

The Sword AND Staff

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

The Great Confession and Corresponding Declaration

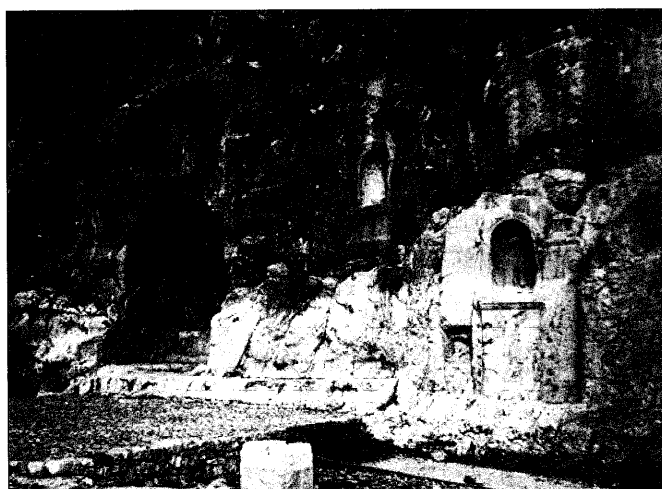
(A Commentary on Matthew 16:13-20)

“When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.”

—Matthew 16:13-20

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THE WRITER of this article had the rare privilege several years ago of reading this Scripture aloud to an attentive audience in the actual vicinity of where this took place. The site of New Testament Caesarea Philippi is located about 25 miles north of the Sea of Galilee on the bottom slopes of Mount Hermon. From here it is about 14 miles to the top of the summit, which is snow-capped part of the year. And here at this site you can see one of the head-waters of the Jordan River coming out of what had been a cave at the base of a massive wall-like cliff of stone. Here there is evidence of temple structures which have stood in ancient times, archaeologists saying they have uncovered at least 14 that span over the centuries. In the cliff amidst bullet-shattered holes, evidence of modern wars, are niches that in ancient times



Niches in Wall-Like Cliff at Caesarea Philippi

served to hold icons and idols. In early New Testament times the Greek god Pan was worshipped here. It was with a backdrop like this that Peter made the great confession and Jesus declared he would build his church.

“When Jesus Came...”

Before we “zero in” on a study of this Scripture, perhaps it would be good to put this in a context of time. For some time Jesus has shunned Judea (John 7:1), and now seems to be even avoiding the Galilean jurisdiction of Herod. The ministry of Jesus, up to this point, has been something like three years. In less than a year he will be crucified. When John the Baptist was killed by Herod Antipas, Jesus had withdrawn from Galilee with his disciples out of the territory of this ruler (Matthew 14:10-13). This was when the twelve returned from their preaching tour (Mark 6:27-31). (1) First they withdrew to the northeastern shores of the Sea of Galilee (while here the 5,000 were fed, although he now

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—THANK YOU—

Proverbially ***SPEAKING...***

***TRUST** is a "must."*

People who know the most know how little they really know.

Jesus said, "Before Abraham was, I AM" (John 8:56-59; Exodus 3:13-15; John 1:1-3,14; Gen. 1:1,26; John 14:8-9; 10:30; Colossians 2:8-9; John 17:5).

When we study to show ourselves approved (2 Timothy 2:15), many times we find ourselves proved.

The closer we get to a person, the more clearly can we see what they look like and the more distinctly hear what they have to say; this is likewise true with the Lord.

Victory is won over sin, not by suppressing our evil thoughts, but by expelling them far from us.

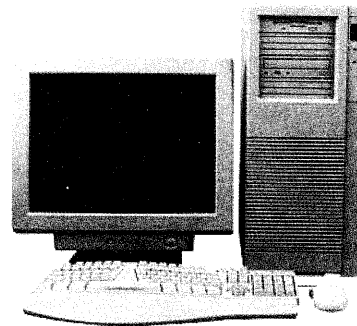
Is an apple tree an apple tree because of the kind of fruit it bears, or is it an apple tree because it is the kind of tree that bears that kind of fruit?

We must face up to ourselves when we come face to face with Christ.

Are we righteous because of the fruit we bear, or because we are the kind of tree that bears that fruit?

Don't "give in" when you "give out" and then "give up." □

EDITORIAL COMMENTS



"HEREBY KNOW WE THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH, AND THE SPIRIT OF ERROR"

THE WRITINGS of the apostle John are uniquely different and on the surface would seem to be very simple, even simplistic, but they are anything but this. They are profound and are sometimes on the border of being complicated. Many times we find ourselves pondering for hours upon what he has to say. We are prompted to do much study. The epistle of 1 John is one of these writings.

Here he seems to be confronting a variant version of the false doctrine called Gnosticism. Gnosticism comes from a word that means knowledge, knowing. The adherents of this doctrine claimed superior knowledge and were called the knowing ones. In their concept of deity, a mixture of paganism, many New Testament teachings were disavowed. In some sense they were denying that God had come in the flesh (and thus, discrediting the claims for Christ). The first few verses of the first chapter of 1 John lay the groundwork for the rest of the epistle. Here we have the testimony of the Word becoming flesh as attested to by witnesses (by John, the apostles). Keeping this in mind, this section serves as a point of reference as we read the rest of the epistle. Throughout 1 John the word "know" occurs time and time again. By way of assurance to Christians, and as a rebuttal of Gnostic claims, John repeatedly highlights many things that Christians definitely know (whether experimentally or intellectually). These things are constantly woven into the fabric of this little book.

Let us consider 1 John 4:1-6. Verse 1 reads, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." John says to "not believe every spirit" and to "try the spirits." Then he mentions false prophets. The words "spirits" and "false prophets" are synonymous in usage here. Hebrews 12:9 says that God is the "Father of spirits." Regardless of the particulars in the meaning of "spirit," he is talking about false teachers. We are not to be naïve. We are not to believe every preacher of religion that comes along. In fact, we are commanded to "try" them (although doing this may be unthinkable to the modern mind); put them to the test. Are they preaching the whole truth of God? Make them accountable for what they say. In this section of Scripture he tells them (and us) how to try the spirits. Two criteria in putting them to the test stand out here. The word "Hereby" is used to draw our attention to them. "Hereby," by this way, we know whether they are of God or not. Let us notice the criteria.

(1) ***“HEREBY know*** ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God...” (1 John 4:2-3a). What is said here is to be understood in the immediate context of this epistle and in contrast with the Gnostic heresy and not generally, for unclean spirits and others have confessed Christ who are not of God (Mark 1:23-24; James 2:19). Confession of the truths about the person of Christ is simply basic Christianity. Take this away and you have no Christianity. Take CHRIST out of Christ-IAN and you have I-A-N left, I-Am-Nothing. Peter made the great confession, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16) upon which truth Jesus said, “I will build my church.” The apostle Paul declared in 1 Corinthians 3:11, “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” This confession is made as each person embraces Christianity (Acts 8:35-39; Romans 10:9-10). Following 1 John, John said in 2 John verse 9, “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.” If people do not believe the Scriptural truths about Christ, which includes the Word becoming flesh (and the virgin birth), they have no claims to Christianity. This includes his sinless life, his sacrificial death and resurrection. When one makes the great confession that Peter made, and with all that is implied in it, you have “said it all.” This is basic in putting teachers to the test. The church does not condone and harbor unbelievers. Do they really believe in Christ? If they don’t unreservedly believe, and with all this implies, they have not passed the most basic test.

(2) “We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. ***HEREBY know*** we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error” (1 John 4:6). Who are the “we” John is talking about here? Go back to the point of reference we noted in chapter 1:1-3. Those of whom John is writing here had seen, they had heard, and they had handled of the Word of life. Again verse 3 states, “That which ***we have seen and heard*** declare we unto you...” Who had seen and heard in reference to the Word becoming flesh? Who were they? The answer is, the apostles. They were eyewitnesses who had been especially chosen by Christ for this very purpose, and John was in their number (John 15:26-27; Acts 1:8, 21-26). So, John, in asserting “he that knoweth God heareth us,” is

basically saying he who knows God will hear (i.e., listen to, accept) what the apostles have to say, and John was one of them. And by extension the “we” could include, along with John, those faithful Christians to whom he is writing (they were standing for the same thing). “Heareth us,” for those reading this today, could involve “us” who hear (accept) the words of the New Testament (written and spoken by the apostles and prophets, Ephesians 3:5). This involves the apostles’ doctrine (Acts 2:42; Galatians 1:8). Initially, this would have to do with accepting the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures. Are the Scriptures really believed and accepted as the very Word of God and the only and final authority in religion? This would involve being aware of denominational doctrines and traditions and putting them to the test. As John said, those who are of God would “hear us” (hear the apostles). “Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.” The best way to “try the spirits” is with the word of the “Spirit,” the Word of God. □



I Resolve...

I RESOLVE not to speak unless I have something to say;

To think well before I speak;

To be a sympathetic—not apathetic—listener;

To regard every incident that touches my life as worthy of deepest consideration and courtesy;

To remember at all times that the kind word is invariably the right word;

To be generous with smiles, and never to bear a dour visage;

To try to develop calmness and poise under trying conditions;

To spend a part of each day in solitude, meditation and prayer.—***Selected*** □




There’s Power in the Blood


IT’S NOT as messy as it seems.

I used to think it strange that the Bible keeps talking about the cleansing power of the blood (1 Peter 1:2). It seemed to me that blood was messy stuff. I needed to wash my white lab coats if they became stained with blood.

Today, I love the analogy; it is so true of the body. The blood is constantly cleansing every cell, and washing away all the debris that accumulates all the time. I like the phrase in Hebrews 9:14 (KJV): “How much more shall the blood of Christ purge your conscience from dead works?”—***Dr. Paul Brand*** □



“By Grace Are Ye Saved Through Faith” (Eph. 2:8).



The Great Confession and Corresponding Declaration

(A Commentary on Matthew 16:13-20)

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was trying to get away from the crowds). We can pinpoint this as taking place around the time of the Passover, a year before his crucifixion (John 6:4). (2) After a brief return to Capernaum, to further get away from the crowds he went with his disciples outside of the country to Tyre and Sidon in Phoenicia (Mark 7:24). (3) His coming back into Israel finds him on the southeastern side of the Sea of Galilee where he feeds the 4,000 this time (Mark 7:31; Matthew 15:29-38). There was more of a Gentile population here. (4) Now, in Matthew 16:13 where we are studying, he is at the northern extremity of Israel which likewise had a Gentile population where he will not be as much in the public eye. His time has not yet come. The populace has a misconception of the Messiah, and, in view of what happened to John, he is made more to anticipate his own death coming soon and attempts to get his disciples ready for the crucifixion. But they are slow to learn.

"Into the Coasts of..."

"Into the coasts of" simply means, in our current vernacular, into the area, region or boundaries of Caesarea Philippi. Mark and Luke give more of an abbreviated account of what happened (Mark 8:27-30; Luke 9:18-21). Although this is true, Mark gives the additional information that they were "on the way" and Luke that Jesus "was alone praying" with his disciples when Peter made the great confession and he the declaration about the establishment of his coming church.

"Caesarea Philippi"

"Caesarea Philippi" is the identity of the place to which they are headed. Throughout history different names have been applied to this place and region. In the conquest of the Promised Land by Joshua, it seems to have been called Baal-gad (Joshua 11:17). Later on in the history of Israel, in referring to the extremity of the land, they spoke of it being from Dan to Beersheba (1 Samuel 3:20; etc.). Dan was the most northern point (and likely the same location referred to in the gospels as Caesarea Philippi). This place, sometime after the conquest of Alexander the Great, came to be identified with the Greek god Pan and was called "Paneas." Now in New Testament times we find it called Caesarea Philippi, but why Caesarea Philippi? One of the Herod family by the name of

Philip had refurbished the city and renamed it after the emperor Caesar. Then to distinguish it from the other city by the same name on the Mediterranean, his name was attached to it—thus, Caesarea Philippi.



Before we go further in this study, perhaps additional information about the Herod family would be helpful. Herod, who is called the Great, was the first in this line of rulers. (He was the one who had the babies killed when Jesus was born—Matthew 2). The Herods were puppet rulers under the Romans as Palestine was part of the fixture of the Roman Empire. When Herod the Great died, he divided his kingdom into three parts and willed them to three of his sons. The southern part, which was the region of Judea and Samaria, was assigned to Herod Archelaus (Matthew 2:22). Galilee and Perea were given to Herod Antipas, the one who killed John the Baptist. And the area above the Sea of Galilee, with some adjacent territory, was left to another son by the name of Philip (who is thought to have been the most civil of these wicked men). The Romans honored this will of Herod the Great, and these sons reigned over the territory that had been bequeathed to them. Herod Antipas and Philip were called "tetrarchs" (Luke 3:1; 9:7), this term meaning the ruler of a fourth part of a kingdom (*tetra* + *arch* = four + to rule). Since only three rulers are named here, it simply means a ruler of less prominence than a monarch. However,

the Romans referred to Archelaus, who was over the Judean section in the south, as an “ethnarch.” But because of his misgovernment he was soon replaced by “governors” coming directly from Rome. Pontius Pilate was one of these.

**“He Asked His Disciples,
Saying, Whom Do Men Say...”**

By saying this, Jesus is not implying that he does not know what men were currently saying about him, for he knew all things (John 1:47-48; 2:24-25). And it is not just simply a rhetorical question. Obviously, he has in mind a larger purpose. As he will immediately and directly put this question to the disciples, he foreknows that the correct answer will be given. Then by having the wrong answer brought out first, it will serve as a contrasting backdrop to make the truth stand out more vividly. Truth can be more clearly expressed and made more emphatic when set over against that which is false.

“...That I the Son of Man Am?”

This is highly interesting. “Son of man” was the designation Christ almost exclusively used when personally referring to himself. Out of the 82 times these words are found in all of the four gospel accounts (Matthew, 30 times; Mark, 15; Luke, 25; John, 12), only one time are they spoken by someone else. That is when some Jews wanted to know what he meant when he was saying this (John 12:34).

What is the significance of this phrasing, “Son of man”? These words, as they stand here, make us think of his humanity. He was the Word that became flesh, as he emptied himself of all the glory of heaven to dwell among us as one of us. We think of human weakness. But by putting the article “The” in front of this expression, making it “The Son of man,” he is exalted. We look upon him uniquely. He is the prince of humanity. “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). We think of the first Adam and the second Adam (1 Corinthians 15:45). Then, taking it a step further, we think of “Son of man” in contrast with “Son of God.” Jesus in his incarnation was both. We think of his humanity and his deity. He was uniquely the “Son of man” and the “Son of God.”

Someone has suggested that this self designation, “Son of man,” was intentionally chosen by Christ to direct the attention of the Jews and the populace away from their misconceptions of the

Messiah. They were expecting an earthly king. By extensively emphasizing the term Messiah (or Christ) before his death and resurrection, it would only serve to inflame their political expectations and aspirations. Finally, with the cross and empty tomb behind him, they would be in a position better to understand why he came into the world and the nature of the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies (Acts 2:36).

**“And They Said, Some Say That Thou Art
John the Baptist; Some, Elias [Elijah];
and Others, Jeremias [Jeremiah],
or One of the Prophets”**

These words seem to be representative of what the people at large were saying about Jesus, and missing in all of them is the word “Christ.” Superstition plagued the guilt-ridden conscience of Herod Antipas, the one involved with the death of John, and he theorized that Jesus was John the Baptist risen from the dead (Matthew 14:1-2). The prophet Malachi had foretold that Elijah would come before Christ (Malachi 4:5). But not understanding the mission of John the Baptist in this capacity (Matthew 11:13-15; Luke 1:17), some had assigned this role to Jesus. And evidently the Jews had different theories involving Jeremiah and the other prophets in this connection. However, the lowly Jesus did not fit the job description they had conjured for the long awaited Messiah. So he was not even considered by most of the people.

**“He Saith unto Them,
But Whom Say Ye that I Am?”**

The second question that the Lord asked, (“But whom say ye that I am?”), is addressed to all of the disciples. The wording, “But he saith unto them,” makes this very plain, as well as the plural “ye” in the question. The “But,” by way of contrast, ties whatever their answer will be in with the answers that have been given to the first question. The masses were saying several different things, but what answer will his immediate disciples now give? As stated before, the Lord seems to have intentionally drawn out the wrong concepts of himself that were in circulation so as to better highlight the truth that will now be confessed.

“And Simon Peter Answered and Said...”

We are not surprised that Simon Peter is the one who answers, although this question had been directed to all of them. As we know, many times Peter was impulsive and even somewhat rash, but, regardless, he was always in the forefront. This time he is neither impulsive, nor rash, as he speaks

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forth the words of insight and eternal truth. As a decided leader, even of leaders, he is just instinctively being true to form. And as the Lord's question had been asked of all of the twelve, Peter answers in behalf of all of them.

"Thou Art the Christ, the Son of the Living God"

Now we come to the heart of this great section of Scripture. It is not the first time these truths have been recognized, or even verbalized, by Peter and the other disciples. They had initially heard the testimony of John the Baptist on the banks of the Jordan (John 1:29-51). Here Peter had been introduced to Jesus through his brother Andrew, who even at this early date acknowledged Jesus as the Christ (although perhaps imperfect in his understanding). In their call to discipleship the twelve have been associated with Jesus something like three years at this juncture of time. Not long before this, after the feeding of the 5,000 and his walking on the water, they unhesitatingly "worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God" (Matthew 14:33). Then the next day at Capernaum when Jesus preached a sermon on the bread of life, saying that men must eat his flesh and drink his blood, we read, "From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." To them this was a provocative and a "hard saying." They were offended. "Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and art sure that thou are that Christ, the Son of the living God" (John 6:59-69).

Now at Caesarea Philippi (Matthew 16:13-20) with the cross just a matter of months away, it seems the Lord is seeking a strong and affirmative summary statement of what his disciples thought about him. His public ministry will soon be over. From this point onward he begins repeatedly to tell them what awaits him in Jerusalem (Matthew 16:21). These great truths in this confession would help sustain them as they looked ahead. Although they had lingering misconceptions about the Messiahship that only his death and resurrection would correct (and the coming of the Holy Spirit, John 14:26), Peter makes this concise, great and profound confession of faith. "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Literally in the Greek: *You are the Christ the Son of the God the living.*

Yes, straightforward, short and to the point; just a few words. But what a mouthful Peter said that day! He said it all.

"Thou Art the Christ"

Jesus is confessed to be "the Christ." The word "Christ" is an Anglicized version of the word *Christos*. "Christos" is the Greek representation of the Hebrew *Messiah*. Basically, the idea of anointing is in the root word for "Christ," and it means the anointed one.

And what is the significance of using this term? In the Old Testament anointing was part of the public ceremony in setting men aside to various "offices." That was true of kings (1 Samuel 10:1; 2 Samuel 5:3), prophets (1 Kings 19:16) and priests (Exodus 40:15; Leviticus 16:32). This was the procedure of placing them in these positions. Remember, David said that he would not touch the Lord's anointed (1 Samuel 24:6), speaking in reference to Saul, although he had been chosen to replace him as king. He would let God take care of this in His own good time. The 2nd Psalm is looked upon as being Messianic, when it says, "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed..." "Anointed" here literally is *Messiah* or "Christ." Speaking in reference to the priests, and the blessedness of unity, we read in Psalms 133:2, "It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garment." (This pictures Aaron being anointed as he was set aside to the office of high priest).

All of this helps us understand the meaning and usage of words as men came to look forward to the coming of *the* Christ, not just another anointed one. The hope of Israel and mankind would be "tied up" in this person. And, as such, *the* Christ would be the embodiment of prophet, priest and king, all in one person. But the Jews had problems of looking beyond their imperfect understanding of the Messiah as an earthly, political figure. What they thought about the Christ and his kingdom didn't allow a cross, although the 53rd chapter of Isaiah was in their Scriptures (read Isaiah 53 and Acts 8:27-35). Paul said the cross to them was a "stumbling block" (1 Corinthians 1:23). (We will say more about the Christ and his kingdom later).

"The Son of...God"

In this great confession Jesus is declared to be the Son of God. These words immediately connect our thinking with the prologue of the gospel of John. Here we read, "In the beginning was the

Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not...And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:1-5,14). This all came about through the virgin birth of Christ (Matthew 1:18-25). The angel had announced to Mary, "The Holy Ghost [Spirit] shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). Later, then, as Jesus lived and walked upon this earth, accomplishing his ministry, he was the embodiment of God in the flesh. The apostle Paul stated, "For in him [Jesus] dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Colossians 2:9).

The gospel of John is full of great statements, as well as the recorded miracles (John 20:30-31), ascribing deity to Christ. In talking with the Jews, "Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58; Exodus 3:14). Another time, the Lord said, "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30). "And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me" (John 12:45). With his disciples that last night before the crucifixion, he asserted, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). Philip responded, saying, "Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us" (14:8). "Jesus said unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?" (14:9). Then later, after the resurrection of Christ from the dead, Thomas exclaimed, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28).

What amazing and mind-boggling things to think about! Being limited to the flesh with our finite minds, there is so much that we don't and can't understand in reference to God. But everything points to the reality of His existence (Romans 1:20; Psalms 19:1). Still, there is so much that we don't know. However, thanks be to God, in the incarnation we have something more exact and tangible to fix our minds upon (while at the same time our salvation has been accomplished)! "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (John 1:18).

"The Son of the Living God"

The last part of the great confession, "the Son of *the living God*," gets our attention now. This confession was made in the vicinity of Caesarea Philippi. We have pointed out that this was the site of at least 14 heathen temples at different times in the past. When Christ and his disciples approached this place, a temple embellished by Herod and dedicated to the so-called god Pan was standing here. It was apparently flush against the massive wall-like cliff with niches that held idols. Heathen temples housed these images of stone or precious metals, representing deity of some kind. They were inanimate, "dead," utterly void of life. In contrast with this, the God of eternity is living and real. The apostle Paul in 1 Timothy 6:17 carries this idea a step further when he admonished Timothy, "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy." In Paul's way of looking at things, materialism (covetousness) is idolatry (Ephesians 5:5; Colossians 3:5). Material things are dead and lifeless in contrast with the living God.

This great truth that is being stated by Peter here is well-illustrated in Exodus 3:14. Moses was being called by God, in connection with the burning bush episode, to go and lead the children of Israel out of Egyptian bondage. In his reluctance to go, he asked God who he should tell them it was that sent him. "And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you." "I am" is a statement in the first person singular, present tense. It is the self-assertion of the present reality of being. God is the great I AM. He is, has been and always will be. He is the eternal self-existent one. He is the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob (the God of every generation, Psalms 90:1) and He goes on forever (Matthew 22:32). He is the living God. And Christ is confessed to be "the Son of *the living God*," God as he became flesh and walked upon this earth.

The apostle Paul puts the crowning emphasis upon this truth in 1 Timothy 6:16, when he says, "Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen." God is life and the source of life. From Him all life emanates. As Paul said, "In him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28b). Any way that we look at it, He is the *living God*."

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"And Jesus Answered and Said unto Him, Blessed Art Thou, Simon Barjona"

When we see this word "blessed," we think of the beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12). This word signifies to be happy and to be in a fortunate circumstance (even to the point of being envied).

By making this confession Peter had entered into such a classification of blessedness. Simeon, who had taken baby Jesus into his arms when he was brought into the temple, experienced a kindred blessedness (Luke 2:21-30). Even the disciples before the Caesarea Philippi declaration in a measure had a taste of it. In the teachings they were hearing from him, the Lord earlier had called them "blessed." Then he said to them, "For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them" (Matthew 13:16-17). Later this same Peter, looking back, will say that the prophets who foretold of our salvation would have been pleased to have known what they were writing was all about (1 Peter 1:10-12). But Peter being "blessed" in connection with the great confession was in a class all by itself.

"Simon Barjona"

Simon is the proper name of Peter. Barjona, breaking the word down into its two parts, simply means "son of Jona." The Aramaic prefix "Bar," as seen in many New Testament names, means "son of." By making this full address to Peter it gives a more emphatic tone to what he is saying. It decidedly emphasizes the solemnness and importance of what is being said.

"For Flesh and Blood Hath Not Revealed It unto Thee, But My Father Which Is in Heaven"

"Flesh and Blood" many times indicates man, as we can see from other Scriptures (Galatians 1:16; Ephesians 6:12). Peter's conclusion that he had reached and now voiced about Jesus was not prompted by what human beings were saying. By contrast the first part of the Lord's statement simply accents the last part, "But my Father which is in heaven" has revealed it to you.

How had this come about? Certainly rubbing shoulders with Jesus throughout his ministry had made a profound impact on him. How could it be otherwise? The miracles and teachings could not be

explained in any other way. Then Luke tells us that Jesus had been praying leading up to asking the disciples this question (Luke 9:18). Could he have been praying about this? And, consequently, the prompting came by inspiration from the heavenly Father? It could be.

"And I Say Also Unto Thee..."

Peter has made the great confession and had his "say" in response to the Lord's question. Now the Lord is having his "say." Actually we have two confessions taking place here. In more of a general sense Christ had said earlier during his ministry, "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 10:32). Because Peter made this great confession, Jesus called him "blessed." Now the Lord confesses him and lays out before him and the other disciples this great declaration.

In the past in laying out great truths before his disciples, the Lord time and time again in his teaching would begin by saying, "Verily, I say unto you." This would get their attention, and they would know that something profound and very important was going to be said. This is likewise true in what he is now saying to Peter.

"That Thou Art Peter"

What we read here reminds us of the first time Jesus met Simon Peter. Andrew, Peter's brother, had met Christ first, and he was so impressed that he wanted Peter to meet him, too. "And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone" (John 1:42). Upon meeting Peter, the Lord immediately recognized his robust character and potential. He therewith gave him an appropriate nickname, Peter. "Cephas" is the Aramaic word for Peter, and Peter (*Petros*) means a stone. With his rock-like character traits, he would be in the forefront as a leader.

"And Upon This Rock I Will Build My Church"

The occurrence of the word "rock" is again before us. Catholicism, which otherwise is not all that concerned about Scriptural authority with their many human traditions, is quick to tell us that the "rock" upon which the church would be built is Peter (since Peter means rock). They claim that he was the first pope and here is the authority for apostolic succession. Their whole system of religion hinges upon this. But, really, is that what the Lord is saying here? Was his church going to be built upon a human being?

Actually in the Greek language of the New Testament, Peter and “rock” (in Christ’s declaration about building his church) are two different words with two different meanings. Peter, or **Petros**, means “a stone” (John 1:42), a piece of rock, loose, detached; whereas the word translated “rock,” is **petra**, and it means rock in the sense of a massive bedrock. This word, **petra**, was used by the Lord when he spoke about a person wisely building his house upon a rock, rock as a bedrock foundation (Matthew 7:24-27), and not upon sand. And the words are distinguished as being different by **Petros** (Peter) being masculine gender and **petra** feminine. And if the Lord meant Peter, why didn’t he directly say, “Upon you will I build my church” instead of impersonally saying upon “this rock” I will build my church?

Then what is the “rock” upon which the Lord would build his church? The answer is quite simple and is so obviously correct. It is upon the profound truth of the great confession that Peter has just made. “Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God.” This confession is made when one comes to faith in Christ and is added to the church (Acts 8:35-38). The apostle Paul will later firmly and solidly state, “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 3:11). That settles it.

“...I Will Build My Church”

The only time the word “church” is found in the 4 gospel accounts is here and in Matthew 18:17. The word “kingdom” is prominent in the gospels and it is not until in the book of Acts and the epistles that church comes into full usage. Obviously at this point the church has not yet been established. He declares, “I **will build** my church.” The word “will” is not only future, it expresses resolve and determination that it will come to pass. The church was not an afterthought on the part of Christ.

“And the Gates of Hell Shall Not Prevail Against It”

The word rendered “hell” here (Matthew 16:18, KJV) is **Hades**, the unseen world of the dead, not **Gehenna**, the place of unquenchable fire. Death seems to be looked upon as a hostile and formidable city arrayed against Christ, standing opposed to the church coming into being and consequently its continuance. But the powers of death would not prevail. From the beginning with the fall of man, God had promised, “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Genesis 3:15). The power of the Devil

would be crushed. The grave could not hold the Savior nor would it prevail against his church (Acts 2:24-31). Read the book of Acts. “Like a mighty army moves the church of God.” “What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31). Because it did not initially prevail, it would not ultimately prevail. The book of Revelation tells the rest of the story. Yes, “strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matthew 7:14). But in eternity with the redeemed of all ages, their number will be great.

“And I Will Give Unto Thee the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven: And Whatsoever Thou Shalt Bind on Earth Shall Be Bound in Heaven: And Whatsoever Thou Shalt Loose on Earth Shall Be Loosed in Heaven”

First let us deal with what the Lord says about the “Keys” and the binding and loosing on earth and in heaven. This is to be understood as parallel in meaning with “I will build my church.” He is talking about the same thing.

Of course the reference to keys and the binding and loosing are figurative, but this plainly gets across what he is saying. Perhaps there is no special significance to “keys” being plural. It is just part of the suggestive parabolic imagery. In everyday usage, “keys” has to do with opening doors. Peter was privileged to use these “keys” on the Day of Pentecost in the 2nd chapter of Acts in the beginning of the church and opened the doors of the church to the Jews (Acts 2:38-47). About 7 years later in Acts chapter 10, he opened the doors of the church to the Gentile world. Looking back in Acts 11:15 and talking about the household of Cornelius, Peter said that “the Holy Ghost [Spirit] fell on them, as on us at **the beginning**.” (Clearly, Pentecost was the beginning of the church). And to “bind” and “loose” among the Jews meant to forbid and to allow. (Matthew 23:1-4 illustrates this). The night before his crucifixion the Lord had told the disciples that when “the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth...” (John 16:13; Also, take note of 14:26). Now as Peter and the other apostles preached under the guidance of the Holy Spirit in Acts chapter 2 (Acts 1:26-2:6, 14), what they were binding and loosing on earth was being bound and loosed in heaven. In fact, it had already been bound and loosed in heaven (and this language implies it). They had been instructed to pray, “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10). Now it was taking place. One of the things that was involved in the binding and

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The Great Confession and Corresponding Declaration

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loosing stands out in Acts 2:38 and 39, "Then Peter said unto them, 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." This binding is for "all" in how they accept Christ. And notice Acts 2:42. "They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine..." The binding and loosing came about through all of the apostles (John 20:19-23; Acts 2:14, 37). It was "the apostles' doctrine" that they who were baptized continued in.

"...THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN" Need of Further Study

This reference to "the kingdom of heaven" deserves more comment and is in need of clearer understanding. There are a lot of muddled concepts out there today. A large segment of the denominational world believes that Christ came to set up an earthly kingdom. But the Jews rejected him; he was crucified, and the church came into being instead. They believe that the prophecies about the kingdom were put on "hold" (the prophetic clock was stopped for a while), and these prophecies will finally be fulfilled with the second coming of Christ. The Christ will yet reign on the earth as an earthly king. We even read one such commentary that said Peter would be the prime minister in this kingdom. This was their explanation of Peter being given the "keys of the kingdom" and the binding and loosing. But, are these "thoughts" right? If so, it would imply that Christ was a failure in his coming to earth the first time. (Are we ready for such a conclusion?) The Jews had this same problem in dealing with Jesus and the cross to them was a stumbling block (1 Corinthians 1:23).

The Wrong Impression

We can see how, like the Jews, people might get the impression from prophecy that the Messiah and his kingdom could be an earthly one. But we need to read the rest of the story in the New Testament to get the complete picture. Much of the prophecy in the Old Testament was clothed in Old Testament language. It was suggestive. The nation of Israel itself was a physical kingdom that was a type of the spiritual that was yet to come. Only in studying the fulfillment of prophecy can we grasp its full meaning. Many times we are accused of

spiritualizing these prophecies. But it is highly interesting and enlightening to notice how the apostles understood them. We can be assured that their hermeneutics was the right one. They spoke by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

The Narrowed Line of Fulfillment

In the first prophecy (or prediction), that would begin a thread of the line of descent, it is said that the seed of woman would bruise the head of the serpent (Genesis 3:15). This is a very wide statement, encompassing the human race, which would

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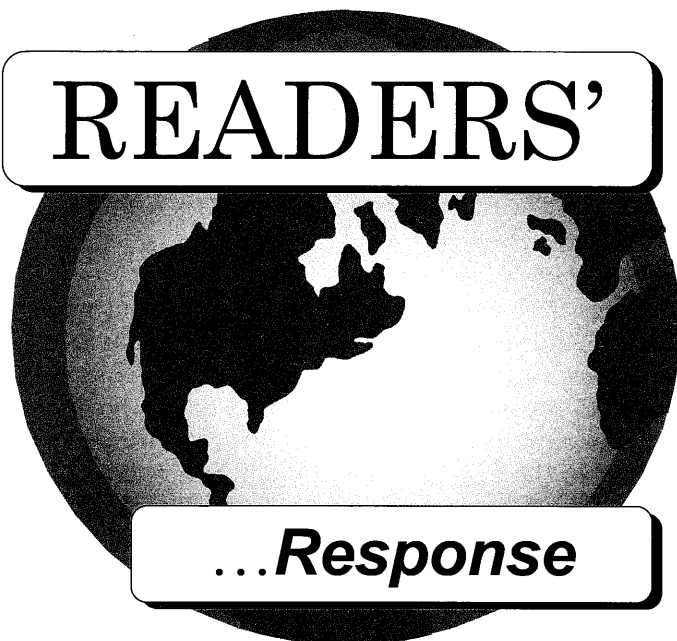
BIBLE QUESTIONS

(Random Questions Over the Bible)

1. What was an occasion in the Bible when people were asked to give, and they were giving so much that they had to be told to stop giving?
2. Gideon was from which tribe of Israel?
3. What man was the "captain of the host" of King Saul's army?
4. Who was the "captain of the host" of King David's army?
5. Who in the Bible is called "the sweet psalmist of Israel"?
6. When the prophet Elijah thought he was the only one left who had not gone into idolatry, how many people did God say were left who had not bowed their knees to Baal?
7. In the book of Proverbs, what does it say does good like medicine?
8. What is the literal meaning of the words translated "make a covenant" in the Old Testament?
9. How is the prophet Ezekiel addressed by God in the book of Ezekiel and how many times is this expression found in this book?
10. What Old Testament prophet said, "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion"?
11. What were the names of the two sons of Zebedee who became disciples of Christ?
12. What is the self-designation that Jesus almost exclusively used when referring to himself?
13. Why did Herod have John the Baptist apprehended and put into prison?
14. Where was the discourse on the bread of life preached by Christ?
15. What was the name of the father of Judas Iscariot?
16. After his conversion in Damascus, how long was it before Saul (Paul) went back to Jerusalem?
17. What younger preacher did Paul several times speak of as his "son"?
18. What two Christians accompanied Paul on his voyage to Rome when as a prisoner he appealed to Caesar?
19. What New Testament book involves a "run away" slave who had been converted and was being sent back to his master as a brother in Christ?
20. Who is the only New Testament writer that calls false teachers "anitchrist"?

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

READERS'



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:

■ *"Thank you for such a good paper. Not too many to choose from these days."*

GEORGIA:

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

NORTH CAROLINA:

■ *"We are thankful you print a 'true to the Bible' paper. May God be with you as you continue to serve Him."*

■ *"I am 85 years old and in poor health. Your paper is a help and blessing to me. I love the Lord. I appreciate getting your paper."*

TENNESSEE:

■ *"Thank you for THE SWORD AND STAFF publication. I also have POEMS OF THE SOUL AND PROVERBS and NOBODY LEFT BEHIND. All of these are great to read and study (thank you). I would like the bound volumes marked..."*

VIRGINIA:

■ *"Will you please send all of the bound volumes [of THE SWORD AND STAFF]...Thank you."*

■ *"I pray God will bless you to continue sending out this much needed publication for many more years..."*

PENNSYLVANIA:

■ *"I thoroughly enjoy your timely magazine and have been enjoying it for some time. May our Lord and Master continue blessing your good work..."*

OHIO:

■ *"Please remove us from future mailings." (E-Mail)*

■ *"Thanks for your faithfulness to the Word. You're spreading a message that is so needed. May God continue to bless your every effort..."*

■ *"Enclosed, please find our contribution to help in the printing and distribution of THE SWORD AND STAFF. It is but a small token of our appreciation for your solid publication that continues to proclaim the truth of God's Word. How important this is with today's political correctness to not just be tolerant of, but to embrace the sin that surrounds us."*

"May He continue to bless you in this mission."

MICHIGAN:

■ *"God bless you for your faithful ministry. I have greatly appreciated it and benefited from it for decades...May God bless you with the resources and health you need in 2009 and beyond."*

INDIANA:

■ *"Please send me your SWORD AND STAFF paper. I saw it at a beauty shop and would like to receive it."*

■ *"This may help a little. You have sent me THE SWORD AND STAFF for ages and I've not responded for ages. I'll try to do better."*

IOWA:

■ *"Just a note to let you know again our appreciation of your labor in the Master's vineyard. Oh, for our Lord to raise up more plain spoken servants with a simple, strong and sincere presentation of the preached gospel!"*

"Thanks again...with sincere best wishes and kindest regards."

MISSOURI:

■ *"Thanks for all you're doing."*

■ *"Thank you so much for the study material. I will enjoy it and learn much..."*

■ *"I appreciate and use many of the articles in THE SWORD AND STAFF. Keep up the good work."*

■ *"Thanks for the paper and I hope you can continue [publishing it] for a long time. Use this to help in printing it."*

■ *"Please send me your bound volumes...I want the whole set again as I love doing the questions...Thanks so much. The Lord bless and keep you."*

■ *"I have read your paper off and on for several years. I know of no other church paper with better material than yours. So keep up the good work. We are living in a time when the truth needs to be published."*

"So I'd like to receive your bound volumes for reading this winter when I have more time. Thanks again for the work you do..."

TEXAS:

■ *"Greetings and God bless you all! I just wanted to drop you all a note to say 'Thank you.'"*

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READERS'...Response

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"I truly enjoy each and every publication of *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. Each one has helped me understand more the good Lord's Word, opening my eyes to see more clearly and my mind to understanding.

"May the good Lord continue to bless you all in all things."

■ "Just a note to say 'Thank you' for the messages in each *SWORD AND STAFF*. It's such a rich blessing and comfort to find the Truth undiluted (as ever so often the case is). It would seem that the desire today is not to offend and not to be 'too different.' I often feel I'm in a dry and thirsty land..."

"May the Lord richly bless your faithfulness in preaching the Truth."

■ "If at all possible, would you please send me the bound volumes of *THE SWORD AND STAFF* 2001-2002 and 2003-2004?"

"I find *THE SWORD AND STAFF* so instrumental in learning and understanding the Word of God in the Bible. *THE SWORD AND STAFF* opens my eyes to the true meaning of much that has clouded my understanding in the past.

"I shall eagerly be looking forward to your reply.

"May the good Lord continue to bless you all in all things."

OKLAHOMA:

■ "Please send me bound volumes for 2003-2004 of *THE SWORD AND STAFF* and 2005-2006 of the same...Thanks for keeping God's Word relevant..."

NEBRASKA:

■ "Please remove from mailing list. Thanks."

IDAHO:

■ "Thank you very much for the wonderful work you have going, and may God continue to bless your efforts."

CALIFORNIA:

■ "God bless you for putting out such a good paper, true to the Word of God. Praise the Lord! It's refreshing in these days. God bless you."

OREGON:

■ "I am grateful for the work you do for the Lord. I pray that you still have many years of strength ahead of you..." (E-mail)

■ "I want to continue getting *THE SWORD AND STAFF* and I want to receive the book *NOBODY LEFT BEHIND*. I appreciate your articles in *THE SWORD AND STAFF*...Enclosed is my check. I hope it will help."

WASHINGTON:

■ "Thank you for your ministry. Many are being en-

couraged and spiritually strengthened.

"Please send two books of *NOBODY LEFT BEHIND* and the tracts I have checked."

UNITED STATES:

■ "Please give me your thoughts regarding the Scripture relating to *women's roll in the worship assembly...*" (E-mail)

Comment:

Acts 20:7 seems to be a general statement when it says, "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread." This would include women. Although Acts 2:42 makes no distinction in reference to gender ("And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and prayers"), this would seem to be inclusive of men and women. We usually think of this Scripture as representing a group action. We are left to other Scripture to see distinctively how this was carried out. Other narrows this down as to how they went about doing this.

It is plain from the New Testament that God intended for men in the formal sense to be the leaders in the church. It is not a matter of superiority or inferiority, but of distinctive roles assigned to man and woman by God. In the continuing "offices" of ministry, evangelists, elders and deacons were (are) men. In connection with the public assembly women are not to teach or to usurp authority over men. Notice 1 Corinthians 14:29-35 and 1 Timothy 2:1-15. According to the apostle Paul, the reason for this injunction is twofold. Here is what he said. "But I [as an apostle] suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For (1) Adam was first formed, then Eve. And (2) Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression." (And this injunction is in connection with the public life of the church)

Right before this in 1 Timothy 2:8 Paul said, "I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting." The context of this is the public assembly. The word "men" in the Greek New Testament is the word *aner* that means a man as a male in contrast with a woman. Men are to pray and consequently lead in prayer in the assembly. However, in more of an informal setting, strictly a prayer meeting, men and women prayed together, it seems (Acts 1:14).

■ "Received and read your latest issue. Nice overview of an issue that won't go away. Also good outline on love."

"Keep up the good work." (E-mail)

■ "Hello! I was told that your publication had articles dealing with the Freemasons. Could you please forward them to me or tell me where to search on your website. I am a Christian and I am witnessing to a

college classmate who is asking me questions about the Freemasons, what they are about, what is right or wrong with them, etc. I appreciate your help in this matter. May God bless you.” (E-mail)

“WHY CHRISTIANS MUST NOT BE LODGE MEMBERS” By William E. Paul

A LODGE is a secret fraternal organization entered by mystic rites of the strictest order. It binds its members into a brotherhood whose ties take precedence over nearly every other allegiance. It requires the taking of oaths of secrecy which may not be broken under the penalty of the most gruesome kind. The Masonic Lodge is an example of the type lodge under discussion. There are a number of lesser known ones which may differ in name and ritualistic detail but all are secret orders requiring allegiance to the most binding oaths.

We are advocating that it is unchristian and therefore wrong for a Christian to be a member of such a lodge. Here is why.

I. The Lodge Is a False Religion

The Masons make the claim of being a religion and of observing the rites and teaching the doctrines characteristic of a religion. In the official Encyclopedia of Freemasonry we read: “I contend without any sort of hesitation that Masonry is, in every sense of the word, except one, and that its least philosophical, an eminently religious institution...Look at its ancient landmarks, its sublime ceremonies, its profound symbols and allegories—all inculcating religious doctrine, commanding religious observance, and teaching religious truth, and who can deny that it is eminently a religious institution?” Vol. II, page 618.

The religion of Masonry claims its authority from a source outside that of the Christian’s Bible. “It’s religion is that general one of nature and primitive revelation—handed down to us from some ancient and patriarchal priesthood...” Page 619.

The Masonic religion does not require belief in the divine authority of the Old and New Testament. “Although in Christendom very few Masons deny the Divine authority of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, yet to require, as a preliminary to initiation, the declaration of such a belief, is directly in opposition to the express regulations of the order...” Page 672.

To the Mason, any book he recognizes as the Word of God is considered the Bible. “The Bible is used among Masons as a symbol of the will of God, however it may be expressed. And, therefore, whatever to any people expresses that will may be used as a substitute for the Holy Bible in a Masonic Lodge... Whether it be the Gospels to the Christian, the Pentateuch to the Israelites, the Koran to the Mussulman, or the Vedas to the Brahman. It Masonically everywhere conveys the same idea—that of the symbolism of the Divine will revealed to man.” Vol. I, Page 104.

So you see, the lodge, by accepting other writings than the Bible as expressive of God’s will, immediately brands itself as a false religion. No Christian can be a

part of such an anti-Christian religion and still be pleasing to God.

II. The Lodge Violates Bible Doctrine

The Masonic Lodge teaches that baptism, a Bible ordinance which brings one into Christ (Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:27), actually is designed to make one a perfect Mason. Part of the instructions to Masons taking the 26th degree includes the following: “Question: What are the symbols of the purification necessary to make us perfect Masons? Answer: Lavation with pure water of BAPTISM because to cleanse the body is emblematical of purifying the soul...”

In referring to what they call the fraternal supper, they say, “And thus the bread we eat, and the wine we drink tonight may enter into and form part of us the identical particles of matter that once formed parts of the material bodies of Moses, Confucius, Plato, Socrates or Jesus of Nazareth.” (Morals and Dogma by Pike, pp. 538, 539). From this it is clear that the Lodge corrupts the very heart and significance of both baptism and the Lord’s supper. Notice that they place Christ on an equality with such non-Christian religious leaders as Confucius and with such Greek philosophers as Plato and Socrates. The Bible teaches that communion is to be with the “blood of Christ” and “the body of Christ” (1 Corinthians 10:16) and not with fallible, sinful men regardless of how scholarly they may have been.

Furthermore, the Masons refer to one of their higher leaders as “Worshipful Master” when Jesus said, “Neither be ye called masters: for one is your master, even Christ” (Matthew 23:10). “Worshipful” indicates an exalted, venerable position, one that is “full of worship.” Certainly this title of distinction is not to be used of any man, and yet the lodges use it freely. Other terms include “Potentate” (which you will see on the Shriner’s fez). The Bible says that Christ is “the only Potentate” (1 Timothy 6:15).

III. The Lodge Requires Unchristian Oaths

The Bible clearly forbids a Christian to swear by heaven, by earth, by his own body or any other thing (Matthew 5:34-37; James 5:12). But part of the Masonic ritual requires a person to swear to some of the most gory and hideous things.

In order to become a Fellow-Craft Mason the candidate must take an oath which includes the following: “I solemnly and sincerely promise and swear with a firm and steadfast resolution to keep and perform the same without any equivocation, mental reservation or secret evasion of men whatever, binding myself under a no less penalty than if having my left breast torn open, my heart plucked out and given as a prey to the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air should I ever knowingly violate this, my solemn obligation of a Fellow-Craft Mason” (Handbook of Freemasonry by Edmond Ronayne, page 123).

A similar oath is sworn by a candidate for the degree of Master Mason in the following words: “Binding myself under a no less penalty than that of having my body sev-

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READERS'...Response

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ered in twain, my bowels taken from thence, and burned to ashes, and the ashes scattered to the four winds of heaven, that no trace of remembrance may be had of so vile and perjured a wretch as I." (Handbook, page 173).

Since the Bible teaches that a Christian's body belongs to the Lord (1 Corinthians 6:19,20), how repulsive it is to even think of solemnly and seriously pledging one's body to such terrible mutilation over the foolish "secrets" of a false religion.

IV. The Lodge Involves Unscriptural Associations

The Bible forbids the Christian from being "unequally yoked" together with unbelievers (2 Corinthians 6:14-17). The Masonic Lodge has fraternal ties of brotherhood of the strongest type. Since the Masons accept people of all the world's false religions, besides atheists, into one fellowship, this is definitely an unequal yoke. In fact, the tie is so close that Lodge members pledge themselves to loyalty even to the extent of shielding each other in crime. By the time one becomes a "Royal Arch" Mason, he takes this oath: "I do promise and swear that a companion Royal Arch Mason's secrets, given to me in charge as such, and I knowing them to be such, shall remain as secure and inviolable in my breast as in his own, MURDER and TREASON not excepted." More than that, he even pledges himself as a Royal Arch Mason (7th degree) to aid and abet a fellow Mason, even if it involves a known wrong. Listen to this: "I furthermore promise and swear, that I will assist a companion Royal Arch Mason when I see him engaged in any difficulty, and will espouse his cause so far as to extricate him (get him out of the trouble, W.P.) from the same, whether he be right or wrong." The Bible says not to have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but rather to reprove them (Ephesians 5:11). But the brotherhood of lodge members participates in and even shields one from wrong doing. Certainly it is sinful to be bound by such an ungodly tie.

Therefore, lodge membership (whether the Masons or any other similar lodge) is contrary to the Scriptures for the Christian. It is a false religion. It teaches doctrine different from the Bible. It places one into fellowship with evil. No Christian can be faithful to Christ and retain membership in the lodge.

■ *"Keep on preaching and printing 'The Word' and I will keep on preaching. Churches in the _____ area are compromising more and more. Hard rock 'Christian' (?) music and changing the name...Ashamed of the name 'Church of Christ'? One such church has a large billboard...'The Church for People That Don't Like Church.' I know of only one personality that fits, the old devil himself. So, is it a church for all his 'little demons'? Yes, it used to be the church of Christ and loyal to the Word..."*

GREECE:

■ *"I would be interested in receiving a complimentary copy of THE SWORD AND STAFF. Thank you and*

God bless you." (E-mail)

GHANA:

■ *"I have been invited by a radio station here to debate with some sabbatarians on why Sunday is a day of worship. I should be pleased to have your input... Thanks for your time." (E-mail)*

NIGERIA:

■ *"Thanks for your good work. May God be with you. Will you send us your publication?" (E-mail)* □

The Great Confession and Corresponding Declaration

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become narrower with the passing of time. Looking back, we see how this took place. First the promise is made to mankind generally through Adam and Eve. The "seed" that would destroy the power of the devil would come through them. Next the lineage of descent is narrowed to and through Seth... Shem...Abraham...Judah...David, and finally concludes in Mary and the Word that became flesh, Jesus Christ himself (Luke 3:23-38).

Prophecies and Moving toward the Kingdom Concept

The first prophecy of the "seed" bruising the head of the serpent seems to have been spiritual in nature, following the fall of man and the sentence of death. This would be reversed in crushing the head of the serpent. The call of Abraham promised that through the coming "seed" all families of the earth would be blessed (Genesis 12:1-3; 22:18). The apostle Peter regarded this blessing as spiritual in the forgiveness of sins and salvation (Acts 3:24-26). Through the tribe of Judah with the coming of "Shiloh" (rest-giver, peaceful one) obedience would be rendered by the people (Genesis 49:10). God told Moses that he would raise up a prophet from among the people like unto him (like Moses, Deuteronomy 18:18-19). Peter by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit applies this to Christ, and the work of a prophet is spiritual in nature (Acts 3:22-23). The 53rd chapter of Isaiah depicts the Christ suffering in behalf of sinful people. It is in David where the prophecies began to take on more of a turn to the concept of a kingdom. It would seem to indicate an earthly kingdom (if we didn't know the rest of the story). David, or David in his seed, would reign forever over them upon his throne. Notice, for example, Psalms 89:3-4 and Ezekiel 34:23-25; 37:24-28. Then Daniel in his prophecy gives the most expansive concept of the coming kingdom. In explaining the meaning of the great image in the dreams of

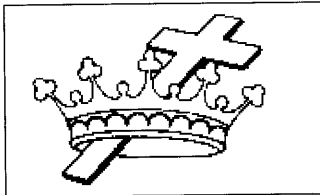
Nebuchadnezzar, having reference to different nations, he went a step further. "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever" (Daniel 2:44).

The Announcements and Birth of the King

The apostle Paul tells us in Galatians 4:4 that "when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman..." This statement very much reminds us of the promise in Genesis 3:15 (along with John 1:14). As we know well the story, when the nearness of this time drew near, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph (Matthew 1:18-25) and Gabriel to Mary (Luke 1:26-38). Mary was told, "And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end." On the surface these words spoken to Mary sound like an earthly king is to be born. However, what was said to Joseph had more of a spiritual ring. "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). Then following the birth of Jesus wise men came from the east, having seen this unusual "star," and enquired, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" (Matthew 2:2) It could well be that the words of Daniel, (who himself was a wise man of the east), had been kept alive by successive generations of these men through the years. If so, perhaps these wise men were moved to think of this as linked to fulfillment of what Daniel had written (Daniel 2:44). The birth of a king had taken place. It is said that he would be given the throne of his father David, but what was the nature of him being a king and the nature of this kingdom?

"Repent Ye: for the Kingdom of Heaven Is at Hand"

Time moves on. About 30 years later John the Baptist comes preaching, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2). The hermeneutics of the New Testament writers now comes into play. They explain his message of re-



pentance and getting ready for the coming kingdom in this way: "As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias [Isaiah] the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth" (Luke 3:2-6). Here we have a picture, if taken literally, of the terrain of the land being altered and changed. Valleys are being filled, hills leveled, and rough places made smooth. The "paths" or roads are made smooth and straight for ease in travel and to expedite traffic. In ancient times engineers and workman would go before a king, his entourage, and even his armies to make sure the roads were in the best shape for travel. This is being accomplished spiritually when people genuinely repent and turn to God. Spiritually, hills are made low, valleys filled and the roads made straight. John was getting people ready for the coming king and his kingdom. When he was cast into prison, Jesus took up the same message: "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17). Later, as Jesus sent out his disciples, he said, "And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 10:7). For something to be "at hand," it means that it is just "around the corner." And to get ready for it by repenting, does this sound like he is talking about an earthly kingdom? We hardly think so.

"My Kingdom Is Not of This World"

To make a long story short, consider the Sermon on the Mount and the references to the kingdom here (Matthew 5-7). These are spiritual teachings, in anticipation of the kingdom. Consider the parables. The Lord told his disciples he was teaching them in parables because it was given unto them to know the mysteries of the kingdom (Matthew 13:11). Time and time again, he will say, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto..." (Matthew 13:24, 31, 33, 44, 45, 47; 18:23; 20:1; 22:2; 25:1). No where is there even a hint of setting up an earthly kingdom; it is all spiritual. In fact, to even be in the kingdom, we must be converted and become as little children (Matthew 18:1-4). John 3:1-5 says that we must be born again. There is nothing earthly or political here. In the mockery and trial of Jesus, they tried to "pin" on him the offense of trying to make himself king. Pilate even asked him if he was a king. Jesus said "yes" (1 Timothy 6:13), that it was to this end he was born (John 18:37). But the

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The Great Confession and Corresponding Declaration

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Lord qualified his statement by saying, "My kingdom is not of this world, if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence [of this world]" (John 18:36). He totally disavows claims to an earthly kingdom (it was a "kingdom of heaven" that he had in mind). Pilate could see that Jesus was harmless and no threat to the Roman Empire. He told the Jews, "I find in him no fault at all" (John 18:38).

Kingdom to Come with Power

Specifically, now let us move on to the fulfillment of the coming kingdom (it becoming a reality). In Matthew 16:18 Jesus had said, "I will build my church" and seems to make this interchangeable with "kingdom of heaven." He, his disciples and John the Baptist had preached that "the kingdom of heaven is at hand." In Mark 9:1 the Lord said that some standing there would not taste of death until they saw the kingdom come with power. With that our thoughts move ahead to the 2nd chapter of Acts to the day of Pentecost following the resurrection and ascension of Christ. As promised, the Holy Spirit fell upon the apostles and there was a great demonstration of power and miracles (starting with the sound of a mighty rushing wind and cloven tongues like fire resting upon the apostles). Thousands of Jews were there in the temple area in connection with the observance of Pentecost. The apostles by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit begin to preach to the startled crowds. Peter is a leading spokesman.

"He Seeing This Before Spake of the Resurrection of Christ"

What was preached on that day is very significant. "Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice" and began to explain what was happening (Acts 2:14ff). He explained the phenomenon of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. He declared the amazing news of the resurrection of Christ from the dead, applying Psalms 16:8-11 to the situation. With his eye on the prophecies about the kingdom, he further speaks of David. "Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, *he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ...*" He further discloses that Christ has ascended to heaven, is seated on the right hand of the Father and has "shed forth this,

which ye now see and hear." He then concludes by summing it all up, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:29-36). Did you catch the significance of all of these words? Peter says that *Christ being raised from the dead constituted him being raised to sit upon the throne of David*. Now with his resurrection and ascension, he is seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven and is spiritually reigning over his kingdom, which has now come into being. That is why he can now be fully declared to be both Lord and Christ (and all that is implied in this).

The Beginning, in the Kingdom, and the End

The kingdom, the church, came with power on the day of Pentecost. Thereafter, looking back and explaining his experience in first taking the gospel to the household of the Gentile Cornelius (Acts 10), Peter said, "And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost [Spirit] fell on them, as on us *at the beginning*" (Acts 11:15). Pentecost in Acts 2 was the beginning of the church, the kingdom, in its formal inception into the world. Throughout the book of Acts we read of men "preaching things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ," and that which followed, "they were baptized, both men and women" (Acts 8:12; 19:18; 20:35; 28:23, 31). Colossians 1:13 states that the Father "hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and *hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son*." The kingdom is a present reality and as born again Christians we are in it. It is spiritual, not an earthly kingdom. The spiritual nature of it is highlighted when Paul asserted in Romans 14:17, "For the kingdom of God is...righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost [Spirit]." In the book of Acts and the epistles there seems to be a shift in terminology as the word "church" largely supersedes that of "kingdom." However, Paul in looking to the conclusion of all things, says, "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power" (1 Corinthians 15:24).

"Then Charged He His Disciples That They Should Tell No Man That He Was Jesus the Christ"

Getting back to the main Scripture that this commentary is all about (Matthew 16:13-20), we have these concluding words. The great confession has been made by Peter, and central to it is that

(Continued on Page 18)

The Selfish Person

THE SELFISH PERSON in being selfish is inclined to become even more selfish. Others, by the very nature of the situation, are not disposed to be drawn to him as much to like and love him as a selfish person. Therefore, sensing he is not loved, he will be more absorbed with himself and thereby become even more selfish (feeling isolated and thus becoming more wrapped up in his own little world). And, needless to say, a person all wrapped up in himself makes a mighty small package. □



BARBS

...with a POINT

LOOSE LIVING will get you into tight places.

With your nose in the air it is hard to keep your feet on the ground.

You reap what you sow, and also you reap what you don't sow (you suffer the consequences of not doing anything).

When a nation has lost its morals, it has lost its moors and is like a ship adrift at sea.

According to the book of Proverbs, a child may be foolish and if not corrected will grow up to become a full-fledged fool.

You do not have the right to do wrong because wrong is never right.

How frequent, and irrational, it is that people cry "legalism" when we simply say that we should do just exactly what the Bible teaches!

It is true, people who tell little white lies soon become color blind.

When you love the LORD God with all of your heart, with all of your soul, and with all of your might, you won't have any trouble coming to all of the services of the church all of the time (unless for reasons of infirmity and sickness).

We only help people, in the long run, when we help them to help themselves.

We are thankful, as of now, that some who have wanted officially to make California "Sodom by the Sea" have been rebuffed (but this is not so in reference to some northeastern states).

We lose our independence and liberties to the degree that we do not accept our responsibilities.

Religiously, I refuse to identify myself with any religious movement, or church, except the one that we read about in the New Testament and that was started on the Day of Pentecost in the second chapter of the book of Acts.

After the cattle have gotten out, it is a little late to think about shutting the gate.

Wild music is made evident in its presentation, in the kind of people it attracts, and in the kind of life and behavior it inspires.

The new "holy rollers," as evidenced in so-called "gospel rock," are not all that holy.

Some people are so far away from the Lord, spiritually speaking, that although they may be in close hearing range of the preaching of God's Word, physically speaking, they do not hear it.

If deeds speak louder than words, some people aren't saying much and can hardly be heard.

Let us not look to psychiatry as the answer to our spiritual problems, but to the Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16-17; Acts 20:32).

Many "mega" churches don't seem to be "mega" when it comes to doctrine.

If we confess our sins, but don't forsake them, the only purpose it will serve is testimony against us in the courts of heaven.

Many times the person who has the least to say is the most eager to say it.

Those who say they are "pro-choice" in reference to abortion should have used their brain and made responsible, moral choices long before an unwanted pregnancy took place.

If we don't live within our means, we will soon find life demeaning.

If you don't take that first strong drink, you won't have to worry about the consequences of the second, of the third, and of all that follow.

People who have "an ax to grind" don't cut it with the Lord.

If you want to find your place under the sun, move on out from under the shade and get to work. □



Would I Be Called A Christian?

Would I be called a Christian if everybody knew
My secret thoughts and feelings and everything I do?
Would they see the likeness of Christ in me each day?
Oh, would they hear Him speak in every thing I say?

Would I be called a Christian if all could know
That I am found in places Christ would never go?
Oh, could they tell the difference in the songs I sing?
In my eating, drinking, dressing—in everything?

Would I be called a Christian if judged by what I read?
By all my recreation, and every thought and deed?
Would I be counted Christ-like in my work and play,
Unselfish, kind, forgiving others every day?

—Author Unknown

The Great Confession and Corresponding Declaration

(Continued from Page 16))

Jesus is the Christ. However, it seems the populace for the most part has a misunderstanding of what the Messiah is all about. At this point, to declare that he was the Christ would only enflame their political aspirations and expectations (and overtly arouse them). Jesus didn't fit into this mold. It was only after his crucifixion, resurrection and ascension, with the coming of the Holy Spirit, that they could fully understand what was involved in him being the Christ. It seems that even Peter, although making the great confession, didn't fully grasp what he was saying. Why do we say this? Immediately following the confession, Jesus began to tell them that he must go to Jerusalem and of all of the bad things that were going to happen to him there: the crucifixion, etc. Peter wouldn't hear it and began to rebuke Jesus for saying such things. The Lord turned to him, and said, "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not [you understand not] the things that be of God, but those that be of men" (Matthew 16:21-23). When Peter made the great confession, Jesus had called him Peter (a rock). Now he tells him that he is an offence to him. Elsewhere in the New Testament this word "offence" is translated "stumbling block" (KJV). Peter, the rock, has now become a stumbling block. However, with the crucifixion and resurrection behind him, and with the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, Peter would have everything in proper perspective. With depth of understanding and conviction he would say that Jesus was the Christ, which he emphatically did (Acts 2:36; 4:12). He saw the spiritual significance of it all. Also, it seems the other disciples would have to experience the same change (Matthew 18:1; Mark 10:35-45), and they did. The charge in Matthew 16:20 could have indirectly had them in mind as well as others in telling no man. □

Extended Use of "Kingdom" TERMINOLOGY

The Overall Extended and Expanded Concept of the Kingdom

A STUDY about the kingdom would not be complete without considering the extended and expanded concept of the kingdom. Although the kingdom of God is spoken of as being now, it is also spoken of as being hereafter. Although it is on earth, it is and will be in heaven. After his resur-

rection, Jesus declared, "All power [authority] is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28:18). As we noticed, he was raised from the dead and ascended to heaven to be enthroned on the right hand of the Father, occupying the throne of David in the expanded spiritual sense. Ephesians 1:20-23 and Colossians 1:13-20 lay out the extended and expanded view of the authority of Christ. (Read this amazing section of Scripture, also, look at Philippians 2:9-11 and 1 Peter 3:22). It involves heaven and earth. It is for time and eternity. It is now and hereafter. God incarnate, our Savior, now resurrected and glorified, is reigning.

"The Kingdom on Earth and the Kingdom in Heaven"

The church is called the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven. We are much like a colony of heaven implanted in the earth today. Jesus had taught his disciples to pray, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). As we noticed, the kingdom came and is here now. And when we are "born again," we enter this kingdom of heaven (John 3:1-5). However, we are still upon the earth, although in an alien land, but Paul tells us that "our conversation [literally, our *citizenship*] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself" (Philippians 3:20,21). Didn't our Lord say, "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also"? (John 14:3). Our life on earth is lived in our physical bodies and in these bodies we cannot enter the eternal phase of this kingdom that will be in heaven itself. Paul said that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God," and that we will be clothed with a new, eternal spiritual body (1 Corinthians 15:49-53). With our new bodies we have "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Peter 1:4; 2 Corinthians 5:1; Colossians 1:5). And Christ reigns and has extended authority in heaven and on earth and all phases of it. How amazing! Yes, finally everything is climaxed in the kingdom being presented up to the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24), and that brings us to our next point.

The Kingdom of Heaven Yet to Come

Paul adjured Timothy, "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick [living] and the dead *at his ap-*

pearing and his kingdom" to preach the Word (2 Timothy 4:1-3). Likewise in verse 18 of this chapter, Paul is confident that the Lord will deliver him and preserve him **"unto his heavenly kingdom."** James states that poor Christians were rich in faith and **"heirs of the kingdom** which he hath promised to them that love him" (James 2:5). In 2 Peter 1:5-12, Christians are admonished by the apostle to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord, adding one virtuous thing right after another. In doing this they would make their "calling and election sure." And, thus, finally "an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly **into the everlasting kingdom** of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." We are in the kingdom of heaven right now, but there is a sense in which we are yet to enter this kingdom. That is the eternal phase of it. It comes at the end of a life well lived, with the second coming of Christ and the Day of Judgment. Beyond this land of death, this veil of wrath and tears, awaits "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Peter 1:3-6). It is spoken of as an "everlasting kingdom." It is yet to come. □

(From a little booklet "Problems in Distinguishing the Spiritual in Reference to the Kingdom" by James E. Gibbons)

Comments on Matthew 11:11

"Verily I Say unto You, Among Them That Are Born of Women There Hath Not Risen a Greater Than John the Baptist: Notwithstanding He That Is Least in the Kingdom of Heaven is Greater Than He"

This shows, (1) That John was not in the kingdom. (2) That, as none greater than John had been born of women, no one had yet entered the kingdom. (3) That, therefore, it had not yet been set up, but as John himself, Jesus, and the Twelve under the first commission, preached, was "at hand." (4) All in the kingdom, even the humblest, have a superior station to John, because they have superior privileges.—**B.W. Johnson** □

Comments on Matthew 11:12

"And from the Days of John the Baptist Until Now the Kingdom of Heaven Suffereth Violence, and the Violent Take It by Force"

Jesus here pictures the kingdom of heaven as a besieged city. The city is shut up, but the enemies which surround it storm its walls and try to force an entrance—an apt illustration which many fail to comprehend. The gates of Christ's kingdom were

not opened until the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), but men hearing it was about to be opened sought to enter it prematurely, not by the gates which God would open when Simon Peter used the keys (Matthew 16:19), but by such breaches as they themselves sought to make in the walls. Examples of this violence will be seen in the following instances. John 6:15; Matthew 20:21; Luke 19:11,36-38; 22:24-30; Acts 1:6. The people were full of preconceived ideas with regard to the kingdom, and each one sought to hasten and enjoy its pleasures as one who impatiently seizes upon a bud and seeks with his fingers to force it to bloom. The context shows that John the Baptist was even then seeking to force the kingdom.—**J.W. McGarvey** □

Fighting Them One at a Time

IN 480 B.C. the outmanned army of Sparta's King Leonidas held off the Persian troops of Xerxes by fighting them one at a time as they came through a narrow mountain pass. Commenting on this strategy, C. H. Sprurgeon said, "Suppose Leonidas and his handful of men had gone out into the wide-open plain and attacked the Persians—why, they would have died at once, even though they might have fought like lions." Spurgeon continued by saying that Christians stand in the narrow pass of today. If they choose to battle every difficulty at once, they're sure to suffer defeat. But if they trust God and confront their troubles one by one, they will find that their strength is sufficient.—**Selected** □

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Answers to:

BIBLE QUESTIONS

1. Exodus 35:4-36:7; 2. Judges 6:11-16; 3. 1 Samuel 17:55; 26:5; 2 Samuel 2:8; etc; 4. 2 Samuel 8:16; 20:23; 24:2; etc; 5. 2 Samuel 23:1; 6. 1 King 19:8-18; 7. Proverbs 17:22; 8. To cut a covenant—Jeremiah 34:18-19; Genesis 15:10 (note the full context); 9. Son of man—93 times; 10. Amos 6:1; 11. Matthew 4:21; Luke 5:10; 12. Son of Man—found 82 times in the four gospel accounts; 13. Mark 6:17-18; 14. John 6:59 (6:27-60); 15. John 6:71; 12:4; 13:2, 26; 16. Galatians 1:15-18; 17. 1 Timothy 1:2, 18; 2 Timothy 1:2; 2:1; 18. Luke and Aristarchus (Acts 27:1-2; 19. Philemon; 20. 1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 John, verse 7. □

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