coming from *ecclesia*, means the called out ones, an assembly or congregation. To speak of “Congregations of the Churches of Christ” is highly redundant, if we are supposed to be using Scriptural terminology. It is the same as saying, “Congregations of the Congregations of Christ” (more mumbo jumbo). Here man has accommodated and adapted himself to denominational thinking. He has reduced his good intentions of being the “undenominational” church of the New Testament, to a denominational way of thinking. The church, in essence, has become the “Church of Christ Church.”

We present these simple thoughts about words to stir our minds so that we may be consistent in what we are trying to say about simple, New Testament Christianity.

Consistency is a jewel of great price. □

Seek an Expert’s Advice

SEek the testimony of people who have tried Christianity. Whenever we wish to know anything, we go to one who knows. We seek an expert. If we wish to know something about bridges, we go to a bridge builder. If it be medicine, we go to a physician; law, to a lawyer; agriculture, to a specialist in that field. Why not follow the same rule in religious investigations? Instead of asking an agnostic, whose boast is that he knows nothing about Christianity, let us have the testimony of one who has tried it and who out of his personal experience can say: “I know whom I have believed” (2 Timothy 1:12).—*Selected* □

EDITORIAL

Byways

"TAKE HEED THAT YE BE NOT



CONSUMED ONE OF ANOTHER"

THIS STARTLING picture, and accompanying news item, captured our attention and absorbed our thoughts when we first saw it. What the apostle Paul said in Galatians 5:15 immediately came to mind: "But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another." Then James 3:14-18 and 4:1-3 followed in our thinking.

What you see in the picture is a 17-foot long Burmese python that has swallowed a 6-foot alligator and in the process his body has ruptured. At the bottom and to the right in the picture, can be seen the back part of the alligator and his legs sticking out. Then extending toward the right upper corner of the picture is part of the python with its head missing. Evidently the swallowing took place after a bitter struggle between the snake and the alligator. In the end, both came out losers. This gruesome scene was spotted by a helicopter pilot in the Florida Everglades on September 26th.

The Burmese python are native to Southeast Asia and grow to be as long as 20 feet. We are told that more than 144,000 Burmese python have been imported to the United States in the past five years, and being young and very small, they are bought for pets. Evidently when they grow in size, which takes place rather fast, they are no longer wanted. Thus, they are destroyed or turned loose into the wild. This is the explanation of them being in the Everglades. In the past two years, 156 have been documented as having been captured.

They seem to be multiplying and challenging the alligator as the monarch of the swamps. Sometimes the snake wins; sometimes the alligator wins. Sometimes it is a draw. A python was seen wrapping him-

self around an alligator. The alligator rolls and tumbles, and fights and bites. After about 24 hours of this, the encounter obviously ended in a draw, with both swimming off and vanishing. It would seem that the size of the particular alligator and snake determines the outcome.

The Everglades picture of the python and alligator is not a lovely sight, is it? If this is appalling and shocking to our sensitivities, how much more so should it become when we visualize human beings in the picture? When we feel hostile and combative toward others, and are disposed to yield to the flesh, remember what Paul said, "But if you bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another." Fussing and fighting are not civil, being beneath the dignity of creatures made in God's image, let alone being Christian. Spiritually speaking, there are no winners in carnal disputations. "Take heed." □



"Gone Through the Bible"

ONE FELLOW said he received no inspiration from the Bible even though he had "gone through it several times." "Let it go through you once," the evangelist replied, "then you will tell a different story!" Isn't that the trouble most of us have? We spend a lot of time just listening to sermons or hearing teachers in classes expound on Bible passages, but go our way and forget what we have heard (James 1:16-27).—*John Bizzell* □



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enter himself, but he is getting Israel ready. They must keep God's law. In chapters 27 and 28 we find the curses and the blessings in reference to this. The whole nation of Israel respectively seated on the slopes of Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim were to responsively recite these words to one another. More specifically, the last words of Moses are recorded in Deuteronomy chapters 31 through 34. He, in particular, said to Joshua, "Be strong and of a good courage: for thou must go with this people unto the land which the LORD hath sworn unto their fathers to give them; and thou shalt cause them to inherit it" (Deuteronomy 31:7). Moses even left the nation with a song to sing before he died. He went on to say, "Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of this law. For it is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life: and through this thing ye shall prolong your days in the land, whither ye go over Jordan to possess it"

(32:46, 47). After viewing the Promised Land from Mount Nebo, Moses died and was buried by God. Moses left behind a legacy and truths that would never be forgotten. As a person who had undergone radical change throughout his life, he would be remembered as the meekest man in all the earth (Numbers 12:3).

Joshua's Last Words (Joshua 23-24)

Read Joshua chapters 23 and 24 to see the last words of Joshua before he dies. Joshua had been the right hand man of Moses who faithfully stood with him throughout the Wilderness journey. With the death of Moses, he had become the commanding military leader in the conquest of Canaan (as well as spiritual leader). The exploits of this stalwart man are found in the book of Joshua. The conquest had been substantially completed, with what remained to be done being left up to the people (as to their faithfulness, how they would go from there). Now with the years "stacked up" on Joshua, and death being imminent, he feels the pressing need to call the tribal leaders and the people together and address them. He said, "Behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the LORD your God spake concerning you..." (Joshua 23:14). A few words before he had said, "Be ye therefore very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, that ye turn not aside therefrom to the right hand or to the left" (23:6). In the next chapter he continues, reviewing their history as a people. They had not always served the one God. The profound words that he said would always be stamped upon their minds. "Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood [in Mesopotamia], and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve...but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (24:14,15). Joshua knew where his family would stand. "And it came to pass after these things, that Joshua the son of Nun" died and was buried in the midst of the land (24:29-31). These words would be long remembered.

David's Last Words

(1 Kings 2:1-11; 1 Chronicles 28-29)

A record of the last words of David spoken to his son Solomon shortly before his death are found in 1 Kings 2:1-11. Words spoken a little before this to the princes and leaders of Israel are to be read in 1 Chronicles chapters 28 and 29. David, whether as a shepherd boy or as a reigning monarch (or as a

fallen adulterous man), was a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22). As king he extended the boundaries of the nation of Israel to their fullest extent to be enjoyed and reigned over by his son Solomon. He had been a man of war, and although he greatly aspired to build the house of God, he was denied by God (this would be Solomon's task). David was such a prominent and outstanding person that he became the prototype and antitype of the coming Christ, who would be called the "son of David" (coming from the lineage of David). Nearing the end of his life, with the project of the temple heavy upon his heart, he addressed the leaders of the nation concerning this. God had revealed to David that He would build David himself a house, and his seed would be established upon the throne forever (parallel with David's physical aspirations). In addressing the leaders of Israel, David singles out Solomon, and says, "And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart, and a willing mind: for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations [reasonings] of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever" (1 Chronicles 28:9). Then later (1 Kings 2:2), with death at the door, he personally communes and speaks to Solomon, "I go the way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore, and shew thyself a man..." He continues with more admonitions for faithfulness to God (and personal matters). Then we read, "So David slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David [Jerusalem]" (1 Kings 2:10). Although imperfect, he was a man after God's own heart. The Psalms show him reaching out to the very heart of God.

Solomon's Last Words

(Ecclesiastes; 2 Chronicles 9:29-31)

The record of the actual death of Solomon is to be found in 1 Kings 2:1-11 and 2 Chronicles 9:29-31. We will consider the book of Ecclesiastes, written in his latter years as he approached the end of his life. There is the underlying feeling of melancholy and sadness as we read this work. A mis-spent life can breed a loathsome old age. However, we are encouraged as we come to the summation chapter. Solomon had started out well, when given options by God, as he chose wisdom above riches and things of this world. Evidence of his wisdom was very apparent, and his kingdom was blessed greatly. But, in time, he became the foolish wise man. He married many wives who worshipped pagan gods. From Ecclesiastes it would seem that he had looked into and tried about everything "under

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the sun” (good, and even bad). He starts this little book with the dismal words, “Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity” (1:2). Then he said, “I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit [grasping for the wind]” (1:14; 2:11). However, the hopelessness of his humanism seems to be reversed in chapter 12. He comes back to God. Life is not futile after all. He has good advice for all who will listen, starting with the youth. “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days [old age] come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them” (12:1). Then the last two verses are profound, “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil” (12:13, 14). We don’t have to sow our wild oats and then pray to God for a crop failure. Learn from those who have messed up their lives and avoid the pitfalls.

Paul’s Last Words to the Ephesian Elders (Acts 20:16-38)

Read Acts 20:16-38. Paul, accompanied by several brethren, was on the way to Jerusalem with the benevolent offering that had been taken up among the Gentile churches. Going along the coast of Asia Minor, he thought that he would not have time for a delayed stopover at Ephesus, wanting to be in Jerusalem by Pentecost. He sent word for the elders of the church in Ephesus to rendezvous with him at Miletus. Paul is of the opinion that he will never see them again. It is an emotionally charged meeting, as he reviews his work among them from the beginning and the prospects of what was ahead for the church. Looking back, and bringing the situation up to date, he sums it up by saying, “Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God” (20:26, 27). With the remaining words that he will speak, the focus is on the elders, their responsibility, and the future of the church. The words are very somber and foreboding. “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost [Spirit] hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in

among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore, watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified” (20:28-32). “And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all. And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul’s neck, and kissed him” (20:36, 37). They were moved at the thought of not being able to see him again. They were left with words to guide and sustain them. It would be well for leaders in the church today to take heed to what Paul has spoken here. These, likewise, are days of falling away.

Paul’s Last Words To Timothy (2 Timothy)

But really, the epistle of 2nd Timothy constitutes the final words of the apostle Paul in the New Testament. These words were written to Timothy, his very close associate and fellow worker. After an active and rigorous ministry in opening up the Gentile world to the gospel and salvation, he was now in his second Roman imprisonment. Things weren’t going well for him this time. He plainly told Timothy, “I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand” (2 Timothy 4:6). The end was near. Paul knew that persecution, hard times, and falling away were in store for the church. Paul would no longer be around to lead. He writes to encourage and get Timothy ready for the days ahead. Normally, we would think that a man in Paul’s situation would be the one needing the encouragement, but this was not Paul’s way of thinking. Timothy is reminded of the unfeigned faith that was in his grandmother and his mother, that God has not given us the spirit of fear, and of the great hope of immortality that we have in Christ. Like the apostle Paul himself, he was to “endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.” He is warned of “perilous times” that were to come (chapter 3). They were dangerous times for the church, spiritually speaking, which would be paralleled by dangerous times physically speaking. In the midst of all of this, he is pointed to God’s Word (3:13-17). With heaven called to witness what was being said, Timothy is charged to “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doc-

trine...” (4:1-5). Even though the times were hard, he was to fulfill his ministry as an evangelist. Yes, Paul knew death was around the corner, but with a confident feeling of satisfaction and optimism, he pens these last words to Timothy, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing” (4:6-8). Tradition tells us that Paul was beheaded. What he had written years before to the Philippians now was actually being realized. Although the church needed him, personally, it was “far better” for him to go on to be with the Lord (Philippians 1:21-23). What a testimony of faith he has left for us! And what a challenge to be found faithful in the face of falling away! Read every word of this epistle.

**Peter’s Last Words to Christians Throughout
Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia,
And Bithynia (2 Peter)**

The epistle of 2nd Peter was written to the churches “scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia” (1 Peter 1:1; 2 Peter 1:1; 3:1). We have no record of Peter’s relationship to these churches in Asia Minor, except for 1st and 2nd Peter. From 2nd Peter we learn that Peter is thinking in terms of death and leaving this world. He tells us why he is writing this epistle. “Yea, I think it meet [fitting] as long as I am in this tabernacle [tent], to stir you up by putting you in remembrance ; Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle [tent, this body], even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me. Moreover I will endeavor that ye may be able after my decease [literally, exodus] to have these things always in remembrance” (2 Peter 1:13-15). What, then, are the “things” he wants them to remember? False teachers and falling away highlight his concern (chapter 2). Falling away was coming. The churches must deal with this. To be forewarned is to be forearmed. They are to be moving on to maturity in Christ (1:3-10). A person in a right relationship to God, who knows God and the truth of God, is not a candidate for apostasy. After devoting over a chapter to these false teachers, whose lives were false as well as their doctrine, he concludes this epistle by saying, “Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.”

**The Last Words of the Lord Jesus Christ
(Matthew 21-27; John 14-16; Etc.
The New Testament)**

It may, indeed, appear to be inappropriate and almost pointless, to have such a heading devoted to the last words of Christ. When we talk about Christ, we are talking about God. He, himself, is the word that became flesh (John 1:1-14). He was God incarnate. However, in becoming flesh, he identified with our human situation in every phase of our being. Hebrews 1:2 tells us that God has “in these last days spoken to us by his Son...” While here, when Jesus opened his mouth, his words were always profound. Even when he was twelve year old, the doctors of the Law were “astonished at his understanding and answers” (Luke 2:42-52). More than once during his earthly ministry, things like this were said, “And they were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power” (Luke 4:32). Others accordingly responded, “Never man spake like this man” (John 7:46). In reference to the things our Lord did, John wrote “And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written...” (John 21:25). The same assessment could be made of his words, and especially an examination of his last words will be found to be most meaningful.

Words of the Last Week

The last week of the life of Christ leading up to his crucifixion is indeed significant. It began with his triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The wisdom in how he answered the scribes and Pharisees (and others) as they confronted him almost daily makes us marvel and will never be forgotten. The foretelling of the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem, no doubt, impacted the minds of the apostles in a way that would never to be forgotten. The institution of the Lord’s Supper the night before his crucifixion put into motion a practice whereby his sacrifice for sin would always be remembered. This was accented with these last words, “This do in remembrance of me.” Peter would never forget having been told by the Lord that he would deny him. John, chapters 14 through 16, constitutes words of encouragement, promise, and expectancy spoken that night in connection with his second coming, the coming of the Holy Spirit, and the revelation of New Testament truths. This is a great section to study. With the arrest of Jesus, and his subsequent crucifixion, other words of subdued anguish came from his lips. The seven last sayings of Christ from

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the cross were heard by mocking, gawking spectators and others present. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46). "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). "Verily I say unto thee [the thief], To day shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). "Woman [Mary], behold thy son!" (John 19:26). "I thirst" (John 19:28). "It is finished" (John 19:30). "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46). Each one of these heart-rending utterances is most meaningful and unforgettable. Jesus died an awful death for our sins and was buried in the tomb of another man.

From the Resurrection To the Ascension

But that is not the end of the story. There were other last words to be uttered. These words followed his resurrection from the dead. For forty days, off and on, Jesus appeared to his disciples under different circumstances. There were tearful and joyful occasions. Words were spoken. Salvation had been accomplished for mankind. The great commission was given in different words at different times during this period. Christ, on the peak of his resurrection glory, said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel [good news] to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved..." (Mark 16:15, 16). "Teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world [age]. Amen" (Matthew 28:20). Then the spectacular experience of seeing him ascend to heaven from the mount of Olives, and hearing his parting words, would be indelibly stamped on their minds forever.

The Last Will and Testament

And, yet, there is a more extensive approach in looking at the last words of the Lord Jesus Christ. The writer of the book of Hebrews tells us that God has "in these last days spoken to us by his Son..." (Hebrews 1:2). All that we have said is true up to now, but there is a bigger picture. Hebrews 9:15-17 speaks of a last will and testament. "For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator." The figure and application is to Christ. Testaments are not in force until men die. Christ has died and actually sealed the New Testament with his own blood. The New Testament Scriptures in their entirety make up the last will and testament of our Lord. We have the Lord's

last words here. None are to be added (nor subtracted). Here we have statements of his grace and stipulations of our inheritance. Let us believe what he has said, receive it, enjoy it, and search it out (and put it into practice). Yes, God has "in these last days spoken to us by his Son." Amen! □



BIBLE QUESTIONS

(Random Questions Over the Bible)

1. What two men in the Old Testament were taken from the earth by God without dying?
2. What was the name of Abraham's nephew who accompanied him into the land of Canaan?
3. What land in the Bible had a name that meant "between the rivers" (and what were those rivers)?
4. Who was the first man in the Bible called a "Hebrew," and what does this mean?
5. What man in the Old Testament and what man in the New Testament made foolish oaths that they later regretted?
6. What does the word "Ebenezer" mean, and what are the circumstances in which we find it being used in the Bible?
7. Which psalm is about the blessedness of brethren living together in unity?
8. Besides Isaiah 2:4, where else in the Old Testament does it speak of beating "swords into plowshares" and "spears in pruninghooks," and where is the opposite found ("Beat your plowshare into swords, and your pruninghooks in spears")?
9. What books of prophecy in the Old Testament were written by post exile prophets?
10. What three times did God audibly speak from heaven in recognition of Jesus as His Son?
11. Which two of the twelve disciples of Christ, who were not brothers, had fathers that had the same name?
12. Zebedee, Jona, Simon, Alphaeus and another Alphaeus were the fathers of which of the twelve disciples of Christ?
13. Which of the disciples of Christ had a house that was located near the synagogue in Capernaum?
14. When the demons were cast out of the man (men) in the land of the Gadarenes, and they entered the swine, how many swine ran into the sea?
15. On what three occasions did the Lord allow Peter, James, and John to accompany him when something outstanding was about to take place?
16. Who said to Jesus, "Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief," and what was the circumstance?
17. In what three chapters of the book of Acts do we find accounts of the conversion of the apostle Paul?
18. In what language did Christ speak to Saul of Tarsus when he appeared to him on the Damascus road?
19. Of whom in the book of Acts were these words spoken, "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they searched the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, [to see] whether those things were so"?
20. The chapter of what book could fittingly be called the "faith chapter" of 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:

■ *"I would like to say 'thanks' for keeping THE SWORD AND STAFF coming to me here in prison. The very name of Jesus Christ helped me get through here and will continue to guide me and keep me from coming back."*

SOUTH CAROLINA:

■ *"I really enjoy reading THE SWORD AND STAFF. Over the years it has helped me so much to understand what the Scriptures really teach. Keep up the good work."*

■ *"I am enclosing a contribution...toward the wonderful work you all are doing in printing THE SWORD AND STAFF. I get a fuller understanding of God's Word. I am really edified by it. I thank God for you all, always."*

NORTH CAROLINA:

■ *"Thanks for your hard work and years of study to send out the paper."*

■ *"Talk about service!! Thanks!"*

"I understand you also have a SWORD AND STAFF publication that I could subscribe to and I would love to do that also..."

"Again thanks!"

■ *"THE SWORD AND STAFF has been a blessing to me for a long time now. I have learned and been enlightened on several subjects. I have used a lot of the material, cutting out articles to send to different people..."*

"Thank you, your wife and whatsoever help you have in getting the publication printed and for all the long hours of hard work. I appreciate you."

TENNESSEE:

■ *"Thanks to you for your help."*

■ *"Thanks. I sincerely appreciate your work of faith and love."*

■ *"Just wanted to send a note of thanks for the booklets and tracts. The Biblical truths found in THE SWORD AND STAFF leave no room for confusion. The information is definitely presented in a clear and concise manner."*

"May God continue to bless you!"

KENTUCKY:

■ *"We are trying to save the Lord's money. Please remove us from your mailing list."*

VIRGINIA:

■ *"Please send indicated volumes to address shown on order form..."*

"THE SWORD AND STAFF has been an excellent source of inspiration and insight for me. I truly am impressed that you always stay with the Bible teaching and never add 'man-made' rules. I feel that adding to the Bible confuses and discourages many people..."

"Please continue your great work."

WEST VIRGINIA:

■ *"We receive THE SWORD AND STAFF at church... Please send me 3 copies of NOBODY LEFT BEHIND and one copy of POEMS OF THE SOUL AND PROVERBS."*

PENNSYLVANIA:

■ *"God bless you and your work!! Happy New Year!"*

■ *"Please accept this check as a donation towards the printing of THE SWORD AND STAFF. It's a great publication and is usually gone the first day our copies are put out. We pray that God will continue to bless your work."*

■ *"Please send 1 copy of the book NOBODY LEFT BEHIND...Enclosed is a check...to cover the cost of the book and the balance is toward THE SWORD AND STAFF paper. Thank you for the inspiration and insight your paper gives me."*

OHIO:

■ *"Please remove from mailing list."*

■ *"Please send 2 copies of NOBODY LEFT BEHIND... This book is opening eyes, including my own! Keep up the good work..."*

■ *"I would like a copy of NOBODY LEFT BEHIND. The remainder of the check is for your ministry. Thanks for your faithfulness and good material."*

■ *"I just finished reading your latest issue of THE SWORD AND STAFF. I particularly appreciated the articles 'Principles Governing the Public Assembly of the Church' and 'And He Died.' You have always published a doctrinally sound paper, which are very few in number today. I just wanted to say, 'Congratulations!'"*

(Continued on Next Page)

READERS'...Response

(Continued from Previous Page)

INDIANA:

■ "Thanks for your publication, *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. You speak very plainly on spiritual matters. You are to be congratulated. Continue the good work."

IOWA:

■ "...We enjoy getting your paper each time it comes. Your articles are sound and timely. Thank you for the work you put into it. I plan to send an order for your bound volumes shortly."

MISSISSIPPI:

■ "Keep up the great work for Him! May 2007 be your best ever! Love in Christ."

OKLAHOMA:

■ "Thank you for printing the truth as found in God's Word."

■ "Please keep up the good work. I enjoy the paper and it helps me in preaching..."

■ "I enjoy *THE SWORD AND STAFF* very much. I would appreciate it, if you would send me bound volumes for 91-92 and 95-96. And please accept this check to help pay for all that you do."

COLORADO:

■ "I look forward to receiving each issue of *THE SWORD AND STAFF*—the articles are encouraging, and they have often been sermon seeds for me. In volume 44, issue 3 (I think that is the most recent one) you offer song inserts, and after conferring with the men at the congregation where I preach, we would like to get 200 copies from you. I know that they are offered free of charge, but I would like to send something to at least help defray printing and shipping costs..."

■ "...Thank you for all your efforts to educate and encourage Christians in these times when our society seems to turn more and more to secular humanism."

"May God continue to bless you and your efforts with *THE SWORD AND STAFF*."

UNITED STATES:

■ "Brother James, I would like to thank you for your publication. It is very insightful and I like that it goes in depth on a lot of issues that others seem to pass by. On that note I was wondering if you had recently or in the past written anything on repentance. There are so many different theories on this subject and the ones that I have been hearing lately do not seem to line up with the context of the passages where it talks about repenting in the Bible. Any help with this would be very much appreciated." (E-mail)

■ "I read your latest issue of *THE SWORD AND STAFF* with interest, as usual."

"I especially noted your statement on page 10, 'In reference to transliterated "baptize," we would need to find out why the Bishops' Bible made use of this in-

stead of actually translating the word immerse (since the KJV simply followed their model).' The short answer to your query is 'They were just following all English translations that preceded theirs.'"

"I, too, was curious about this same matter, so I did a study of just when a form of the words 'baptize/baptism' first came to be used. I was quite surprised at my findings..." (E-Mail)

(**Editor's Comment:** Thanks for this in-depth information that follows, a selected part of it, which shows this practice of transliteration going all the way back to the 2nd century).

Tracing the Form and Meaning of the Word "Baptize" in Early Christian Writings

By William E. Paul

Even the most novice of Bible students, possessing and utilizing a reference library that includes a Greek-English Lexicon (Dictionary), has discovered that the words "baptize/baptism," used in most English Bible translations, are spelled quite similar to the Greek words "baptizo/baptisma." This is because the word "baptize" is not strictly a *translated* word, but a *transliterated* one. That is, at least as far back as the 2nd century, certain letters in the Greek forms "baptizo/baptisma," were changed to produce similar words in various other contemporary languages. In English these words eventually became "baptize/baptism." Such a change was a fairly common practice throughout history, accounting for the origin of a number of words in our language, both biblical and secular. In some cases only one or two letters were either altered or added. This can be seen in the following Greek/English words: angelos/angel, zelos/zealous, sunagoge/synagogue, apostolos/apostle, psalmos/psalm, kosmos/cosmos, leon/lion, pseudos/pseudo, blasphemos/blasphemous, and many more. So the practice of *transliterating* a foreign word to make an English word out of it, has not been an unusual practice.

Those familiar with the use of a Greek-English Lexicon will also have discovered that the predominant definition for "baptize" is "dip, plunge or immerse." While it is true that those religious groups practicing "sprinkling" or "pouring" for baptism tend to prefer the word "baptize" over "immerse" in a Bible translation, there is no validity to a *conspiracy* theory that involved the translators of the *Bishops' Bible* (the immediate predecessor of the *King James Version*) "inventing" the word "baptize" to justify the practice of "sprinkling" or "pouring." If fact, the King James translators later said, in the preface to their version, called "The Translators to the Reader," (written by Miles Smith), "Lastly, we have on the one side avoided the scrupulosity of the Puritans [they were a small minority of the translators], who leave the old ecclesiastical words, and betake them to others, as when they put washing for baptisme...." Puritans

generally observed “sprinkling” for baptism, but the King James translators apparently did not agree with that practice. The Puritans apparently preferred “washing” since they knew that “baptism” meant immersion. Much less valid is the assertion that the Church of England (during King James’ reign) was in some way instrumental in suppressing “immerse” from being used in the *King James Version*. Ample evidence of the practice of the Anglican Church bears out that they continued the age-old, apostolic practice of immersion during that period.

In this study we will demonstrate [we found] that the use of the term “baptize” did *not originate* in any of the English translations *prior* to the *King James Version*. The English version preceding the *King James Version* in time was the Catholic *Rheims New Testament* (1582). It *transliterated* the original Greek word “baptizo,” by making it “baptize.” That translation’s predecessor was the Protestant *Bishops’ Bible* (1568), which was the stated model for the King James translators to follow. It too contained the rendering “baptize.” And the version that preceded that one, the *Geneva Bible* (1557), used “baptize;” with its predecessor, *Taverner’s Bible* (1539), spelling the word “baptise.” The next earliest Bible was the *Great Bible* (1539), which followed the same spelling, “baptise.” Before that, *Matthew’s Bible* (1537) used the spelling common in today’s Bibles, “baptize;” and before that, the *Coverdale Bible* (1535) substituted a “y” for an “i,” spelling it “baptyse.” Going back still further, the *Tyndale New Testament* (1525) employed the word “baptise;” and finally, the first complete “English” Bible, the *Wycliffe Bible* (1380), contained the word “baptise.” (It was quite common in that day for the same word to be given a different spelling, sometimes even in the same sentence.) Several revised editions of the above named translations, produced during intervening years, also used some form of “baptize/baptism.” Thus, we see that the English word transliterated as “baptize” had been used consistently, for more than 230 years *before* the *King James Version* was produced.

Since the *Wycliffe Bible* was the first complete “English” Bible to be produced (actually its language was “Middle English”), before that time the non-Greek languages into which Scripture portions were translated included Syriac and Old Latin (since A.D. 150), and then Coptic, Gothic, Armenian, Ethiopic, Arabic, Latin (4th century onward), etc. Old English (Anglo-Saxon) was utilized during the 7th – 12th centuries, Middle English from the 13th – 15th centuries, and finally Modern English from then until the present. Of course, there were also numerous New Testament manuscripts, fragments and “Church Fathers” writings that appeared in koine Greek, dating back to the 2nd century.

But, what words were used to translate “baptizo/baptisma” *before* Wycliffe’s time? In other words,

when was the word “baptize,” familiar to most people today, *first adopted* in the New Testament and other Christian writings? Since the Latin language was the prevailing vehicle for literary works for hundreds of years before Wycliffe’s translation, what word(s) were used by those early Latin writers to convey the idea of “baptism” and the practice of “immersion”? Did they, too, employ the use of transliteration?

...Their translation from Latin writings, show that a transliterated form of the Greek “baptizo” was, indeed, also used in the Latin language for *more than 1000 years* as well. It is interesting to note that a Latinized form is sometimes used in the same sentence along with *another* Latin word explaining that “baptism” consisted of the person being “immersed” or “submerged.” These quotations confirm that some form of the Greek word “baptizo,” transliterated into a Latin word, was in use as far back as the *2nd century*, and then used repeatedly throughout the succeeding centuries. So when the Scriptures were translated into Middle English (Wycliffe, 1380), the use of “baptize” as a transliterated word was already a very common practice...

■ “You may enjoy the attached article. I certainly have enjoyed reading *THE SWORD AND STAFF* for the past 20 years or so.” (E-Mail)

(Editor’s Comment: Thanks to our correspondent for the material, although alarming and sobering, that he has sent, evidently in response to the last issue of *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. For our readers, the name of the article is, “Pimp My Ride, i.e. Modern-Day Church Succumbs to Culture.” It shows the extent certain so-called churches are stooping, “based on MTV’s show ‘Pimp My Ride,’” to try to entice the world in a worldly manner with the gimmicks and unsavory language of the world. This correspondent also goes on to say that some “are actively involved with and promoting a venture with a so-called ‘Christian nightclub!’” Then he goes on to say, “Unbelievable! There is no such thing as a ‘Christian nightclub’ just like there is no such thing as ‘Christian rock-n-roll music.’ It’s an oxymoron to call it such! It’s an abomination to attach Christ’s name to anything so carnal and heathen!”

Space will not allow us to put the article referred to above under “Reader’s Response.” However, if you would like a copy of this sobering article, facing up to what is taking place today in religious circles, let us know and we will be glad to send it to you.) □



“Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil” (1 Thesalonians 5:21, 22).

Follow-up Thoughts on
**“THE MODEL PRAYER
EXAMINED AND EXPOUNDED”**

The Model Prayer

GOD ADDRESSED: *“Our Father which art in heaven”*

1. GOD’S PART OF THE PRAYER:

(1) *“Hallowed be Thy name”*

(2) *“Thy kingdom come”*

(3) *“Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven”*

2. MAN’S PART OF THE PRAYER:

(1) *“Give us this day our daily bread”*

(2) *“And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors”*

(3) *“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil”*

CONCLUDING DOXOLOGY AND AMEN: *“For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.”*

● By **JAMES E. GIBBONS**—1535 W. Fairfield Drive
Mount Airy, NC 27030 USA

WE FEATURED a concise study on what is commonly called the “Lord’s Prayer” in the last issue of this paper (better referred to, perhaps, as the “Model Prayer” or the “Disciples’ Prayer”). (If you haven’t read it, perhaps it would be well for you to read it). Now, in the light of the rest of the New Testament, we feel a few expanded and appended thoughts are in order. This will make our understanding more complete and we can more effectively pray as the Lord would have us pray.

THE WILL OF GOD

In the first part of the prayer that the Lord taught his disciples, he instructed them to pray, “Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.” The apostle John further asserted in 1 John 5:14, “And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, ***if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.***” The will of God, and asking according to his will, are closely interwoven (if we expect to have our prayers answered). Therefore, it is important that we know what is meant when he says, “If we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us.”

What is the will of God? What is involved in asking “anything according to his will”? Basically, in that for which we pray, this falls under two categories: (1) The fixed will of God as made known in the Scriptures, and (2) God’s personal and permitted will in our lives. And, taking it a step further, the one who prays must be doing the will of God.

**(1) The Will of God as
Revealed in the Word of God**

The will of God involves His purpose being accomplished in reference to His creation, and especially in reference to man made in His image and likeness. The purpose of God is His glory. And His glory is accomplished in man when His attributes are made evident in the godly lives that we live. This can be seen in such qualities as righteousness, holiness and love. But the problem is that we have all sinned and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). In the model prayer the disciples were instructed to pray, “Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.” In the execution of God’s plan of salvation, Christ lived the will of God perfectly to become our Savior. The apostle Paul tells us the very center of God’s will is the salvation of mankind, “Who [God] ***will*** have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4). In reference to all of this, he likewise says that God has “made known unto us the mystery of ***his will***” (Ephesians 1:9; 3:1-5). The Word of God is that revelation of God’s will as to His purpose as to what is expected of us. Peter tells us that a Christian “no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the ***will of God***” (1 Peter 4:2). So, the Bible, and now the New Testament, is God’s fixed and unchanging will for mankind. No prayer should be made that comes in conflict with the Word of God.

Not “According to His Will”

To illustrate, selfishness stands in the way of answered prayer. Such a prayer cannot be prayed according to God’s will. James wrote, “Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts” (James 4:3).

Let us make a more graphic illustration. In response to those who cried out on the Day of Pentecost, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” the apostle Peter replied, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost [Spirit]. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” Then we read, “And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized...” (Acts 2:37-41). To accept the grace of God in forgiveness, and thus receive the Holy Spirit, men here were told to repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins. Peter emphatically says this promise was to them, to their children, to those that were afar off (Gentiles, Ephesians 2:11-13), and to as many as would ever become Christians. In other words, what Peter is saying is a fixed thing. This is what everyone is expected to do in accepting Christ.

(Continued on Page 14)

The Most Important Factor

IF THERE is a life after this life—and there is; and if there is a judgment to come—and there is; and if every accountable person shall stand in judgment before the Christ—and each shall; and if this life is given us that we may prepare for the life to come—and this is the case; and if the Bible is our only and all-sufficient guide in making preparation for the judgment, and for the life to come—and it is; then, it has to be the case that a knowledge of the Bible is the most important factor in the life and education of an individual.—**Roy Deaver** □



BARBS

...with a POINT



SHORT CUT methods may get short cut results.

All “talk” and no “walk” will get you nowhere with the Lord.

You have to become a Christian before you are a Christian (Acts 2:37-41; Acts 8:35-39; Romans 6:3-5; Galatians 3:27).

The brotherhood of man, in the real sense, is impossible without the fatherhood of God.

There is something worse than not becoming a Christian; that is, becoming one, and then going back on the Lord (2 Peter 2:20-22).

People find it hard to be reasonable when they don't have a reason.

The basic problem with the philosophy of “live, and let live” is that its backside is “die, and let die” (which is not Christianity).

Too many times the self-made man worships his own creator.

Making a loud noise and calling it “worship” can never take the place of a heart quietly in tune with God's will.

A real Christian will readily give and forgive (as he has been on the receiving end of both).

Unless and until we move on from having a religious movement mentality, and thus a denominational one, and simply be identified with the Lord's church of the first century, and that alone, we will never fully be that church in its purity.

If we love the right, we will hate the wrong (Psalms 119:127,128) and not dilly-dally around in it.

If you regard what you give to the Lord as ten percent, how would you like to take the remaining supposed ninety percent (tallied by the ten percent) and try to live on it? (Do you really give ten percent?)

Modern religious thinking is so shallow that it is hard for the old ship of Zion to embark, let alone navigate and sail, in its waters.

It is unreasonable to think that God will do for us what we will not do for others.

It is amazing and really strange that movie stars and foul mouthed entertainers who don't even know how to run their own lives, or how to stay married, would try to tell the leaders of our country how to run the government.

To be a real Christian you must be able to stand on your own two feet (and to stand alone, if needs be).

If you compromise right and wrong, trying to accommodate your children when they go astray, you don't give them anything to come back to if they ever want to get their lives turned around.

Many times we are not getting anything done because we are not doing anything.

The old kind of Holy Roller “church music” in the religious world is rapidly being replaced by the Rock ‘n’ Roller kind.

Mercy is forgiveness for repented sins, not compromise for us to continue in them.

It really seems ironical, but many who embellish the tombs of the prophets (and religious reformers), and even talk much about a so-called “Restoration Movement,” have no intentions of doing much reforming and little restoring.

A sinner does not seek God for the same reason that a thief does not try to find a policeman (John 3:20).

When the weight of years settles upon a person, and the weight of sin has never been removed, life becomes a grueling experience. □



Do You Hunger and Thirst?

DO YOU hunger and thirst after righteousness (Matthew 5:6)? Whether we do or not tells a whole lot about us. Hunger and thirst are evidence of life and the need for that life being sustained. This is true physically, and it is likewise true spiritually. Where there is no hungering and thirsting, this indicates the absence of life. This would be true in reference to a manikin, an inanimate form that may look human and lifelike (but isn't), or even a human corpse. They are incapable of such an experience. And we are made to wonder, does this explain the lack of stimulus and spiritual sensitivity among many professed “church members” today? Jesus plainly said, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he **cannot see** the kingdom of God” (John 3:3; Also, read 2 Peter 1:9). Think on these things.—**J.E.G.** □

Follow-up Thoughts on “THE MODEL PRAYER EXAMINED AND EXPOUNDED”

(Continued from Page 12)

It stands until the “end of the world [age]” (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15,16).

However, we have a problem today. Men would circumvent what Peter said in Acts 2:38. Sinners are told simply to pray and they will be saved. Certainly in reaching out to God a sinner is disposed to pray, and this is not discouraged, but God has a fixed way whereby we accept His grace according to Acts 2:37-41. To think that God would save us any other way is to ask Him to set aside what He has said in His Word. This is almost like an act of presumptuous audacity to think that by simply praying God will set aside His expressed will. (However, many are unaware of what the Bible really teaches). Saul of Tarsus fasted and prayed three days (Acts 9:9-11), and, yet Ananias had to come to him and say, “And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). “If we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us” (1 John 5:14) Yes, it is God’s will that we be saved (1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9), but God has let us know His will on how this takes place.

The Word of God is the revelation and embodiment of the fixed will of God. “For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven” (Psalms 119:89). And, with the coming of the New Testament, in the preaching of the message of Christ by the apostles, whatever was bound on earth was bound in heaven (Matthew 16:19; 28:18; John 12:48). God cannot lie (Titus 1:2; 2 Timothy 2:13). Therefore, if something is right or wrong, no amount of praying will change what God thinks about it—*it is not according to his will.*”

(2) The Personal And Permitted Will of God

The second category in considering the will of God involves his personal and permitted will. God is personally involved in our lives. There is His permitted will. This is especially true of Christians. A good Scripture to bring out along this line is James 4:13-16. James writes of those who seem to be boasting about what they are going to do. He says, “Go to now [listen now], ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little while, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, ***If the Lord will***, we shall live, and do this, or that.” Time and again Paul refers to the will of God in this way. Notice Acts 18:21; Romans 1:10; 15:32; and 1 Corinthians 4:19. When Paul was set on going on up to Jerusalem in the face of great danger, although his fellow Christians warned him against it, they said, “***The will of the Lord be done***” (Acts 21:14).

So, when we pray, always keep in mind that God knows all about us and what is best for us. He knows what He would like to be accomplished in our lives. He knows the best timetable in it being brought about. He knows our limitations. Many times He is providentially at work in our lives. And in view of all of this and if we are committed to His *revealed will*, we know that “if we ask any thing according to his will [including his ***permitted will***], he heareth us.” And, consequently, Paul says, “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28). It has been said that if a person lives by plan he will die by plan.

Those Who Do the Will of God

That being the case, that brings us to our last thought about the will of God. Our lives must be lived in the center of His will. This has to do with our relationship to Him and the way that we live. This is likewise a key to having our prayers answered. The blind man whose sight had been restored by Christ, and in answering the Jews, said, “Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and ***doeth his will***, him he heareth” (John 9:31). Later Jesus said to his disciples, “***If ye abide*** in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you” (John 15:7). Paul wrote Timothy, “I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up ***holy hands***, without wrath and doubting” (1 Timothy 2:8). James tells us that “the effectual fervent prayer of a ***righteous man*** availeth much” (James 5:16). And to sum up the over-all picture, remember that the Lord said, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 7:21). We cannot expect God to hear our prayers if we are not living right.

“Thy Will Be Done”

Therefore, when we pray to the heavenly Father, any way that we choose to look at it, the will of God is what should stand in the forefront. Jesus is our model as he agonized and prayed there three times in the garden of Gethsemane, “O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done” (Matthew 26:36-46). Let us always be of the same disposition.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS ON PRAYING THE MODEL PRAYER

“God Be Merciful to Me a Sinner”

Inasmuch as we are to pray “lifting up ***holy hands***, without wrath and doubting” (1 Timothy 2:8), and “the prayer of a ***righteous*** man [not a self-righteous man] availeth much” (James 5:16), we need to be sure that our sin problem is dealt with when we approach God (and that we are indeed what these

Scriptures teach). The parable of the Pharisee and the publican who went up into the temple to pray gets this point across in a good way. We know how the self-righteous Pharisee vainly complimented himself before God, but “the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, *God be merciful to me a sinner.*” Then Jesus said, “I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted” (Luke 18:6-14). Realizing that “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23), we must ever come before God like the publican. James strongly admonishes his readers, “Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up” (James 4:8-10). Yes, having done this, we are ready to come before the throne of grace in an acceptable way. Let us always have a repentant heart.

“With Thanksgiving Let Your Requests Be Made Known to God”

With that being said, thanksgiving is next in order as we approach God in prayer. Paul admonished in Colossians 4:2, “Continue in prayer, and watch in the same *with thanksgiving.*” Likewise, in Philippians 4:6 he exhorts, “Be careful [full of care, anxious] for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication *with thanksgiving* let your requests be made known unto God.” Too many times our prayers are heavy on asking, with little given to thanksgiving. We are blessed and never acknowledge it. How ungrateful can we get?! In writing to the Christians at Rome, Paul said, “First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all...” (Romans 1:8). And, so, thanksgiving should be expressed in the early part of our prayers. Yes, “Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift” (2 Corinthians 9:15).

“In the Name of Christ”

And as “appendage” thought in the light of later teachings of Christ, we would end the model prayer by making clear that we are asking in the name of Christ. The Lord said this to his disciples as he was nearing the end of his earthly ministry, “Whatsoever ye shall *ask the Father in my name*, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full” (John 16:23, 24; also, notice John 14:13 and 15:16). We are to be “giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father *in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (Ephesians 5:20; Colossians 3:17). This should be true, whether we do it audibly or in our hearts (or in any other sense). It is shameful in this day when men

would try to adapt Christianity to all religions that the name of Christ is omitted in their prayers. In fact, it is only in Christ being our great high priest in heaven that we can draw near to God with assurance (Hebrews 4:14-16). To leave Christ out is to cut off the vital line of connection to the heavenly Father.

There is much more that could be said, but these are some follow-up thoughts on praying the model prayer. Add these thoughts to what was written in the article, “The Model Prayer Examined and Expounded,” and it will more round out the picture. Let us follow these guidelines to praying as the Scriptures teach. Amen. □

Check Out the Back Page

Editors Note: Check out the back page. The marker (►) indicates new material that is available. A new booklet that currently has been added is, “**The More Excellent Way.**” It is a careful study of the love chapter of the Bible (1 Corinthians 13). What is taught in this chapter is needed so badly in the church and the world today. This would make a good class study. Order a supply (including the other materials, if you like). There is no charge, but any help with the expense of printing and mailing would be much appreciated.—*J.E.G.* □

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1. Genesis 5:24 (Hebrews 11:5); 2 Kings 2:9-11; 2. Genesis 12:1-5; 3. Mesopotamia, Acts 7:2; between the Tigris (Hebrew: Hiddekel) and Euphrates Rivers; 4. Abraham—Genesis 14:13; two possible meanings: (1) descendant of Eber (Genesis 10:21, 24,25; (2) one from across the river (people from across the Euphrates, Joshua 24:2); 5. Judges 11:29-40; Mark 6:17-29; 6. 1 Samuel 7:9-17; 7. Psalm 133; 8. Micah 4:3; Joel 3:10; 9. Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi; 10. (1) At his baptism (Matthew 3:13-17); (2) The transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-9; (3) In Jerusalem (John 12:28); 11. Matthew (Mark 2:14; Matthew 9:9) and James the less (Luke 6:15); 12. Zebedee (Matthew 4:21,22); Jona (John 1:40-42); Simon (John 12:4); Alphaeus (Mark 2:14; Matthew 9:9); another Alphaeus (Luke 6:15); 13. Mark 1:29; 14. Mark 5:1-13; 15. Mark 5:35-43; Mark 9:2-10; Mark 14:32-42; 16. Mark 9:14-29; 17. Acts 9, 22, and 26; 18. Acts 26:14 (Hebrew=In N. T. times, what is called Hebrew really was Aramaic); 19. Acts 17:10-12; 20. Hebrews 11. □

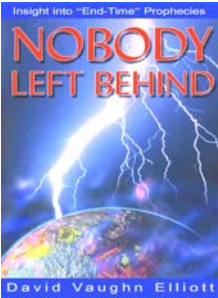
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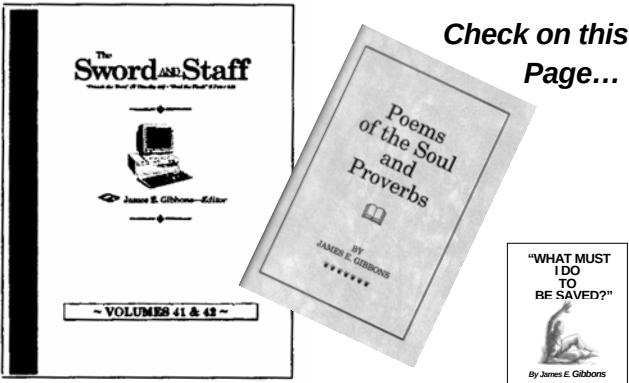
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