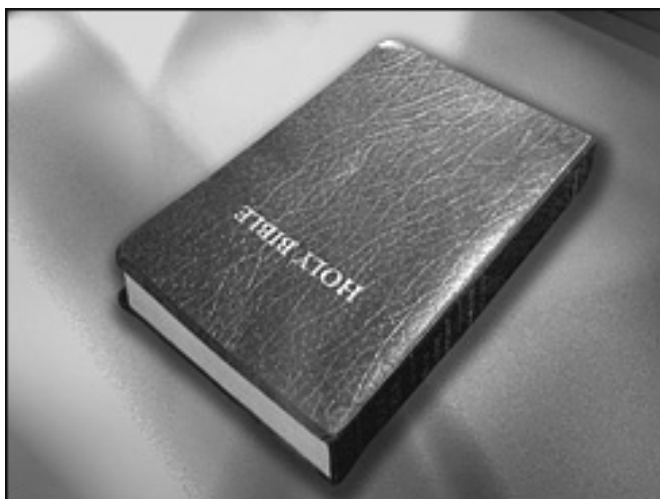


The Sword AND Staff

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

The Church and Denominationalism

• By JAMES E. GIBBONS—1535 W. Fairfield Drive—Mt. Airy, NC 27030 USA



THIS ARTICLE deals with the subject of “The Church and Denominationalism.” As we approach this subject, perhaps it would be well for us to define what is meant by “church” and “denominationalism.”

The Church

The word “church” is the translation of the Greek word *ἐκκλησία* (*ekklesia*), which from its stems signifies “out of” and “to call.” It is used to identify an assembly of people who have been called together, the called out ones.

As we think of this word as found in the Scriptures in connection with Christianity, we find three different usages of the term. (1) It refers generically to the body of believers in the world in a collective way. The Lord said, “I will build my church” (Matthew 16:18). Paul said, “I persecuted the church” (1 Corinthians 15:9). (2) Then the church exists in a local sense, the body of believers in one given locality, as “the church of God which is at Corinth” (1 Corinthians 1:1-2). (3) And, finally, the word is used in its most basic meaning, that of believers coming together for worship and edification. This can be

seen when the apostle Paul said, “Let your women keep silence in the churches [assemblies]” (1 Corinthians 14:34), as they were not permitted to be public speakers in the general assembly of the church (1 Timothy 2:12-14). Also, notice a similar usage in Colossians 4:16. (A non-religious use of *ekklesia* also can be seen in Acts 19:32,39, and 41 where the term is translated “assembly,” KJV).

From the overall perspective, Christ said, “I will build my church.” And speaking of this coming church at that time, he said, “There shall be one fold, and one shepherd” (John 10:16). The church is the body of Christ, spiritually speaking (Colossians 1:18). As the Lord Jesus came into the world through the virgin birth, and thereby taking the form of man and walking upon the earth, he had one body. Now the church, representative of Christ in the world, is one body. When we become a Christian, we are called into and baptized into one body (Colossians 3:15; 1 Corinthians 12:13). Ephesians 4:3-6 clearly makes plain the teaching that the church is one body and the oneness of everything in connection with it, according to God’s plan.

Denominationalism

Now in sharp contrast with all of this, let us notice the meaning of “denominationalism.” The first definition found in the English dictionary reads, “The tendency to separate into religious sects or denominations” (*The American Heritage Dictionary*). This brings us to the word “denomination,” which signifies division and “partyism.” And with this word we back up to the word “denominate,” meaning “to give a name to; designate.” And thus from the purity of the undenominational Christian viewpoint, a religious sect or party separated from others, while wearing man-made names and embracing distinctive doctrines of men,

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—THANK YOU—

Proverbially ***SPEAKING...***

***IF YOU** have never become a Christian, you are not a Christian.*

If you would know the Father, first become acquainted with the Son (John 14:6-7; 1 John 2:23).

When the Bible says "therefore," we need to notice what it is there for.

Life without the LORD, likewise, is like a "sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal."

The Lord's Supper is also a memorial to God forgetting (Matthew 26:26-29; Hebrews 8:12).

If life leaves you broken, let the Lord pick up the broken pieces and put them back together the way they ought to be.

If you take care of the little things in life, the big things will take care of themselves.

When you are bruised, battered and bounced around by life, be like the rubber ball and from the impacts, bounce to greater heights.

People who say everything they think are not thinking.

The life of an older Christian that has been faithfully lived unto death is perhaps the best sermon that will ever be preached.

EDITORIAL COMMENTS



"A GOOD MINISTER OF JESUS CHRIST"

PAUL, using the term "minister" (*diakonos*) simply in a non-technical sense as a servant of Christ, plainly told Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:6, "*If* thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, *thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ*, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained." "Put the brethren in remembrance" of what? The verses right before in this chapter are the clear antecedent to what he says here. He foretold and warned of a departure from the faith (1 Timothy 4:1-6). This was of deep concern to the apostle Paul. In fact, verse 3 of chapter one of this epistle tells us why that Timothy, a younger evangelist working with the apostle Paul, had been left at Ephesus. It reads, "I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine." "If" (that's the word Paul uses) Timothy was to be found faithful as a servant of Jesus Christ, taking heed to this injunction was absolutely necessary.

Yes, carrying out the Great Commission involves delivering a message decidedly with a positive thrust (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15,16). The word "gospel" itself means good news, and a mistake is made when the negative is dwelt upon in an inordinate way. But even in heralding forth the good news of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ and how it relates to our salvation, the negative has to be dealt with. In preaching Christ, Paul asserts, "Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect [complete] in Christ Jesus" (Colossians 1:28). Sinners must be brought to repentance to be saved. And genuine repentance can only be realized when they are brought face to face with their sins.

And the negative must be dealt with in other ways, too, although many would back away from doing this. We have heard preachers say that their job was to bring people to Christ and it was the job of Christ to take care of them thereafter. But the instrumentality through which Christ does this involves the leadership of the church (and other Christians). To not teach and warn new converts is to leave them like babes in the woods to fend for themselves. Jesus said there would arise false Christs and false prophets (Matthew 24:11-13). The prospects of false teaching and apostasy was a continual burden upon the heart of the apostle Paul and other New Testament writers like Peter, John and Jude (and they didn't hesitate to write and talk about it either). Check

out their writings. But today in a multicultural society inordinately preoccupied with what they call the “positive,” and with being politically correct, this is a “no! no!” Contrariwise, we hear, “I’m okay. You’re okay.” Or, we are all sinners, therefore it behooves none of us to raise our voices and talk about the rest of us. You must not judge. So, no one says anything in a negative way about anyone or anything (except politicians running for office, talking about other politicians; or Bible-believing Christians being “put down”).

On another occasion when Paul was gathered with the Ephesian elders, reminding them of how he had preached to them the Word of God from the beginning, he said, “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” (Acts 20:26,27). Then he admonished them to “take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock...” (20:28). With this said, he soberly continues, “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” (20:29-31). Paul practiced what he preached (1 Timothy 4:6). He conversed with the leaders of the church, warning them (and to be forewarned is to be forearmed). It was not just with the elders of the church alone. For “three years,” he said, “I ceased not to warn everyone night and day with tears.” Would that we had leaders who loved the truth of God and the Lord’s church that much today. (Yes, where are the tears? Where is the concern?). But the imbalanced preoccupation of some with the positive makes them tongue-tied. Consequently, Christians are never warned about false teaching, and so many don’t even look upon “false teaching” as being all that bad, or even false, nor do they notice questionable infractions coming into the church that are leading straight to apostasy.

In conjunction with reading 1 Timothy 4:1-6, the big picture emerges before us in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 (one of Paul’s earliest epistles). Paul warns of a massive falling away from the true church that was coming with the appearance of the man of sin, who exalted himself as God. The early Protestant reformers had no trouble in identifying this with the papacy. Here it says that the man of sin “opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that

he is God.” From the New Testament perspective, the temple is the church (1 Corinthians 3:16; Ephesians 2:21-22). To them the pope usurped the position of God, even being called the Lord God the pope (Holy Father, Reverend, etc.) (Ephesians 4:6; Matthew 23:9), and he usurped the position of Christ, being called the head of the church (Colossians 1:18). And, in conjunction with this, 1 Timothy 4:1-6 paints a picture of celibacy and asceticism, practices found in this falling away. With the coming of the Dark Ages, this apostasy came into being in its fullest. Even Protestant denominations, which later appeared in protest, were unable to fully unshackle themselves from it, carrying over many of its errors and now seems to be gravitating back to their origin. Today we live in the aftermath of this great apostasy, but its physical representation is still with us, as well as denominationalism. Add to this, modern unbelief (even in the ranks of professing “churches”) and rampant moral decay that is all about us, there should be “big time” concern for the well being of the Lord’s church. With many who have before claimed identity only with the church of the New Testament, continued adherence to the simple concept of undenominational Christianity seems to be outdated. They are open to all kinds of winds of change and doctrine.

All of these things being heavily upon Paul’s heart, he repeatedly wrote about them, as well as teaching and personally talking to Christians about them. He loved the Lord, he loved the church, and he loved the truth. People needed to be informed. In 2 Thessalonians 2:5, he said, “Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?” To the Ephesians elders, he said, “Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears” (Acts 20:31). To Timothy he wrote, “*If* thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, ***thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ***, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained” (1 Timothy 4:6). With this, notice such Scriptures as 2 Timothy 4:1-8.

Preacher, elder, we personally ask you. Are you a “***good minister of Jesus Christ***” nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine” like the apostle Paul said here? Are Christians under your care being informed and warned, or are they being left as babes in the woods? To be a “good minister of Jesus Christ” this warning must take place. Spiritually speaking, we are living in perilous times. Let us watch and pray. □

EDITORIAL

Byways

UNUSUAL AND STRANGE THINGS IN A CRAZY WORLD: Body Piercing, Et Cetera

THIS IS a follow-up to an “Editorial Byways” article under the caption, “Unusual and Strange Things in a Crazy World.” In the little article we highlighted a news story about a woman being sentenced to six months of house arrest for piercing the ears and necks of kittens and selling them on the internet. In her defense her lawyers argued that parents allowed their children to get their ears pierced at a very young age, and why would it be wrong to do it to cats? We also told of our experience witnessing a mother having her screaming baby’s ears pierced in the local Wal-Mart store. We also called your attention to this other news item about an English woman who died after reaching her goal of having 100 piercings in her ears, nose, lips, belly and body to display jewelry. Likewise, another woman died after getting her tongue pierced to anchor a fixture of jewelry. After writings these things, we asked, “Are there any Christian teachings or Scriptures that have a bearing upon all of this?”

But before looking at responses we received to this question, let us notice some other things that we have seen that could be added to our “unusual, strange and crazy” listings. Off at a distance we noticed this unusual sight of a young woman with a protrusion from her lip that looked like a bloated, shining tick (yes, like the bloodsucking parasite seen on dogs). However, when we got closer, we saw it was jewelry attached to her pierced lip. On another young woman, who rendered curb-side service at a drive-in restaurant, we saw curiously attached to her exposed “belly button” (navel) and naked mid-part of her body, this object much like the one on the girl’s lip. At first we did not know what to make of it. But now we know. Then at another time at a restaurant we were served by a young waitress with a jewel attached to the side of her pierced nose with bloodshot eyes looking at us from above (obviously coming from the pierce). Having eyes, we can’t help but see what comes before them. Et cetera.

Having written the said “Editorial Byways” article in the previous issue of *The Sword and Staff*, and beginning to get some readers’ responses from it, we decided to google “body piercing” on the internet. We suddenly became more informed, perhaps more than we would liked to have been. One ad-

vertisement featuring “piercology” listed thirty-some places (or options) for piercing over all parts (and any parts) of the body, along with the price tag for the initial piercing and basic jewelry. It was not just for getting ones ears pierced, but for any and all parts of the body (literally). Yes, for even piercing and placing jewelry on multiple places on the sexual organs of the male and female (as well as the nipples of their body)!!! (Maybe we should add another word to “unusual, strange and crazy”—**absurd!**)

Enough said (perhaps too much). Now let us move on to our question, “Are there any Christian teachings or Scriptures that have a bearing upon all of this?” We will now sort of summarize some of the lines of thought brought forth in response to our question with the accompanying Scriptures. They are from the viewpoint of a Christian and what should be expected of such (and not expected of the people of the world). In responding to our question, thoughts have been expanded from piercing to tattoos and adornment. You can come to your own logical conclusions about this matter in light of what all is being said (and especially as a Bible believer).

The first Scripture that was brought to our attention was Leviticus 19:28 (NKJV), “You shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor tattoo any marks on you: I am the LORD.” They were not to mutilate or disfigure their body. This is Old Testament, but from here another person went to the New Testament where the apostle Paul said, “What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost [Spirit] which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). Then 1 Corinthians 3:17 reads, “If any man defile [footnote: destroy] the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.” Also, it was pointed out in Ephesians 5:28-29 that men should love their wives as their own bodies (they are one now), “For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church.” Normally, according to Paul, no man would ever intentionally injure and inflict disfigurement to his own body (i.e., “hate” his own body). However, the demon possessed man, whom Jesus healed, “was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones” (Mark 5:5). But when he was healed by the Lord, we find him “sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind” (Luke 8:35). So, to inflict oneself indicated a mental ab-

normality (as well as, it being implied, in not being clothed and properly dressed).

Then in answering our purposed question, response was taken a step farther. The piercing of the body was regarded as being basically wrong, but there was another factor involved which equally has a bearing upon this matter for Christians. The apostle Paul writes that Christian women should “adorn themselves in modest apparel...which becometh women professing godliness.” Read 1 Timothy 2:9-10 and you will see what all the apostle meant by “modest apparel” * (also 1 Peter 3:1-4). “Women professing godliness” are in an entirely different mold than the women of this world. In fact, Paul stresses a wide sweeping principle in Romans 12:1-2 when he said that all of us should present our bodies a living sacrifice unto God, and he continued by saying, “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” John expands more on this matter of loving the world in 1 John 2:15-17. And James takes it even further by saying, “Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (James 4:4).

All of these Scriptures, plus others not mentioned, entered into answering our question, “Are there any Christian teachings or Scriptures that have a bearing upon all of this (upon this matter of having the body pierced)?” Thanks to those who replied and accept our apologies for not getting you personally answered. □

* FOOTNOTE: 1 Timothy 2:9-10, “I also want the women to be modest and sensible about their clothes and to dress properly; not with fancy hair styles or with gold ornaments or pearls or expensive dresses, but with good deeds, as is proper for women who claim to be religious” (TEV translation).

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constitutes a denomination. This situation is represented in the Scriptures (KJV) by the word translated “sect” and “heresy” (*haireisis*), having this twofold meaning (the religious party and the divisive beliefs that have brought them together as a party). (The Jews looked upon Christianity as such, when the words “sect” and “heresy” are used, Acts 24:5 and 24:14—the same Greek word, *haireisis*, is behind these words). To simplify it, when you see the word “sect” think of the word “section,” and not

the whole. That is what denominationalism is, a splinter group.

In view of what we have learned about there being one church taught in the New Testament, denominationalism is contrary to the Bible in every way. In that great high priestly prayer found in the 17th chapter of John, our Lord prayed for unity among his would-be followers (John 17:20-22). Religious division, as seen on a local scale at Corinth, was condemned as sinful and a work of the flesh (1 Corinthians 1:10-13; 3:3-5). In fact, Paul specifically calls such division a work of the flesh in Galatians 5:19-21. But in spite of all of this, we are told there are over 300 denominations in our land today as men unblushingly hold to their divisive denominational doctrines and traditions of men (or have little conviction at all).

I. WHEN WAS THE CHURCH ESTABLISHED?

Looking at Prophecy

When was the church we read about in the Scriptures established among men? Perhaps a good place to begin in answering this question would be to look at prophecies leading up to its establishment; then it finally coming into being. That way we will get a basic understanding in approaching this subject.

The “Forever” Promise to David

A good beginning place in this consideration would be 2 Samuel 7:12-16 (1 Chronicles 17:11-14). David had it upon his heart to build a temple for God as theretofore the tabernacle had only been used as a place of worship (1 Chronicles 17:5). God said “no” to David because he was a man of blood and war (1 Chronicles 22:7-8). But God told David that his son would build the house, and he would establish the seed of David forever upon his throne. This promise in 2 Samuel 7:12-16 seems somewhat like the one given to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3. It was multi-layered, two-pronged or two-fold. It had its temporal part and its eternal part as subsequent history bears out. The immediate temporal part involving the building of the temple and David’s posterity being on the throne forever, or indefinitely, was conditional (1 Chronicles 28:7,9), and in time this “forever” part was invalidated. But the second part, which we learn was about the coming of the Messiah, was irrevocable. Thus we read in Isaiah 9:6-7 these expressive words: “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there

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shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. **The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this** [meaning, it is irrevocably going to come to pass].” In spite of God no longer recognizing the sinful seed of David and them being uprooted and carried into Babylonian Captivity, the Jews still looked forward to David (his seed) being established forever upon his throne.

The Anticipated King and Kingdom

There are numerous references to be found throughout the prophets, although clothed and expressed in the imagery of the Old Testament, that look forward with great anticipation to this event coming to pass. Here is a string of Scriptures to consider besides the ones already mentioned: Isaiah 11:1-10; 55:1-5; Jeremiah 23:5-6; 33:14-26; Ezekiel 34:23-24; 37:24-25; Daniel 2:44; 7:13-14; Hosea 3:5; etc. (Also, notice Psalms 89:3-4). Each one is worthy to be looked into. Reference is made to King David, his seed, it being forever. From Babylonian Captivity Ezekiel writes, “And David my servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them” (Ezekiel 37:24). There is continual reference to Gentiles in connection with this kingdom. Daniel expands it in language beyond the context of Israel. “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 “Law” Would Go Out of Zion

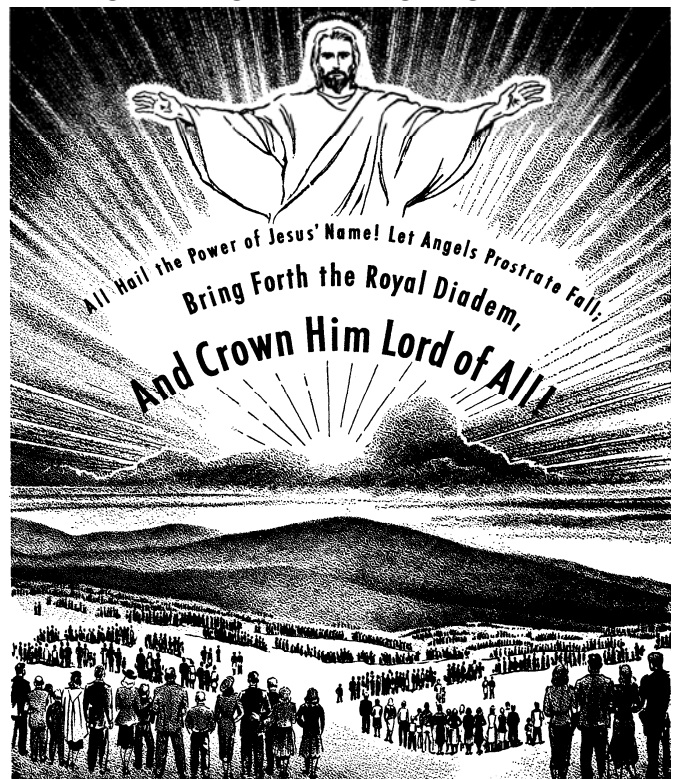
Another interesting Scripture that points to the coming of the church is Isaiah 2:2-4. This really is a duplication of Micah 4:1-3. Isaiah and Micah were contemporary prophets. Isaiah reads, “And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem...” The expression “in the last days” is commonly understood to refer to the New Testament era (Acts 2:17; Hebrews 1:1,2). In the “last

days” the “word of the LORD” would go forth from Jerusalem and “all nations” would be involved in response to this.

The Angel’s Declaration

When the fullness of time was come, all of these things began to happen (Galatians 4:4). A young virgin by the name of Mary, engaged and as yet unmarried, was found to be with child conceived by the Holy Spirit. Her lineage was of David (Luke 3:23-38), as likewise was the lineage of Joseph, her husband to be (Matthew 1:1-17). Before this happened the angel Gabriel appeared unto her, “And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. 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” (Luke 1:30-33).

FOREVER ON THE THRONE OF DAVID



The King and Kingdom in the Gospels

The gospel accounts are saturated with repeated references to the kingdom, its nature and its imminence. When Jesus was born, wise men came from the east asking, “Where is he that is born King of the Jews?” (Matthew 2:2) Years later, John the Baptist upon beginning his ministry as the harbinger of Christ, began to preach, “Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Mat-

thew 3:2). The Lord Jesus himself, upon entering his ministry, began to preach the same message: "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17). During his ministry, he repeatedly gave parables about the nature of this kingdom, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is likened unto..." (Matthew chapter 13 and elsewhere). Almost surprisingly, in view of the seemingly literal language of the prophecies in the Old Testament, there was nothing earthly or political about this kingdom. Christ even said that unless a person was converted and became as a little child, he could not even enter this kingdom (Matthew 18:3-4). Nicodemus was told that a man had to be born of the water and the Spirit to enter the kingdom (John 3:1-5). Decidedly, the anticipated kingdom spoken of in prophecy was to be spiritual and not a political or physical one of this world. While the Lord was being interrogated by Pilate before his crucifixion, he said little, but he did say, "My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight..." (John 18:36). Pilate, seizing upon these words, asked him then if he was really a king. Jesus answered, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world..." (John 18:37).

The Caesarea Philippi Declaration

As we "zero in" in more exactly understanding when the church was established, it is well for us to notice words exchanged between the Lord and his disciples a few months before the crucifixion. This took place in Caesarea Philippi, as he questioned them concerning their conclusion as to his identity, just who they really thought he was. In all that was said, many great truths emerge and converge. Peter made that great confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16). ("Christ," or "Messiah," was the official title of the one who would sit upon the throne of David, and the confession of deity corresponds well with Isaiah 9:6—notice John 15:9; Colossians 2:9) To this the Lord responded, "Upon this rock I will build my church..." (16:18). And in what he further says to Peter, the word "church" and the word "kingdom" are used interchangeably. Reference to building his church and using the keys of the kingdom were synonymous expressions. Earlier in his ministry excitement filled the air as it was preached that the kingdom was at hand. Now this decided and affirmative declaration is made in reference to it coming. It is imminent. Following this, we read, "And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till

they have seen the kingdom of God come with power" (Mark 9:1).

Pentecost: Christ Raised and Sitting on the Throne of David

Finally in the 2nd chapter of Acts, the first Jewish Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ, we see all of these great truths that we have touched upon coming to pass. God had promised David, the prophets repeatedly spoke of it, and the angel plainly declared to Mary that "JESUS" would be given "the throne of his father David." But the Lord Jesus, the seed of David, had been raised from the dead and was ascended to heaven. When did this enthronement take place? Along with what was happening that day, Peter explains everything in reference to what David had said. "Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him [to David], 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...*" (Acts 2:30-31). According to what Peter says here, Christ in being raised from the dead, going back to heaven and being seated on the right hand of God has fulfilled the promise made to David. He was thereby enthroned as King. He was responsible for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The kingdom had come with power, just like Jesus said (Mark 9:1). Thus Peter declares, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (2:36). The kingdom was now a reality. In the book of Acts, preaching the gospel involved preaching the kingdom (Acts 8:12; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23,31). Thereafter we read such Scriptures as Colossians 1:13, "Who [God] hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." Believers were spoken of as being in the kingdom (Revelation 1:9).

The Church Now a Reality

All of the other references fall in line. The prophets had said that the "law" would go out of Zion and all nations would flow into the house of God. This definitely came to pass. In stating the Great Commission, the Lord had said "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47). Notice Acts 1:8. Before the book of Acts, the term "church" had only been used twice, and that was in anticipation (Matthew 16:18; 18:17). Christ said, "I will build my church." In Acts 2, Peter had used the "keys of the kingdom" in

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this connection as it came about. Thereafter (after Pentecost) in the book of Acts the church is spoken of as something in existence and ongoing (Acts 5:11; 8:1,3; 11:22,26; 12:1; 13:1; 14:23,27; 15:3,4,22; 18:22; 20:17, 28). In the rest of the New Testament, "church" is a term that appears frequently. As one reads the book of Acts, called the history of the early church, Pentecost is looked back upon as a point of reference, the day of beginning. After going to the household of the Gentile Cornelius, in explaining what happened, Peter said, "And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost [Spirit] fell on them, as on us **at the beginning**" (Acts 11:15).

II. WHAT ABOUT THE RISE OF DENOMINATION-ALISM?

God's Eternal Purpose in Christ and the Church, the Kingdom

Salvation and the concept of the kingdom are synonymously interwoven in God's scheme of redemption from sin. It involves being saved and the saved. The church, or the kingdom, is made up of the saved and in this context the saved have their being and their spiritual well-being. Interestingly, the angel said to Joseph, speaking of Mary, "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 in the parallel appearance to Mary, the angel accordingly said, "And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS" (Luke 1:30-33). And what would be the outcome of this son as spoken of to Mary? What would he do? He would occupy the throne of David and reign forever upon it. The thoughts are parallel: *SALVATION and THE KINGDOM are inseparably interwoven*. The first was said to Joseph and the second to Mary. The kingdom is spiritual; it has to do with salvation. We are told that Christ purchased the church with his own blood (Acts 20:28). Paul said, "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Ephesians 5:25). So God's eternal purpose in reference to himself and man is tied up in Christ and the church (Ephesians 1:4; 3:10,11). Looking to the end of the world (age), as implied in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:20), the apostle Paul said, "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father..." (1 Corinthians 15:24). And, looking upon the full spectrum of the picture, he said, "Unto him [God] be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen" (Ephesians 3:21).

The Devil's Failure to Thwart God's Plan from Without

All of this being the case in reference to Christ and his church (or kingdom), we could hardly expect the devil to sit idly by while all of this was taking place. After all, he was the one responsible for the sin and death that had come upon mankind and necessitated God's plan of salvation. But he didn't thwart the plan of God in the establishment

(Continued on Page 12)

BIBLE QUESTIONS

(Random Questions Over the Bible)

1. Who is the first man mentioned in the Bible having more than one wife, and what were the names of his wives?
2. Who in the Bible was called "a mighty hunter before the LORD?"
3. What was the name of the brother of Moses and the name of his sister?
4. Initially, why didn't God have the children of Israel take the shortest and most direct route to the Promised Land?
5. Specifically, why were the children of Israel condemned to wander forty years in the wilderness before they could go into the Promised Land (why forty)?
6. Who soon confronted the children of Israel in battle after their exodus from Egypt?
7. Which tribe of Israel is mentioned in the Old Testament as having left handed men who were skilled in using that hand?
8. Which psalm is a psalm about unity?
9. Where is this Scripture found in the Bible: "Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it"?
10. According to Job's friends and the conventional wisdom of that day, what did it mean when something really bad happened to a person?
11. Which is the longest book in the New Testament Scriptures?
12. What three times did God the Father speak directly from heaven in recognition of Christ, His Son?
13. Which was the only one of the original twelve disciples of Christ who was not from Galilee?
14. To whom did Jesus commit the care of his mother while dying on the cross?
15. What New Testament book has been called the "book of conversions"?
16. Which are Paul's prison epistles regarded to have been written during his first Roman imprisonment?
17. Are there any other writings of the apostle Paul not found in the New Testament, but mentioned in the New Testament, that God has not preserved for us?
18. In Paul's traveling, it speaks of "wintering" at such and such a place—what does this mean?
19. In 2nd Peter, what does the apostle Peter say about the writings of the apostle Paul (and especially about the second coming of Christ)?
20. What New Testament epistle repeatedly says much about what a Christian can "know" (using this word) in reference to his religion and relationship to God?

(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 appreciate THE SWORD AND STAFF and all the good articles. Keep up the good work."*

ALABAMA:

■ *"I continue to enjoy THE SWORD AND STAFF."*

■ *"Thanks so much for THE SWORD AND STAFF. It is an excellent paper and teaches the whole truth about the way of salvation. So little is taught in the world these days! I appreciate your faithfulness to our Lord!"*

SOUTH CAROLINA:

■ *"Thank you."*

■ *"Please find a check...to help on the cost of printing those wonderful lessons. And please send me the bundle of past dates."*

TENNESSEE:

■ *"Thank you so much for the work you do for the kingdom. THE SWORD AND STAFF is a wonderful booklet and is full of truth and help that we can learn to better serve the Lord. God bless you and yours."*

■ *"Thank you so much for your wonderful publication. I use it a lot in the church bulletin that I do. I've handed them out when it seems fitting for problems friends are facing. You're always addressing issues of everyday life. Thank you again."*

NORTH CAROLINA:

■ *"This edition [4th issue 2010] of THE SWORD AND STAFF is no mere 'little thing.' It is great work and means a lot." (E-mail)*

■ **(Editor:** And to our reader who pointed it out, you are right. The context of Matthew 18:20 does involve inner-related church problems and handling them

correctly (or apostolic pronouncements, 18:18) when it says, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." This does not seem to be talking about the public assembly of the church as such.

Although these words in particular may not be talking about it, I believe these words express a truth in another sense that is verified elsewhere in other Scriptures. In the preaching and teaching of the gospel Christ has promised to be with us unto the end of the world (Matthew 28:18-20). Thus, he is with us whether we are assembled or otherwise in doing this. Then 1 Corinthians 3:16 speaks of the Holy Spirit dwelling in the church as a unite ("ye" in the Greek is plural), whether that number be small or large. So application of the words, as such, as found in Matthew 18:20 can be made here, but perhaps not in the immediate sense of Matthew 18:20.

You are right. The immediate context of Matthew 18:20 should have been pointed out and (or) other Scripture more appropriately used. We want to handle the Word of God aright, 2 Timothy 2:15.)

KENTUCKY:

■ *"I admire your work. Keep it up, you're touching hearts."*

VIRGINIA:

■ *"I enjoy your paper so much. May God bless you and your work. I look forward to getting it."*

■ *"Sorry, it has been so long since I have sent any money. I hope this will help with the paper. I truly appreciate your steadfastness in preaching and teaching the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and his Word. You are a true brother in Christ."*

NEW YORK:

■ *"Thank you for sending me your wonderful publication. It's a great blessing because it reveals the gospel truth! Praying that GOD will continue to bless you and your work, so that more souls will come to know more of the true God and His Great love for mankind, the true church and true salvation..."*

"Thank you so much and hoping that more people will read, study and obey GOD'S WORD, and be enlightened with your paper."

MICHIGAN:

■ *"God bless you as you continue your excellent, encouraging ministry for Christ and His church. As the zeal for His church declines, keep on stoking the fire. May the enclosed encourage you to keep on keeping on for Him."*

■ *"THE SWORD AND STAFF has been a part of my Christian life since my son first introduced me to your religious paper...I have read every issue that I have from page 1-16. Thank you for your time."*

(Continued on Next Page)

READERS'...Response

(Continued from Previous Page)

OHIO:

■ “Thanks for your continued faithfulness! May God continue to bless!”

■ “I would like to see you put your editorial comments from recent issue (Vol. 48 # 4) in tract form. Keep doing what you are doing. Your commentaries on Scripture are the best I have read.”

■ “I appreciate the Truth that is published in THE SWORD AND STAFF...As a young Christian I would like to receive everything you have to offer so that I can grow even stronger in the Truth. Thanks and God bless you!”

INDIANA:

■ “For now, a gift. I’m...reading old issues and enjoy all of them. Will try to give more later as the issues have been a great joy and finding truth...Your editorials are great with Scriptures.”

ILLINOIS:

■ “Please remove us from your mailing list.” (E-mail)

■ “Great message on ‘Little Things.’ I am going to use it at church.”

IOWA:

■ “Thanks and keep up the good work.” (E-mail)

MISSOURI:

■ “I appreciate THE SWORD AND STAFF very much! God bless you in your labor of love. I would like to request a sampling (1 of each) of your booklets and tracts. Enclosed is a donation.”

ARKANSAS:

■ “Thank you so much for sending me the bound volumes. Do you have any still available from before 1990? Also when the 2009-2010 volume is published please send me one. Thank you for your stand for the truth.” (E-mail)

(Editor: None are available now before 1993; the supply is all gone).

TEXAS:

■ “Pardon me taking so long to get in touch with you. Your religious periodical has attracted me for years as a true beacon of Biblical truth. Truths which we much need to share with a fast becoming lost world...”

“The purpose of my letter is to ask about what it takes to use some of your articles in THE SWORD AND STAFF which I may translate...”

“May God continue to give you strength, dedication and the means to accomplish your work for Him.”

(Editor: You are welcome to use the articles non-commercially for good and for the glory of God, even translating them).

COLORADO:

■ “I gave a set of [the bound] volumes to a fellow preacher in Missouri and he read all ten volumes. To him they were so full of enlightenment that he con-

fessed that he has used several of the sermons for the church, where he is preaching. Our prayers are with your endeavor in getting out the undenominational message and going back to the Bible to see what the early pattern of the church was. Thank you for the wonderful information you have in THE SWORD AND STAFF. Keep up the good work.” (E-mail)

OREGON:

■ “We have enjoyed your SWORD AND STAFF for several years.”

■ “Wishing you the very best and I do like your SWORD AND STAFF, articles like ‘Little Things Mean a Lot.’ Excellent.”

UNITED STATES:

■ **NOTE:** If any on our mailing list received the paper GOOD READING, there has been a request made by the editor of that paper. Their mailing list has been deleted and lost (evidently, they had no backup). If you received that paper, they would like for you to send your address to them again, or send it to us and we will forward it to them.—**Editor**

■ “We had read your first pdf [on the internet] and noticed the small article called TV or Not TV and I forgot what the parenthesis said...however, in January 1991 the Lord led us to get rid of our TV. The best thing since salvation and my marriage to happen to us.” (E-mail)

TV (to Be Carnally Minded) or Not TV (to Be Spiritually Minded), That is the Question

UNQUESTIONABLY, a constant diet of television profusely feeds the carnal mind. Subsequently, as Christians, we should be seriously aware that “to be carnally minded is death: but to be spiritually minded is life and peace” (Romans 8:6). Therefore, the admonition in Philippians 4:8 should be taken to heart, “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest [noble], whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise [anything praiseworthy], think on these things.” And with the Psalmist let us pray, “Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer” (Psalms 19:14), as we remember, “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8).—**J.E.G.** □

■ In correspondence a reader has brought up a question of whether the death, burial and resurrection of Christ is all of the gospel (1 Corinthians 15:1-4) and what is meant by the Scriptural expression “obey the gospel.” Following are some of the editor’s words from this correspondence.—**Editor**

The Gospel and Obeying the Gospel

In what I have written about obeying the gospel I have not used the word “only” nor thrown 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 over against the rest of the New Testament as being all of the gospel. Even before Christ was crucified and raised from the dead the word “gospel” is used as Mark begins his writing, saying, “The beginning of the gospel [good news] of Jesus Christ, the Son of God” (Mark 1:1). Then this side of the cross the apostle Paul speaks of “the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation” (Ephesians 1:13). So, the word itself is called the gospel. However, it is not “either or,” but both (with one of limited emphasis, and with the other the full spectrum). But if we delete from the word the truth and information about the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, there is no gospel. All other New Testament teachings have their authority and roots in these truths. As we know, the word “gospel” means good news. Without the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, we fall back to the “do’s” and “don’ts” removed from the context of grace. Thus, being imperfect, as we surely are (Romans 3:23; 1 John 1:8,10), we stand condemned before God. This is not good news. The whole picture must be looked upon together.

In Romans 10:16 Paul says that “not all have obeyed the gospel.” This is in the context of initially becoming a Christian (Romans 10:8-18). Here he speaks of believing “with the heart” (10:9-10), and, as we noticed, sinners obeying the gospel. Then Romans 6:17 reads, speaking to the Christians at Rome, “But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered unto you.” What is that “form of doctrine” that they have obeyed “from the heart”? (not just “in the heart,” faith only) The first part of this chapter tells us, “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection” (6:3-5). The death, burial and resurrection of Christ, coupled with his walking in newness of life, constitute “that form of doctrine” that had been delivered unto them (the gospel), and they had obeyed. Parallel with this, when we die to sin, when we are buried in baptism, and are raised from the watery grave, we come forth to walk in the newness of life (Ephesians 2:10; Galatians 2:20). This is obeying the gospel. It corresponds with 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 in the meaning of gospel, whether we think of it in reference to just three components or with the added obvious “walking in newness of life.” It involves the whole Christian religion.

Consequently such Scriptures as 2 Thessalonians 1:8 and 1 Peter 4:17 come to mind. Also, we think of Romans 1:5 and 16:26. Then Luke tells us in Acts 6:7, “And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.” Jude, in a more expansive way, by saying “the faith,” seems to include the whole Christian system (Jude 3), although this can refer limitedly to the person of Christ also. All of the teachings of Christianity have their roots in the person of Christ and what he taught. All of our obedience in being a Christian filters through the person of Christ (and central to that is the cross and the empty tomb) and not just responding to laws engraved on tables of stone. We respond to the living Christ. We are forgiven and are cushioned by grace (unmerited favor) as we grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord. The throne of grace is our refuge (Hebrews 4:14-16; 1 John 1:5-10) as we go on unto maturity in Christ. Paul says that we “stand” by grace and “stand” in the gospel (Romans 5:1-2; 1 Corinthians 15:1).

No, it is not that “we all accept the gospel, i.e., the death, burial and resurrection, so we are all saved, and the rest is all just interpretation,” being not all that important and of little consequence. That is not what we believe, nor what the Scriptures teach. The gospel in its fullness includes more than the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, but this is central and the very heart of the gospel, which makes the gospel the gospel. □

GHANA (W. Africa):

■ *“Many thanks for the years of faithfulness. As you can be sure, I have been using your articles and ideas in well over 80% of my ministry for the Lord here...”*

“I am requesting 30 copies each of EXCUSES ANSWERED and YOU, YOUR INSECURITIES AND GOD.”

“I have been going to the radio station, this time with the TEN COMMANDMENTS.”

“God bless.” (E-mail)

■ *“I write to acknowledge receipt of the new booklets sent. We pray the Lord Himself will add more fruitful years to enable you to write on more spiritual concepts as you have been doing over the years.” (E-mail)*

BELGIUM:

■ *“...So I want to thank you for that [THE SWORD AND STAFF]. It really helps. Can you send me new ones to my new address? Thank you for that.” (E-mail)*

**TRUE LOVE is of such a nature
that to divide it is not to diminish it,
but to multiply it.**

The Church and Denominationalism

(Continued from Page 8)

of the church. Christ had declared, "I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). Jesus came forth victorious from the grave, and the church triumphantly came into being. However, from the very beginning the church was harassed by persecutions, being more localized in nature. But as time went by, we are told there were ten major persecutions of Christians carried out on a large scale by the Roman Empire, starting with Nero. As if waiting for relief and vengeance from God, the voice of the martyrs is heard crying out in the book of Revelation, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" (Revelation 6:10). But, as it has well been said, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." The prayer of the saints was heard. In time Christianity triumphantly prevailed, paganism was debunked and dismantled, and the church was officially recognized and embraced by the Roman government. Like a mighty army moved the church of God.

The Devil's Efforts to Thwart God's Plan from Within

However, all was not well. Converging forces were at work. While the gospel was being carried to the remotest parts of the Roman Empire and beyond (Romans 10:18), the devil was coming from the other direction. Evidently he saw that persecution was not stopping the spread of Christianity, so another more subtle tactic came into play. If he could not stop Christianity by opposition from the outside, he would try working from the inside to make havoc and impede the progress of the church, if not bringing it to a grinding halt. He would pollute the fountainhead of its source, its message. One of his first attempts along this line was Judaism, the corrupting of the gospel with the outdated Law of Moses that had been taken out of the way. First, the practice of circumcision would be imposed on the Gentile Christians (Acts 15) and then whole churches began to be swayed over to keeping the Law of Moses, as seen among the Galatians (Read the epistle). This would result in their condemnation, severing them from Christ (Galatians 1:8; 5:4). At times it seems that local practices and philosophies, along with a smattering of the Law, were mixed with the gospel (Colossians 2:8,18-23). Toward the end of the first century, a false teaching called Gnosticism was beginning to raise its ugly head, as implied in John's epistles.

"For the Mystery of Iniquity Doth Already Work"

All of this worked ill, but the undercurrents of a far greater and a far more reaching deception were early in the making. Paul's concern for the local situation at Corinth could well be used as a description of the wider and more sweeping apostasy that was to come. He said to them, "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:3). While here the Lord, speaking in general terms, had said, "And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matthew 24:11-13). Paul personally had warned the Ephesian elders, "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:29-30). Peter, John and Jude ominously spoke of apostasy (2 Peter 2:1-3; 1 John 4:1-3; Jude). But the apostle Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 more specifically tells of a great apostasy that was to come upon the church on a universal scale. It was troubling and of much concern to him. Even in his day, Paul said, "For the mystery of iniquity doeth already work..." (2:7). It would be just a matter of time, involving days, years, and even centuries, for it to reach its apex.

The "Man of Sin," Celibacy and Asceticism

Read 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 carefully and then 1 Timothy 4:1-6. At Thessalonica some were expecting an early second coming of Christ. Paul makes it plain that certain things would take place before this would come about. He wrote, "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God." In the New Testament sense, when talking about the "temple," it is the church (Ephesians 2:20-22; 1 Corinthians 3:16-17). This would happen in the context of that which was supposed to be the church. One would flaunt himself flamboyantly as if he were God himself (called the "man of sin" by Paul). Then in 1 Timothy 4:1-6 Paul seems to be talking about the same apostasy.

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Pornography

FROM INFORMATION gleaned from news sources on the internet, it is said that the pornography industry has larger revenues than Microsoft, Google, Amazon, eBay, Yahoo, Apple and Netflix combined, and every year America spends \$13.4 billion and the world spends \$96.7 billion on its porn habit. And, in view of that, read and consider Hebrews 13:4 and Matthew 5:27-30. (!!!) □



BARBS ...with a POINT



***IF WE** fail to plan, we (in essence) plan to fail.*

Most people like a “lite” generic gospel message because that is the way they respond (if they respond at all), not wanting to get down to specifics.

If you leave God out of the picture, the devil will immediately fill the space.

We will all be judged by our works (2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 20:13), which also includes our lack of works (Matthew 25:41-45).

People who do as they please many times don't please God.

If your convictions change with the weather, you are being “carried about with every wind of doctrine” (Ephesians 4:14).

Many people would like to have an imperfect Bible because their lives are imperfect.

The religious world today is overwhelmed by religious teachers who preach a positive, feel good gospel with little emphasis upon being good.

Unless people are added to the church by the Lord, they don't count.

Christ said to “watch” (Matthew 24:42), and a constant vigil of watching all the junk on television was not what he had in mind (1 Thessalonians 5:22; Philippians 4:8)

Nothing reveals our character any more clearly than that which we think is laughable.

If all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy, what does all play and no work make him? Does it make Jack a jerk?

Much of modern “music” could well be indicative of our culture—abrupt, crude and rude.

Many who have had their bodies washed with water in baptism have never had their souls washed by the blood of Christ (if they have never repented of their sins, Acts 2:38).

If you are a “hard boiled” egg, it might have been better if you had ended up being scrambled.

It is all right to have a time to play, but don't play with your time.

If the simple worship of the Lord seems dead, without having all of the modern innovations and entertainment, it may be that we are spiritually dead.

Where you find yourself physically may pretty well indicate where you are spiritually.

If something was the truth 2000 years ago and it was the truth 20 years ago, it is still the truth today.

We do not return to the Jerusalem church by way of Rome.

The Lord's Supper is not a “sacrifice of the mass” (Christ being crucified all over again), but it is a remembrance of Christ's sacrifice.

Let us be sure to have our brain in gear before we get our mouth going.

Man-made religious empires and organizations beyond the local church that usurp and replace the simple organizational structure and work of the local church are not of God.

Why do people want to sow wild oats and then have to pray for a crop failure?

If the Christian armor fits a little too tight (Ephesians 6:11-17) perhaps we need to lose a little worldly weight to get into it.

How can we expect people to go the second mile (Matthew 5:41) when they won't even go the first?

Many Christians have little appetite for spiritual things because they are already gorged with the junk food of the world.

The intensity of your love for the Lord determines the intensity of your disdain for sin. □



When People Love the Lord a Little

1. A little rain, a little heat, a little cold, a little company, a little excuse can keep them from attending church.
2. A little money is given the Lord; a little half-hearted service is rendered a little.
3. Prayer and Bible study are engaged in a little, if a little at all.
4. Little grief is manifested over sin and personal shortcomings.
5. There will be little persecution and little cross-bearing.
6. Little concern is provoked because of lost sinners in the world and backsliders in the church. □

The Church and Denominationalism

(Continued from Page 12)

Interestingly, here two tenets of practice in this apostasy are mentioned, “Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats...” In other words, he is talking about the practice of celibacy and asceticism. Are these telling clues in identifying this apostasy?

“The Man of Sin” and the King James Version of the Bible

To make a long story short, let us leap frog the many years from Paul and to more modern times, to the year 1611. Europe was beginning to emerge from the Dark Ages with the Renaissance and the Protestant Reformation being in full sway. In times past, the Bible had been kept from the people, even with death and burning at the stake being imposed upon those who would dare to translate it, i.e. to John Huss, 1415, and William Tyndale, 1535. In the century before, before 1611, Luther had made his initial impact upon the religious scene. Now in such a context, the King James Version of the Bible (known as the Authorized Version) makes its debut. In the “Dedicatory” preface of this Bible, King James is commended for authorizing such a translation and the importance of the Scriptures is recognized, “which hath given such a blow unto that Man of Sin, as will not be healed.” (This is the exact quotation). To them the “man of sin” prophetically spoken of by the apostle Paul was the papacy of the Church of Rome, the pope having long arrogantly imposed himself upon the world, both politically and religiously, as if he were God.

Departure and Radical Changes

From the time of the apostle Paul, and the initial inception of the church into the world, radical changes had taken place. The professed church had gone from a simple, local autonomous entity to a monolithic structure with its imposing headquarters in Rome. Bishops (elders) had gone from being one of a plurality in a local church to one so-called bishop (the pope) at Rome claiming to be the head of the church and over all the churches in the world. The unfounded claim was put forward that the apostle Peter was the first pope and all others were his successors. With the collapse of the Roman Empire, the pope filled the vacuum and it wasn't long until the so-called Holy Roman Empire came into being with the pope making and replacing kings. He even divided the world up into different geographic areas for different countries to occupy for purposes of colonization. Claims were made that final religious authority was in the so-called church, meaning the pope and bishops, and

not in the Word of God alone. Doctrines and traditions of men at variance with New Testament teachings prevailed. Religion seemed to amount to prescribed human works. We know things had gotten so bad spiritually speaking with the sell of indulgences in the time of Martin Luther, that he nailed his 95 Theses on the door of the church in Wittenberg, Germany. With the rebirth of learning and the Bible being discovered all over again, the Protestant Reformation Movement to reform the Catholic Church became full-blown.

The Multiplication of Denominations

Although accomplishing much good, the shortcoming of the Protestant Reformation was that it was a protest against certain glaring wrongs in the Catholic Church, and that being its primary focus, it fell short of a complete return to and restoration of the church in other areas. Different prongs of the Reformation Movement divided from others with their distinctive creeds and beliefs, the creeds being used to define and hold each group together. About all of them carried over certain beliefs and practices from Catholicism. We will not attempt to list all of them in this article, but such can be seen in the practice of infant baptism and sprinkling in the place of New Testament baptism (Acts 2:38; 8:38; Romans 6:1-4). Many copied and mimicked the organizational structure as seen in the Catholic Church. In many countries the separation of church and state was not distinct. Likewise, many reactionary beliefs and doctrines were incorporated into their denominational creeds. Reacting against human works so evident in Catholicism, Luther taught salvation by “faith only” (James 2:14-26). Finding God dethroned in the papal system, Calvin, evidently trying to establish again the sovereignty of God, taught predestination (his version), irresistible grace, and the impossibility of falling from grace. Then the masses in coming to America found freedom of religion like they had never experienced before in the Old World. This freedom, although great and wonderful, became the spawning grounds for more division and the further multiplication of denominations.

A Concluding Appeal to All

Our appeal in this article is that we would divest ourselves of any and everything that would make us a denomination and merge into that one church that was started in the first century on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ; just be Christians, not different kinds of Christians. (There is only one kind). We need to do this because denominationalism is wrong. And as we intimated in the first part of this study, denominationalism is

wrong because of division and because of diverse man-made doctrines that cause this division (1 Corinthians 1:10-13; 3:1-5; Romans 16:17-18). Let us heed, believe and practice the words of the apostle Paul in Ephesians 4:3-6, “Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” According to the Scriptures, when we repent and are baptized into Christ for the remission of sins, the Lord himself adds us to his one church (Acts 2:38-41, 47; 1 Corinthians 12:13). We are called into one body (Colossians 3:15). That being the case, why join some denominational division, which is condemned in the Scriptures? And as the great apostasy came about in getting away from the simple, independent and autonomous local church, the oneness and unity that the Lord wants is to be reclaimed, realized and practiced within the bounds of that local church (not by being lined up with a denominational bloc of “churches”). It is a Scriptural and spiritual unity as we follow the Bible and that alone. ☐

The Bible

THE BIBLE contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, and the happiness of believers. Its doctrines are holy, its precepts are binding, its histories are true, and its decisions are immutable. Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you.

It is the traveler’s map, the pilgrim’s staff, the pilot’s compass, the soldier’s sword, and the Christian’s charter. Here Paradise is restored, Heaven opened, and the gates of hell disclosed. Christ is its grand subject, our good the design, and the glory of God its end.

It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet. Read it slowly, frequently, and prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, and a river of pleasure. It is given you in life, will be opened at the judgment, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labor, and will condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.

—*The Gideons International*

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Some new booklets have been added to the list of printed materials available and listed on the back page. They are “EXCUSES ANSWERED” (This appeared in a recent issue of *The Sword and Staff* and has already been requested) and “You, Your Insecurities and God” (Many have checked this out on our website). We believe you can make good use of this material. Some already have.—**Editor** ☐

HELP US get out the message of God’s Word. If this publication has been a blessing to you, help us increase our mailing list by enrolling others to receive this paper.—**Editor** ☐

Sectarian wrangling is not contending for the faith, but merely being contentious about it in a fleshly sort of way. ☐

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Answers to: BIBLE QUESTIONS

1. Genesis 4:19; 2. Genesis 10:8-9; 3. Numbers 26:59; 4. Exodus 13:17; 5. Numbers 14:33-34; 6. Exodus 17:8-13; 7. Judges 3:15; 20:16; 1 Chronicles 12:2; 8. Psalms 133; 9. Psalms 127; 10. That person was a bad person; 11. Luke; 12. (1) Matthew 3:13-17; (2) Matthew 17:1-8; (3) John 12:27-30; 13. Judas Iscariot (Iscariot = Ish + Kerioth—man from Kerioth, a place in Judah, Joshua 15:25); the other eleven were from Galilee (Acts 1:11-13); 14. John 19:25-27; 15. The book of Acts; 16. Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon and Philippians; 17. I Corinthians 5:9; Colossians 4:16; 18. Acts 27:12; 28:11; 1 Corinthians 16:6; Titus 3:12 (For about three months during winter ships would not travel the high seas, but stay where they might happen to be until the weather opened up again); 19. 2 Peter 3:14-16; 20. I John. ☐

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