

The Advocate of Truth





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Telephone: 304-782-1411
Fax: 304-782-2248

E-Mail: cogsevday@aol.com

Web site: www.churchofgod-7thday.org

Del DeLong

David DeLong

Bond Tennant.....Editorial Staff

Gary Mills Managing Editor

Ludina Mills.....Children's Page Editor

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The Magi

Tradition vs. The Bible

By David Royer

A portion of events surrounding the birth of Jesus involves wise men or Magi visiting Jesus with gifts of honor. This story is being repeated often in school and church pageants this month. Even nativity scenes attempt to depict the event.

Unfortunately, these traditional stories are not factual to Bible truth. Let's examine the differences:

Traditional Magi Story

In December, Wise men called Magi, astronomers, astrologers kings or priests from a country (possibly Babylon, India, China, Arabia, Kingdom of Sheba, most say Persia) saw a star, in the heavens, which indicated that a king of the Jews had been born. Three of these wise men named Balthazar, Gaspar, and Melchior, traveled (following the star) to Jerusalem, the capital of Judea. The wise men inquired of King Herod, where the

new born king could be found so they could pay homage and give gifts to this new born king. King Herod conferred with his scholars and learned that it was prophesied that a king of the Jews would be born in Bethlehem. So, King Herod sent the Magi to Bethlehem to continue their search.

The wise men traveled on, following the "Star of Bethlehem" and discovered new born Jesus laying in a manger. Present were the parents Joseph and Mary, farm animals, and Shepherds from local fields. The three wise men joined this group in the barn; worshipping and giving gifts to the baby Jesus.

Bible Truth

The biggest fallacies of the traditional Magi story, are the number of Magi and time of year. Nowhere in Scripture does it say there were three named wise men traveling to find Jesus. Some historians say the number could have been 12 Magi traveling in a large caravan. The country of origin is not known. All that Matthew tells us in (Matthew 2:1) "they traveled from the East".

The time between Jesus's birth and the Magi visit could have been several months. We do know that the earliest time of the Magi's visit could have occurred sometime well after 33 days of Jesus's birth. Matthew 2:13 says that the night of the Magi visit, Joseph took Mary and Jesus to Egypt. The days prior to relocating to Egypt, several events happened: "And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb. And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present *him* to the Lord; (As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;) And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons." (Luke 2:21-24). Notice that the offering of two turtledoves/pigeons was for the mother after 33 days from giving birth. (see Leviticus 12:1-8 for this purification under Mosaic Law).

Further evidence that Jesus was over a year old when the Magi visited, was when Herod asked of the Magi, the exact time the star had appeared. He later proceeded to have all baby boys killed who were two years old and under (Matthew 2:16). This would indicate that Jesus had been born up to two years previously.

Knowing that the Magi were not following the star is clear from the fact that they had to inquire where Jesus was born. They originally saw “His Star” in the east, which clued them in to an event happening in Judea. In fact, if they followed “His star”, they would be heading East, not West toward Israel. There is no evidence that it continued to shine or that it led them to Jerusalem. It was not until they were told of the prophesied birthplace of the Messiah (Matthew 2:5–9) that the star reappeared or a new star appeared (never called the “Star of Bethlehem”) and guided the Magi approximately 6 miles south...not only to Bethlehem, but to the exact home (not stable or barn) where the child was. Note that when the wise men visited this home, Scripture does not mention Joseph being there. “On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him,” (Matthew 2:11).

There is strong evidence that Jesus was not born in the month of December. We know from Scripture that Jesus was born six months after the birth of John, his cousin (Luke 1:24-26).

Some historical calculations indicate that John was born in the end of March. Adding another six months, brings us to the end of September as the likely time of Jesus’s birth.

If Jesus’s birth was in September, it would correspond to Luke 2: 8-11 “...shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.” December’s weather in Judea would typically be cold and rainy. Speaking of bad weather: Joseph brought Mary (prior to birth) to Bethlehem for a Roman census (see Luke 2:4). Would it make sense to travel in such bad weather?

We just do not know, with confidence, when John or Jesus was born. However, we do know that December 25 was artificially set by the early Catholic church. According to the article, [Christ is Born?](http://www.history.com) Source: www.history.com "This Day in History" 2010:

“Although most Christians celebrate December 25 as the birthday of Jesus Christ, few in the first two Christian centuries claimed any knowledge of the exact day or year in which he was born. The oldest existing record of a Christmas celebration is found in a Roman almanac that tells of a Christ’s Nativity festival led by the church of Rome in 336 A.D. The precise reason why Christmas came to be celebrated on December 25 remains obscure, but most researchers believe that Christmas originated as a Christian substitute for pagan celebrations of the winter solstice.

As Christianity (via Catholicism) began to take hold in the Roman world, in the early fourth century, church leaders had to contend with a popular Roman pagan holiday commemorating the “**birthday of the unconquered sun**” (*natalis solis invicti*)—the Roman name for the winter solstice.

Every winter, Romans honored the pagan god Saturn, the god of agriculture, with a festival that began on December 17, and usually ended on or around December 25, with a winter-solstice celebration in honor of the beginning of the new solar cycle. This festival was a time of merrymaking, and families and friends would exchange gifts. At the same time, Mithraism—worship of the ancient Persian god of light—was popular in the Roman army, and the cult held some of its most important rituals on the winter solstice.”

Note that most Bible references, in this article, come from

three chapters: Matthew 2 and Luke 1 & 2. I recommend you read these chapters about the birth of Jesus Christ for full context. You will notice some inconsistencies and few details of the birth of Jesus. However, it is plain to see, that God exalted the birth of his Son into human flesh. New Testament Scriptures are focused more on the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, the Christ, not his birth. Apostle Paul said it best:

“By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:” (I Corinthians 15:2-4).

Eternal Life

By David DeLong

Imagine living always,
Your life will never end;
Imagine never being sick,
Where nothing will offend.

Peace will last forevermore,
No fighting will occur;
And in the Kingdom of the Lord
Will righteousness endure.

God's holy Law will spread the earth,
Starting from Mount Zion;
The calf will eat the tender grass,
As also will the lion.

The Tree of Life has fruit and leaves
For healing of the nations;
A River flows from out God's throne
With healing demonstrations.

THOUGHTS ABOUT THE BEATITUDES

Bond Tennant

On one occasion, Jesus separated Himself from the multitude of people who had come to see and hear Him. Then He went up into a mountain where He could commune with His Father in prayer. His disciples later joined Him, and He proceeded to teach them many valuable lessons known as the Beatitudes.

Blessed are the poor in spirit

“Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:3). To be “poor in spirit” means being poor in the spirit of self, or not to think highly of oneself. All of us must realize our need of the Father and the rich blessings that only He can provide.

Blessed are they that mourn

“Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted” (Matthew 5:4). This does not refer to mourning in the everyday sense. Countless numbers of people continue to mourn who have not been comforted. The real lesson concerns what we may learn from Jesus’ life and ministry, and then apply those principles to our own lives.

Many years before Jesus came to earth, the Prophet Isaiah was moved by the Holy Spirit to emphasize a special mark of our Saviour’s character. Isaiah wrote, “He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted” (Isaiah 53:3-4).

Jesus’ grief and sorrow had nothing to do with His own trials. They only confirmed that He had a deep sense of love and sympathy for poor groaning mankind. The Apostle Paul wrote, “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). Sincere followers of Jesus are encouraged to develop similar hearts that are genuinely sympathetic toward others.

Blessed are the meek

“Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5). Sincere followers of Jesus must strive to be meek and teachable. Sincere followers of Jesus cannot fully appreciate the truth unless they are willing to lay aside their own beliefs and theories. They must

allow themselves to be led and taught by our heavenly Father from His word of truth. The blessing for those who diligently heed these important instructions, and who are meek and teachable, is the promise that they will “inherit the earth.”

Blessed are they who hunger and thirst

“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled” (Matthew 5:6). We realize that Jesus was not talking about human appetites. He was teaching His disciples an important lesson concerning those consecrated Christians who “hunger and thirst” to know and to do God’s will. Every child of God is encouraged to study and meditate on spiritual things, and to apply those truths in their own lives.

Jesus said that those who search for truth and apply it to their own lives “shall be filled.” Nothing could satisfy the hunger and thirst for righteousness more than in studying the Word of God.

Blessed are the merciful

“Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy” (Matthew 5:7). Mercy is an essential principle of the true child of God. Jesus included reference to showing mercy in His model prayer. He said, “...Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors” (Matthew 6:12). This points to an important element in our relationship to our heavenly Father. “For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (verses 14-15).

Blessed are the pure in heart

“Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8). Having a heart of pure intentions may be contrasted with having a merely outward profession. We will be exalted to the divine nature if we are faithful to our consecration vows. Face to face, we will see God as well as His dear Son, Jesus Christ. “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (I John 3:2).

Blessed are the peacemakers

“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God” (Matthew 5:9). In connection with

these words of Jesus, the Apostle Paul wrote, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Romans 5:1-2). Those who seek the peace of God in their lives are led by Him to repentance and consecration. This is done through the power of the Holy Spirit. They receive this special blessing through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and proclaim the truth to those who have an ear, even as foretold of the Master. “I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart. I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation” (Psalm 40:8-10). This is evidence that we are the children of God.

Blessed are the persecuted

“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you” (Matthew 5:5:10-12). Jesus wanted to explain to His people that even as He had been persecuted for His faithfulness in proclaiming the good news, so also would His followers be persecuted.

When the Apostle Paul was travelling from one place to another, he encountered opposition, which he explained was necessary in his ministry. Luke was his companion and recorded the events as they developed. In Acts 14:21-22 we read, “...When they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:21-22). The apostle confirmed the fact that difficult experiences will help prepare us for a place in our Lord’s future kingdom. Those who faithfully let their light shine will receive disfavor from the world.

SAUL'S CONVERSION

By Betty Whetstone
(Acts Chapter 9)

*He was there at the stoning of Stephen,
A hard hearted Pharisee named Saul;
He felt no pity for poor Stephen,
His death touched him not at all.
His great pleasure was in harassing God's people,
To this mission he always was true;
Throwing both men and women into prison,
And even taking of their lives, too.
But God had a purpose for the Pharisee,
To resist Him would be striving in vain;
And so on the road to Damascus
Saul learned quite a bit about pain.
A blinding light came from nowhere,
And brought mighty Saul to his knees;
His eyes were blinded completely,
And God's people he no longer could seize.
God told him to go on to Damascus,
There a man he would profit to see;
So he was led by the hand to Ananias,
And another miracle then came to be.
His eyes once more became open
When Ananias offered a prayer;
And Saul's hard heart, had softened,
And his attitude changed, then and there.
He repented of harassing God's people,
His way of life no longer the same;
And not only had God forgiven,
But he gave him a brand new name!
He would henceforth devote all his actions
To doing the will of the Lord;
He was ready to live, and die for
The spreading about of His Word.
The apostles at first didn't trust him,
They remembered the man known as Saul;
But then they learned of the chance he'd been
given,
For he was now known as Paul.
When they witnessed the way God had changed
him,
His past they were quick to forgive;
For we all have our own "road to Damascus"
Where we can find a better way to live.*

WHAT ABOUT CHRISTIANS OBSERVING CHRISTMAS?

Reprinted

Some things people do are not discussed at all in the Bible, because they have come into existence since the Bible was written. That is, they are not discussed in such a way as to tell how to do them, nor to speak of someone doing it and being condemned for it.

But the Bible does not leave us in the dark as to how we should feel about these matters. Always there is some way to tell what God would prefer.

You will be surprised to discover that in the tenth chapter of Jeremiah, there is a discussion of what heathen people did, which so nearly parallels the Christian practice of observing Christmas, that it awakens a deep concern and conviction that it is too nearly the same thing just to be accidentally recorded. This is what the Bible says:

"Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them. For the customs of the people are vain: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not. They are upright as the palm tree, but speak not: they must needs be borne, because they cannot go. Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good" (Jeremiah 10:2-5).

What is the Prophet discussing?

Form the context, it is obvious that the prophet is not actually discussing Christmas trees, but he is discussing a matter which parallels it so closely that we may judge the one by the other. There was a method used to determine what was right and what was wrong. That same method is still safe. It is also necessary.

It must be kept in mind continually that God is not pleased for man to make up his own method of worshipping Him. The trouble caused is easily understood. Whatever man does, if other men show appreciation for it, then it

means more to him than whether God appreciates it or not.

Does that sound wrong--not according to the facts as you understand them? Then consider this: God did not tell man to celebrate Christmas--yet man does far more to celebrate the birthday of Christ than anything which God did command him to do!

“Ye shall not do after the things that we do here this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes” (Deuteronomy 12:8). The New Testament teaches the same things: *“This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men”* (Matthew 15:8-9).

Does Jeremiah 10:2-5 apply to celebrating X-mas? It assuredly does. Jeremiah 10:2-5 discusses man worshipping idols--false gods. A “god” is not just an imitation of some imaginary spirit being. A person may make a “god” out of his own desires, and this is completely biblical. We are not making up an interpretation but using the terms in their natural usage. The Bible says:

“Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly...” (Philippians 3:19). This simply means that their own appetites are what they live to satisfy, when they are rather intended to be living to please and satisfy God.

What is Wrong With Celebrating Christmas?

We, of course, acknowledge the truth of the story all of us know and love so well about the birth of Christ. It is certainly right and pleasing to God for us to teach this truth to our children. Most of the carols sung about Christ’s birth are just as good and right to sing as any hymn of praise.

What then is wrong? The basic thing that is wrong is, as we have indicated, that it is man-made, and that it actually came from heathen origin instead of originating within Christianity. Even the name ought to be completely repugnant to protestant Christians. Who named this holiday? It is very obvious--who else has “Christ-MASS”? The Encyclopedia Americana says: “Christmas derived from the mediaeval Christes Masse, the Mass of Christ, the feast commemorated the birth of Jesus, observed by the Christian Church...”

The New International Encyclopedia says, in an article on Christmas: “Many of the beliefs and usages of the old

Germans, and also of the Romans, relating to this matter, passed over from heathenism to Christianity and have partly survived the present day. But the Church also sought to combat and banish--and in this it was to a large extent successful--the deep-rooted feeling, by adding for the purification of the heathen customs and feasts which it retained, its grandly devised liturgy, besides dramatic representations of the birth of Christ and the first events of His life.”

The article continues: “Hence, also originated at a later period the Christ tree, or Christmas trees, adorned with lights and gifts, the custom of reciprocal presents and of special Christmas meats and dishes.”

Why December 25?

Did you ever wonder why or how shepherds would be out in the fields watching their flocks by night in the winter time? This fact alone proves that December 25th is not the time of year when Christ was born! Then how was the date chosen? The following information taken from the Johnson’s Universal Encyclopedia, may be verified many times by consulting other Encyclopedias:

“Among the causes that operated in fixing this period perhaps the most powerful was that most heathen nations regarded the winter solstice as the beginning of the renewed life and activity of the powers of nature. The Romans, Celts, and Germans, from the oldest times, celebrated the season with great feasts.” “At the winter solstice, the Germans held their Yule-feast, and believed that during the twelve nights reaching from the 25th of December to the 6th of January they could trace the personal movements on earth of their great deities. Some of these usages passed over from heathenism to Christianity, and have partly survived to this present day. But the Church sought to banish the deep-rooted heathen element by introducing its grand liturgy, besides dramatic representations of the birth of Christ and the first events of His life.”

Again, talking about the fact that much of what is practiced at Christmas time is not from the Bible but is from heathen religions, the Nelson’s Encyclopedia says:

“It is apparent, however, that a festival was celebrated at this season long before it was held sacred as the birthday of Jesus of Nazareth. The Saturnalia of the Romans and the winter festival of the heathen Britons were both celebrated about December 25th, and later, the Roman festival in honor of the sun-god, Mithra (instituted 273 A. D.). From the latter the day came to be known as the

“Birthday of the Unconquered Sun”; and after its adoption by the Christian Church in the fourth century as the anniversary of Christ’s birth, this name was given a symbolic interpretation.” A study of the customs associated with this period also reveal a heathen, if not invariably a solar, origin. The lighting of the Yule log on Christmas Eve, once a widespread European custom, is or was a function of such predominant importance among the Lithuanians and Letts that their words for Christmas Eve literally signify “Log Evening.” The sports of the ‘Lords of Misrule’ in England are thought to be an inheritance from the Saturnalia. The decoration of the churches with the once sacred mistletoe and holly is a pagan survival. Other illustrations might be cited, such as the sending of presents, analogues of which are found in the Yule of Northern Europe and Ancient Rome.” “Most of the ancient customs associated with the winter solstice are now obsolete, but a sentimental interest in them was revived during the 19th century chiefly by the writings of Washington Irving.”

Are These Only Isolated Reports?

Certainly not! As indicated before, you may go to any large library, look in the encyclopedias, and find general agreement, over and over. We feel that the following quotation from the *DICTIONARY OF RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE* is very concise and revealing:

“The manner in which this Christmas festival came to be observed in the Romish Church, and through it in the other churches, is as follows: Precisely in this season of the year a series of heathen festivals occurred, the celebration of which was in many ways closely interwoven with the civil and social life of the Romans. Hence the Christians were often exposed to be led astray into many of the customs and solemnities peculiar to these festivals. Besides, these festivals had an import which easily admitted of being spiritualized and, with some slight change, of being transferred into a Christian sense. First came the Saturnalia, which represented the peaceful times of the Golden Age, and abolished for a while the distinction of ranks, the distance between servants and freedom. This was very easily transferred to Christianity, which, through the restoration of the fellowship between man and God, brought like the true liberty to the free man as well as to the slave. Then came the custom, peculiar to this season, of making presents afterwards transferred to the Christmas festival.

After the Saturnalia came the Festival of Infants, at which the children were presented with images; just as Christmas is the festival of the children. Next came a festival still more and logous to Christmas than that of the shortest day, the winter solstice, the birthday of the new sun, about to return once more toward the earth. In the case of this last named feast, a transition to the Christian point of view naturally presented itself, where the sun of the spiritual world, was compared with that of the material. To this series of pagan festivals belonging to this season was to be opposed that Christian festival which could be so easily connected with the feelings and sentiments that lay at their foundations. Hence the celebration of the nativity of Christ was transferred to the 25th of December, for the purpose of drawing away the Christian people from all participation in the heathen festivals, and of gradually drawing the pagans themselves from their heathen customs to the Christian celebration.”

Isn’t This a Logical and Right Procedure?

That which is logical and right in the eyes of man is not usually right in spiritual matters. The Bible says: “Ye shall not do after all the things that we do here this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes” (Deuteronomy 12:8).

In the eyes of man, it is logical to gradually lead the children of God and the children of the Devil together into unity through compromise mostly on the part of the Christian. It was about false doctrine that the remark was made about “rooting up.” Jesus said, “This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me” (Matthew 15:8).

Never has there been a way in which more people have given “lip service” than in the celebration of Christmas as youngsters and adults, who have never known Christ, all sing His praises, enact scenes from His life, and then go immediately, during the same celebration, into the wildest sort of indulgences. This sort of thing does not honor, or please God, and as far as man is concerned, it is in vain.

It is logical for the apostate church to have compromised with the world in order to be united. It is also logical for Protestants now to compromise in negotiations to be united not only together, but with the apostate church--as they have been, unknowingly, very much compromised already. Who chose the date to

celebrate the birth of Christ? The answer is obvious from the quotations which have been given. Who chose the name of this holiday? This, too, is obvious, from the quotations, as well as from the word-building of the name.

Do You Believe the Word of God?

The Bible says: “God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good” (Numbers 23:19).

God spoke through the prophets and said: “...Learn not the way of the heathen...” (Jeremiah 10:2). The Apostle Paul wrote: “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son...” (Hebrews 1:1-2). Did God say the same thing through His Son that he said through the prophets?

Jesus said: “...Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up” (Matthew 15:13).

The teachings about Christmas, in every respect except for the Bible stories of His birth, are man-made and if God does not change, (and we have His Word that He is steadfast) then this plant will be rooted up.



CYNTHIA'S CORNER: "RENEWAL" By Cynthia Clayton

As I write this at the coldest time of the year, looking out my back window at the St. Joseph River which is frozen and covered with snow, I look forward to Spring when the cycle of renewal and regeneration begins again. We can count on this – the seasons follow one after another.

Just as the earth is renewed, God gives each human the opportunity to be renewed – to begin again. No, not to change the past, but to be forgiven of it and have it blotted out of God's memory (Isaiah 43:25). God remembers our sins no more (Jeremiah 31:34. last part). That is an incredible gift and blessing God gives to those who repent and turn to him in humility and obedience!

What is repentance that is acceptable with God? Remember that God knows our minds and hearts (Psalm 139:1-4). We cannot fool God. What exactly is repentance and what does it do? Is worldly sorrow the same as repentance? Second Corinthians 7:8-11 discusses the difference between worldly and godly sorrow. We also have two classic, biblical examples of worldly and godly sorrow in Judas and Peter, two of Jesus' twelve chosen disciples. Judas betrayed Jesus for money, was sorry he did it, and attempted to return the money. But, his worldly sorrow led to his death – he hanged himself (Mathew 27:1-5). Peter, on the other hand, denied Jesus three times and “wept bitterly” about it (Luke 22:54-62). But, his godly sorrow led to repentance and forgiveness. He rejoined his fellow disciples (John 20), and then Jesus himself “reinstated” him (John 21:15-19).

Real repentance is not just talk of a verbal admission of wrongdoing. It is demonstrated in a changed life that conforms to God's Word in how we live and how we treat others every day (I John 2:3-6). Peter's repentance was demonstrated by how he lived the rest of his life. The Christian life, just like the seasons, is a continual journey of repentance and renewal (I John 1:7-9) as we strive to “walk as Jesus did” (I John 2:6).

--From Does God Exist?



Hold Fast

By David DeLong

The writer of Hebrews, in chapter 2 verses 1-3, makes this very grave point: "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him".

We may think that we are strong in the faith with no possibility of slipping or turning back on the Lord. However, the Apostle Paul, in writing to the Corinthian brethren, makes this comparison in I Corinthians, chapter 10, verses 5-12: "But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

The apostle wrote to warn the saints that even when they think they're standing firm, they can fall. That includes us as well. It happened to one of Paul's co-workers named Demas. This co-worker of Paul had been apparently a solid disciple of the Lord. In Colossians 4:14 Paul lists

him with several disciples who sent the brethren greetings. And in Philemon 1:24 we read: "Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellowlabourers." But, then, in II Timothy 4:10 we read some disturbing news about Demas. Paul wrote: "For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica..." What caused him to forsake Paul and leave? He began loving this present world. We don't know what specifically happened, but somehow Satan tempted him, apparently, and he fell from grace.

The Apostle John warns us about loving the world. He wrote in I John 2:15-17: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

The book of Hebrews, chapter 3 verses 12-14, instructs us to "take heed". These verses read: "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end".

This text tells us that sin is deceitful; it will therefore fool us. That, along with Jeremiah 17:9, which reads: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" makes turning from the Lord doubly possible. We know that we must hold fast our salvation to the end, but what are some of the things that we must hold fast to in order to secure that salvation?

Proverbs 4:13 gives us one of the things we must hold fast to: "Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her; for she is thy life." The words that we read from the Scriptures, the truths we hear from the pulpit, the lessons we learn from Sabbath School, are a part of this instruction that we must "take fast hold of". Do you find yourself quickly pushing this instruction into the back of your mind soon after learning it, or do you ponder it, thinking of its life applications on a daily basis? Proverbs told us that this instruction is "thy life." The Apostle Paul put it this way: "Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle" (II Thessalonians 2:15).

Another thing that we must take hold of is God's strength. We must do this on a daily basis, because we have no spiritual strength of our own. In giving admonition to people the Lord says: "Or let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me" (Isaiah 27:5). The only way we can have true peace with the Lord is to take hold of His strength. We do this by asking for His Power, the Holy Spirit, to be mighty within us.

Though we cannot earn our salvation by doing good works, yet the Lord expects us to lay hold on His covenant by keeping His commandments, including the Sabbath. In Isaiah 56:2-6 we find: "Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it; that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil. Neither let the son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to the LORD, speak, saying, The LORD hath utterly separated me from his people: neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree. For thus saith the LORD unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant; Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off. Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the LORD, to serve him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant".

It is the habit of some in today's society to stay home

from attending church services. But, attending such services is a great help in our walk with the Lord, and we are exhorted to assemble together. Hebrews, chapter 10 verses 23-25, instructs us: "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."

Of the truths and faithfulness of living to which we have already attained, we must hold fast to these and not let them go. False teachings were being propagated in the Church of Thyatira, and the Lord Jesus had some strong words of exhortation for the church members. He said: "But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. But that which ye have already hold fast till I come" (Revelation 2:24-25).

A similar message was given by Jesus to the churches in Sardis and Philadelphia. To Sardis He warned: "Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee" (Revelation 3:3). And to the church in Philadelphia He said: "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown" (Verse 11).

To Timothy the Apostle Paul gave this admonition: "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses." And to the rich church members he added: "Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life" (Verse 19).

Finally, to all of us the writer of Hebrews gives this counsel: "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us" (Hebrews 6:17-18).

Open Thy Mouth

By David DeLong

We read in Proverbs 31:8: "Open thy mouth for the dumb in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction." I am writing this article with a certain group of human beings in mind. This group consists of the millions of babies who have been aborted over the years. True, it is too late to open our mouths on their behalf, but we can still do so for those in this group who have not yet been aborted.

May this upcoming year show us diligently finding a voice for these not yet aborted babies. There are several ways that we can find a voice for these precious and beloved of the Lord human beings. First, we can find a voice for them by praying to the Lord that He will help us end this scourge upon the world. Abortion is murder and we need to intercede to the Lord for the blood already shed upon our lands. We find in Deuteronomy 21:9: "So shalt thou put away the guilt of innocent blood from among you, when thou shalt do that which is right in the sight of the LORD."

Second, we can find a voice for these babies by communicating with our government officials to put an end to government-sanctioned abortion. We know that ever since the Roe vs. Wade decision made by the United States Supreme Court, millions of babies have been legally aborted in the U.S. Legally aborted, however, does not mean morally aborted. God still grieves for these precious souls and He is storing up His wrath to be poured out upon a murdering society. The same is true for the whole world. Praying for our government officials that God will soften their hearts to this issue is also a must.

The committing of abortion is really not much different than what some of the children of Israel were doing by sacrificing their children to Baal or Molech. We read the commandment of the Lord concerning such practices in Deuteronomy 18:10: "There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch". The Lord punished Israel for committing such practices.

Buy The Truth

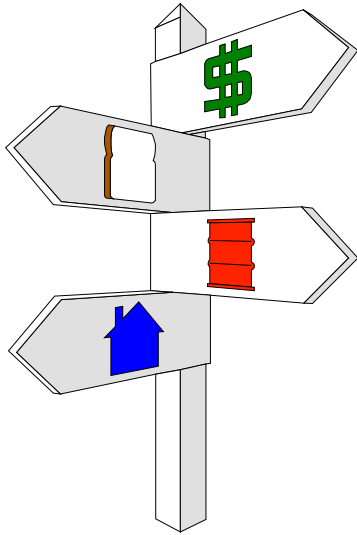
By David DeLong

Proverbs 23:23 informs us: "Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding." Obviously, we buy the truth, for instance, when we purchase a Bible. However, we also buy the truth when we work diligently to search for it and make it our own. And then we never relinquish it, or sell it. Proverbs 2:1-5 is very pointed about making the truth one's own. "My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God."

Very few people in today's world want the truth. Rather, they want their version of the truth. If most people were confronted with the truth of God's Word, they would immediately reject it. This is even true of the many who call themselves Christians. They would rather hold to their traditions than receive the truth.

Truth is a wonderful thing. It is based upon the word of Jesus and it sets a person free. John 8:31-32 tells us: "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

We must also be willing to share the truth when we have an opportunity. I Peter 3:15 reads: "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear". The Apostle Paul exhorted Timothy: "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (II Timothy 4:2-4).



THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

If you have any items of interest that you would like to submit to this segment, please send them to The Church of God Publishing House, PO Box 328, Salem, WV 26426-0328.

THE AMERICAN WORKPLACE

The following is an article by Paul Wiseman of the Associated Press which appeared in the **Houston Chronicle**. It is entitled *One-fifth of Americans find workplace hostile or threatening*.

WASHINGTON – The American workplace is grueling, stressful and surprisingly hostile.

So concludes an indepth study of 3,066 U.S. workers by the Rand Corp., Harvard Medical School and the University of California, Los Angeles. Among the findings:

Nearly one in five workers – a share the study calls “disturbingly high” – say they face a hostile or threatening environment at work, which can include sexual harassment and bullying. Workers who have to face customers endure a disproportionate share of abuse.

Nearly 55 percent say they face “unpleasant and potentially hazardous” conditions.

Nearly three-quarters say they spend at least a fourth of their time on the job in “intense or repetitive physical” labor. “I was surprised at how physically demanding jobs were,” says lead author Nicole Maestas, a Harvard Medical School economist.

Telecommuting is rare: 78 percent say they are required to be present in their workplace during working hours.

Only 38 percent say their jobs offer good prospects for advancement. And the older they get, the less optimistic they become.

About half say they work on their own time to meet the demands of their job.

“Wow – (work) is a pretty taxing place for many

people,” Maestas says. “I was surprised by how pressured and hectic the workplace is.”

In many cases, less educated workers endure tougher working conditions. For example, fewer than half of men without college degrees can take a break whenever they want to, compared to more than 76 percent of men with college degrees. Likewise, nearly 68 percent of men without college degrees spend at least a fourth of their time moving heavy loads.

Maestas wonders whether toxic working conditions are keeping Americans out of the labor force. The percentage of Americans who are working or looking for work – 62.9 percent in July – has not returned to pre-recession levels and is well below its 2000 peak of 67.3 percent. The unemployment rate is at a 16-year low, and many employers complain they can’t fill jobs.

“There’s a message for employers here, Maestas says. “Working conditions really do matter.”

Not everything about American workplaces is grim. Workers enjoy considerable autonomy: More than 80 percent say they get to solve problems and try out their own ideas. Moreover, 58 percent say their bosses are supportive, and 56 percent say they have good friends at work.

The first-time survey of Americans ages 25-71 was carried out in 2015.

Comment

I know of many people who are dissatisfied in their workplace. Every person who is able to work must secure a job or viable profession in order to earn a living. We are told in God’s Word that if one does not work, he

should not be able to eat. No matter how rough one's job is, it should be done wholeheartedly. By doing this, God is very pleased. Due to certain factors, not everyone is able to acquire the best work opportunities. Many are limited by their mental capacity. That may be one of the reasons that there are so many jobs unfilled in the technology world.

When God's kingdom is set up on the earth, the inhabitants of that kingdom will not have to worry about securing a good workplace without any drawbacks.

CHAOS IN OUR COUNTRY AND THE WORLD

I cannot describe the sad state of affairs in America and the rest of the world at the time of the writing of this column. The events that have transpired are definite proof that we are living in the last days.

The American political world is totally out of whack! The president's party controls both the Senate and Congress, but they are unable to get anything done and act as they should. It seems like the president wants to contradict and oppose some of the advice that his advisory board has given him, and some on his advisory board have either been fired by the president or have resigned on their own. There is friction among the staff of the White House. The first White House press secretary, Sean Spicer, resigned. Since then a host of others resigned from the president's inner circle.

Due to fighting among themselves, the members of the Senate and Congress have been unable to pass any bills to send to the president for his signature. Of course, they have to listen to the people in the district or state which elected them.

Among other happenings, you may have heard and read of the situation in Charlottesville, Virginia when a van plowed into a group of people demonstrating against the taking down of a Confederate statue. One young lady was killed and several injured. Both demonstrators and those who opposed the demonstrators had opposing philosophical views, and they fought each other.

There was a so-called freedom of speech demonstration in Boston. It was much less violent than the Charlottesville affair due to the strict supervision by the police and safety officials.

The above is just a briefly condensed state of affairs of what has happened in America.

I will just mention two events that have happened in Barcelona, Spain. A van plowed into a crowd enjoying a sunny afternoon on one of Barcelona's most famous thoroughfares. At least 13 were killed and 30 were left bloodied on the pavement. The attack was determined to be sponsored by terrorists. ISIS took credit for it.

Just hours later, police foiled a second van attack in the seaside town of Cambrils which is 70 miles south of Barcelona. Police shot at least four people who appeared to be wearing explosive belts.

A CELEBRITY FOR PRESIDENT?

I hear that some believe that the Democrats need a celebrity to run for president in 2020.

Comment

America needs presidential candidates who are well versed in the inner workings of the American governing system and can work well with other officials, not necessarily a celebrity.

CHRISTIAN ATTITUDE TOWARD THE POOR

I read an article in a newspaper that said that 46 percent of Christians believe that being poor is caused by lack of effort by the poor, and only 29 percent of Non-Christians believe such.

Comment

Regardless of many Christians who believe that being poor is caused by a lack of effort, Jesus said, "For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always" (Mark 14:7).

ABOUT CARS

I understand from a news report that England plans to ban new gasoline and diesel cars by 2040.

Comment

Many countries, it seems, plan to ban new gasoline and diesel cars. This makes us wonder what the future holds for fossil fuel.

TROUBLE IN KENYA

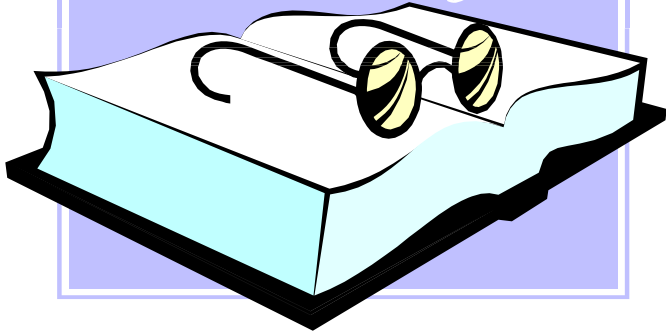
Earlier this year there were deadly protests in Kenya. The protests were in protest to the re-election of its president, Uhuru-Kenyatta. A report said that at least 11 people were killed.

Comment

Kenya seems to be a very unsafe country in which to live. Several Church of God members live there. Let us pray for their safety and welfare.

BIBLE

Study



Questions and Answers

QUESTION: What makes a good preacher (minister)?

ANSWER: If a preacher is to fulfill his duty, he must be a man of the Book, that is, God's inspired, eternal Word, the Bible. The minister must remember that he is living in an age of specialists and that he, too, must be a specialist. The minister is not in competition with the world; he is above it. He need not know literature, art, history, current events, philosophy, nor a myriad of other man-developed subjects, but he must be a specialist in God's Word.

God calls preachers not to read the "book-of-the-month" until they have studied the "Book-of-eternity." God wants His preachers to review no secular work of fiction. God expects His ministers to proclaim the never-fading glories of His own revelation to men. If a preacher's first duty is to bring men to God through Jesus Christ, he must know Christ personally; he must know the way.

If a preacher is to do His duty properly, he must be a man of God. We are not called to be "good mixers" and "good sports". We are called to be good separators. Be so free of worldly conduct that your preaching will be free of pollution. Be a clear voice for righteousness, that sinners may turn and become the redeemed children of God.

Since preachers are called of God and are taught of God through the Holy Spirit, let them remember that they must keep in direct communication with their God. Second-hand inspiration never made a great preacher.

When ministers walk close to God, their walk before man is different. We all admire well-prepared sermons, but a well-prepared life is more important, and it will preach a sermon in every street and avenue of life.

The world looks at the minister on the street to see whether he means what he preaches in the pulpit. What do you preach? Let it be the crucified Christ. What is the source book for your sermons? Let it be the Bible. What kind of life do you live? Let it be the kind that makes men want to be children of God because they know you and see what it means to be a follower of God's only begotten Son. A preacher must be a winner of sinners.

QUESTION: One definition of the word paradox is a statement that seems contradictory, unbelievable, or absurd but that actually may be true in fact. Will you please site some paradoxes in the Bible?

ANSWER: The following is a list of twelve paradoxes that are in the Bible:

1. More through less. **"But I say unto you... whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain."** (Matthew 5:39, 41)
2. Getting through giving. **"...It is more blessed to give than to receive."** (Acts 20:35)
3. Help through hindrances. **"...In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer..."** (John 16:33)
4. Freedom through slavery. **"For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak**

boldly..." (Ephesians 6:20)

5. Strength through weakness. **"...When I am weak, then am I strong."** (II Corinthians 12:10)

6. Rest through labor. **"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest ... For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."** (Matthew 11:28, 30)

7. Love through hatred. **"If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."** (Luke 14:26).

8. Living through dying. **"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me..."** (Galatians 2:20)

9. Profit through loss. **"...If ye love them which love you, what reward have ye?..."** (Matthew 5:46).

10. Finding through losing. **"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."** (Luke 9:23)

11. Raising up through stooping down. **"...He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."** (Philippians 2:8).

12. Righteous through unrighteous. **"...He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (II Corinthians 5:21).**

QUESTION: Will you name a few ways in which the devil is trying to work personally in the lives of saints today?

ANSWER: Let us name just four of them:

The devil is trying to work in the lives of saints today through depression of spirit.

Oh, the number of saints today in whom the devil, not only has a place, but has control through depression. He brings to them doubts and discouragements regarding their spiritual condition. Whenever such doubts and discouragements assail you, you may know that it is of the devil. God never torments one of His children; and when this depression of spirit means torment and torture for you and me, we may know that it is the devil at work in our hearts. It is his mark.

All he wants is that we should get our eyes off Christ. If he can do that through this concern as to our spiritual condition, he has won his first victory in your life and mine. He will lead us on to morbid introspection, and to a deadly dissection and analysis of our spiritual condition. It is

fatal! The moment we find ourselves so doing, we should be on our guard. Satan never asks for control of your life and mine at the first. All he asks for is a place there. We have that command so simple and definite, "Never give place to the devil." All he wants, first of all, in your life is standing room, and he knows if he can get standing room he will soon get control, and he can get that standing room through depression of spirit.

The devil is trying to work in the lives of saints today through delusion of mind.

The world is being flooded by organizations, and movements, and cults, many of them satanic in origin, many of them containing half-truths and half lies, subtle counterfeits that deceive even the very elect. Satan today will take even the most glorious truth, the truth of the Holy Spirit, and he will use it, and capitalize it for himself. Thus through cunning deception Satan lays hold upon many hungry hearted people and leads them away from the Lord and His Word.

The devil is trying to work in the lives of saints today through discord in the home.

He does this by creating alienation between husband and wife, parents and children; through misunderstanding between members of the same family.

The devil is trying to work in the lives of saints today through division in the church.

Yes, division in that part of the church that is sound and true and fundamental. I am sorry to say it, but I have scarcely touched division that is caused by intolerance of workers one with another, by insignificant things, by jealousies. It is the devil's most deadly work within the evangelical part of the Church of God.

QUESTION: What did Jesus mean when He said, "...He that hath seen me hath seen the Father"? (John 14:9).

ANSWER: In John 14:28, Jesus clearly says, "...I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I." Also, in John 6:46 Jesus said, "Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father." Here, Jesus speaks of Himself as being from God, and in His pre-human existence, He had seen God.

How do believers see God through Jesus? It is through an understanding of God and His teachings; just as many in the world today--even the blind--use the same expression when they may finally understand a difficult matter--they say, "I see," meaning they understand.



THE CHURCH AROUND THE WORLD

Youth Retreat--San Antonio, Texas



2017 Church of God (7th Day) Youth Retreat, July 18, 2017. Theme: #OwnUrEmoji

Back Row: Chase Howell, Nathan Olivares, Chance Howell

4th Row: Tim Buechner, Scott Mills, Nicole Herrera, Arissa Hernandez, Sharon Marquez, Carolina Herrera, Debbie Smith, Yeimy Salais, Valerie Almanza, Olivia Herrera, Richard Santiesteban

3rd Row: Joel Cruz, Cindy Buechner, Alfonso 'Pop' Telesca, Diana Ledezma-Trujillo, Natalie Olivares, Josh Sedano, Tim Cruz, Isaac Munoz, Jasmine Munoz, Alexis Herrera, Rick Herrera

2nd Row/Seating: Andrew Cantu holding Jade, Jasmine Fowler, Caitlynne Howell, Domingo Esquivel, Emily Herrera, Joseph Turcios, Joseph Buechner, Lorena Herrera, Gina Williams, Christy Howell

Front Row: Nina Salinas, Yahaira Vasquez, Morgan Buechner, Marissa Santiesteban, Christina Herrera, Lupe Cantu - Missing: Esmeralda Salais

2017 Youth Retreat Group picture, that was taken on July 18, 2017, at Mt. Zion Christian Retreat Center in Pipe Creek, TX.

2018 Youth Retreat is scheduled for July 22-27, 2018; please contact Cindy Buechner at buechner1@aol.com to sign up or for more information.

Nigeria, part 2



Various church members attending services in a church in Nigeria.



LESSON I

ABRAHAM AND HIS FAMILY

Scripture Reading: Genesis 15:1-18.

Golden Text: Genesis 15:6.

"And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness."

1. How many children did Abram have at the time of our Scripture reading? Genesis 15:2.
 2. What did the Lord show to Abram? Genesis 15:5.
 3. Did Abram believe everything the Lord told him? Genesis 15:6.
 4. What did God promise Abram? Genesis 15:18; 17:4-8.
- NOTE:** The word covenant means a mutual agreement between two or more parties.
5. What is the name of Abram's first son? Genesis 17:18.
 6. What is the name of Abram's second son? Genesis 21:3.
 7. What does the Apostle Paul say of Abram's family? Galatians 4:22-23.
 8. Who were some of Abram's descendants? Matthew 1:1-2.

LESSON II

SODOM AND GOMORRAH (PART I)

Scripture Reading: Genesis 18:1-8; 16-33.

Golden Text: Genesis 18:22.

"And the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom: but Abraham stood yet before the LORD."

1. How many men came to visit Abram one hot day? Genesis 18:1-3.
 2. Was Abram a good host? Genesis 18:4-6.
 3. What did Abram set before the Lord to eat? Genesis 18:7-8.
 4. After eating the sumptuous meal, what did Abram's guests do? Genesis 18:16.
 5. Did the Lord tell Abram why he was visiting the city of Sodom. Genesis 18:19-20.
- NOTE:** Boys and girls, this truly is a wonderful statement made by the Lord about what Abram would do. Does He know when you are obedient too? Live that the Lord can also say about you that you will always be obedient to the laws of God.
6. When Abram heard of the Lord's mission, what did he say? Genesis 18:23-24.
 7. In what manner did the Lord answer Abram? Genesis 18:26.
 8. From fifty righteous souls down to what number would the Lord spare the city of Sodom? Genesis 18:32-33.

LESSON III

SODOM AND GOMORRAH (PART II)

Scripture Reading: Genesis 19:1-3; 12-29.

Golden Text: Genesis 19:24.

"Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven".

1. From last week's lesson you learned why the Lord came and visited Abram. Tell us the reason again.
2. Who did God send to the city of Sodom to meet Lot?

Genesis 19:1.

3. What did he say to the two angels in Genesis 19:2-3?

4. What did the angels tell Lot to do and why? Genesis 19:12-13.

5. What happened when Lot talked to his sons in law? Genesis 19:14.

6. What other special instructions did they give Lot's family, and did all of them obey it? Genesis 19:24-26.

7. What special purpose did God have in destroying the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah? II Peter 2:6; Luke 17:28-30.

NOTE: The cities were destroyed as an example of what will eventually happen to the wicked people of today.

LESSON IV

GOD'S TEST FOR ABRAHAM

Scripture Reading: Genesis 22:1-19.

Golden Text: Genesis 22:18.

"And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou has obeyed my voice."

1. What was God's test for Abraham? Genesis 22:1-2.

2. What did Abraham do the next morning? Genesis 22:3.

3. What did Isaac ask his father, and what did Abraham answer back? Genesis 22:7-8.

4. Was Abraham going to sacrifice Isaac? Genesis 22:9-10.

5. What did the Lord do to help Abraham and Isaac? Genesis 22:11-13.

6. What did the Lord promise to Abraham for obeying

him? Genesis 22:16-18.

7. This story is one of the classic examples in the Bible of having faith to do what God tells you. This means also doing work to show your faithfulness. James 2:17-24; Hebrews 11:17.

8. Who else offered his Son as a sacrifice so that the world might be saved? John 3:16.



BIBLE BOOKS

1. What book of the Bible has only three letters?

2. Fill in the first and last letters of these four letter Bible books.

-UT- -ZR- -OE-

-AR- -UK- -OH-

-UD- -CT- -MO-

3. Fill in the first and last letter of these five letter Bible books.

-ING- -OSE- -ONA-

-ICA- -AHU- -ITU-

-ETE- -AME-



PETER'S LIE FORGIVEN

One night Jesus was eating supper with His friends in the Upper Room. He told them that all of them would leave Him, and He would be left alone. Peter at once began to boast "I am ready to go with You to prison or even to die for You."

"O Peter," said Jesus sadly, "before the rooster crows twice you will deny me three times and will even say that you do not know Me" (Mark 14:30).

That seemed impossible to Peter. But before long, trouble began. A crowd of wicked men came after Jesus and the disciples ran off into the darkness for fear the men

would take them too. But Peter and John followed Jesus far enough behind so that they would be safe.

When Jesus was taken into a ruler's house, Peter and John stood outside in the yard. It was a cold night. Soldiers and servants were standing about also, waiting to see what was to happen to Jesus.

They built a fire to warm themselves. Peter sat down by the fire with them to try to keep warm. One of the young women noticed him. She came closer. She looked into his face. "This man was with Jesus," she said.

Peter was frightened. "I do not know Him," he said. After a little while another servant noticed him. "You were one of those men with Jesus," he said.

"I am not one of them," said Peter in a loud voice. An hour later when Peter was standing about the fire talking with some of the soldiers, another servant pointed to him. "Truly this man was one of those with Jesus," he declared, "for he talks just like the others. I can tell."

Peter was afraid that they knew. He said crossly "I do not know what you are talking about." And just then he heard, "Cock-a-doodle-doo! Cock-a-doodle-doo!" the first rooster was crowing in the darkness to say that daylight would soon be coming. Jesus was being led from one house to another across the hallway. He looked down at Peter.

Suddenly Peter remembered! He remembered what Jesus had said, "O Peter, before the rooster crows for the new day you will three times say that you do not even know Me." And he had done it! He had three times said that he did not know Jesus, his best Friend! Peter felt as if he could never be happy again. He went outside in the cold where no one would see him. There he cried and cried. He wept bitterly. He thought he never could be happy again because of those three terrible lies he had told.

But we are glad the story does not end there. After cruel men put Jesus on the cross, He died and was buried for three days. But He came back to life again. Then one of the very first persons He came to talk with was Peter! Jesus knew how sorry Peter felt, and Jesus forgave him. Ever after that, Peter was the best friend he could be to Jesus. He was always glad for a chance to say that he was Jesus's friend, no matter what people did to him. He was never afraid again.

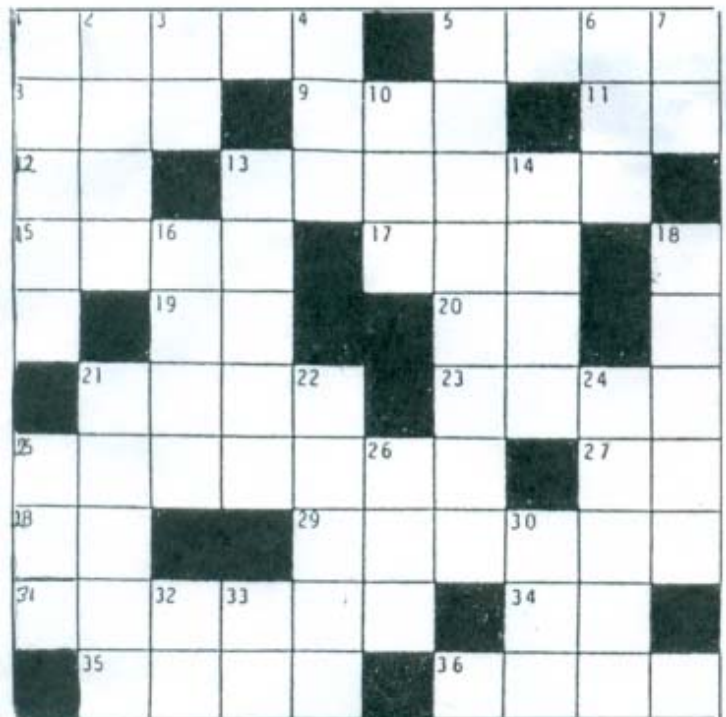
BIBLE FOODS
ACROSS

- 1. Food tree called a "king" - Judges 9:8
- 5. What Ruth gleaned
- 8. Seed with a hard shell
- 9. Extinct bird
- 11. First half of Bible (abbr.)
- 12. I am (short form)
- 13. Put somewhere
- 15. Precious stone
- 17. Young dog
- 19. college degree
- 20. Military police (abbr.)
- 21. Cages, hutches
- 23. "Brought beds, and basons,...and ___ and lentiles." (II Samuel 17:28)
- 25. What Esau sold his birthright for (Genesis 25:29-34)
- 27. Regarding
- 28. Epistle (abbr.)
- 29. "For the ___ was in the ear..." (Exodus 9:31)
- 31. "Comfort me with ____" (Song of Solomon 2:5)
- 34. Presupposition
- 35. Pertaining to you
- 36. To bridge

DOWN

- 1. The leeks, and the ___ of Egypt. (Numbers 11:4-5)
- 2. Rough piece, clod
- 3. That thing
- 4. Long slender fish
- 5. As "a lodge in a garden of ___" (Isaiah

- 1:8)
- 6. Staff
- 7. Where the Gospel is (abr.)
- 10. Plan of a country
- 13. Flora form
- 14. Sword (French)
- 16. Aid, help
- 18. Samson found some in a lion's carcass (Judges 14:8)
- 21. Oriental flower
- 22. Curved sword
- 24. Sports coliseum
- 25. Green vegetable
- 26. One of 3 forms of matter
- 30. Rim, esp. a pitcher
- 32. Italian river
- 33. Chemical symbol for lutetium



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THE RIGHTEOUS CRY

By Pat Evans

*Your righteousness is like the great mountains,
Your judgments are like the great deep;
Your mercy is in the clouds and the heavens,
Lord, our salvation is Yours to keep.*

*I've called out, Lord and You've heard me,
For Your Word, Lord, is true and right;
You deliver me from all my fears, Lord,
For within You is the fountain of life.*

*The weak shall inherit the earth one day,
And on the meek His bright light will shine;
Their inheritance shall be forever,
When He will establish the upright for all time.*

*The riches of the wicked are nothing,
Compared to the little of a righteous man;
He'll not cast us away nor forsake us,
Those who shall follow His guiding hand.*

*The wicked shall plot things against me,
But the Lord will just laugh at them;
I fret not because of evildoers,
They will receive their reward in the end.*

*Let them be ashamed and be brought to confusion,
Let them not say, we have swallowed him up;
In Your day, Your wrath will fall upon them,
And God's final judgment will pour into their cup.*

*Let us shout for joy and for gladness,
Those who follow the Lord's holy plan;
He'll destroy everyone who's against us,
He'll save the righteous from the evils of man.*

*We feel our prayers sometimes go unanswered,
We stew and fret and ask the Lord why?
We should remember to always have patience,
For His ears are open to the righteous cry.*

