



# Who Drew the “Line in Sand” Against Gays?

Richie Thetford

In the *Albuquerque Journal* (August 13, 1998), a headline read: “Clerics’ Group Draws ‘Line in Sand’ Against Gays.” Before I read the article the first thing that came to mind was the fact that it was not any “cleric” group or any particular denomination that “drew the line” against homosexuality, but rather God himself. It is good that there are still many religious groups that will take a stand against homosexuality because God teaches that it is a sin. There are various passages of Scripture that teach against homosexuality. Notice the line that God has drawn: “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 6:9-10). Other passages of Scripture teaching against homosexuality are: Romans 1:26-32; 1 Timothy 1:9-10; Leviticus 18:22; 20:13.

## God Called Them Homosexual

It is interesting to me that when the homosexual community raises its head to “come out of the closet” and “tell all” that we are supposed to listen to their concerns and be sympathetic to their cause. Yet when we that are opposed to homosexuality raise our head and cry out against the sin of homosexuality then we are accused of violating human rights. Let’s not forget that it was not me or any other man that determined that homosexuality is a sin, it was our creator, God himself!

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This is the same God that made everyone of us. He made us with the ability to follow and practice his righteousness. Yet the homosexual community cries out against those that are trying to uphold the teaching of God as “a well-orchestrated political campaign directed against the ‘gay’ community!” One individual stated, “It’s simply wrong to use God as an excuse for name-calling.” But wait, it was God that called them “homosexual,” pronounced that it is a sin, and said that anyone engaging in this sin will *not* inherit the kingdom of heaven. The homosexuals

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## Editorial

# The Spirit of Isaac

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Mike Willis

Most of us desire peace with one's fellowman, although many of us are not willing to pay the price of peace. We are too concerned with standing up for our rights to look for and desire peace. The patriarch Isaac displayed an example of a righteous man who desired peace more than his desire to stand up for his rights. His great spiritual character displays many lessons for us.

### The Story of Isaac Displays His Spirit (Gen. 26)

Isaac was forced to leave the promised land because of a famine (26:1). His intention was to go to Egypt, but the Lord forbade him (26:2). The Lord assured him of divine protection in the fulfillment of the Abrahamic promises (26:3-4). He settled in Gerar. Fearing for his safety, he lied saying that Rebekah was his wife (26:7). Perhaps he learned from his father Abraham to follow this course!

The men of Gerar believed the lie. But for the providence of God, they would have sinned against the marriage relationship of Rebekah and Isaac (26:10). (We see the relationship between believing a lie and sin in this case. The believing of Isaac's lie did not make the men of Gerar sinners. Had they taken Rebekah as their wife, they would have sinned!) The marriage relationship of Isaac and Rebekah was perceived when Isaac was seen "sporting" with Rebekah. The Hebrew word for Isaac (יִצְחָק) and "sporting" (יִצְחָק, Piel part. of יָצַח) are derived from the same root.

Abimelech commanded the Philistines not to harm Isaac or his wife (26:11). Having the assurance of Abimelech's protection, Isaac settled in the land (26:11). Isaac prospered in the land (26:12-15). However, his prosperity caused Abimelech to drive him from the land (26:16).

Isaac's sweet spirit is perceived in the conflict over the wells (26:17-33). The wells that Isaac's father Abraham had dug were filled in by the Philistines (26:18). To understand how serious this was, one must remember what water meant in that country. It was literally the "water of life." Isaac's servants dug a well of "springing water" (26:19). The Philistines took the well from him (26:20). Isaac named the well Esek (עֵשֶׂק, "contention") because they strove together over the well. Isaac's servants dug another well (26:21). The Philistines strove with him over this well and took it from Isaac. Isaac named this well Sitnah (סִטְנָה, "hostility," derived from the word יָטַח, "adversary"). Isaac's servants dug a third well (26:22). The Philistines left Isaac alone to have this well. Isaac named the place Rehoboth (רְהוֹבוֹת, from the root that means "broad"). The meaning is that there was room for Isaac here. Later, Isaac returned to Beer-sheba (26:23) where his servants also found water (26:32-33).  
*see "Isaac" on p. 600*

# What If God Is Listening To Our Songs?

J.S. Smith

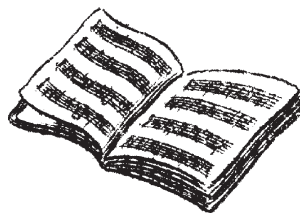
In Acts 5, we learn that two Christians, Ananias and his wife Sapphira, were intending to copy the example of Barnabas and other saints by selling a plot of land and bringing the proceeds to benefit the needy of the Jerusalem church. However, unlike Barnabas, this couple covets the notoriety of such a gift but does not want the pain of charity to afflict them so severely. Ananias and Sapphira conspire to pretend they are giving all when they are really only giving part of the proceeds. Truly, it was their option to give as they chose, but they endeavored to deceive their brethren into thinking they had done more.

The apostle Peter accuses the husband of his sin, claiming he had “not lied to men but to God” (v. 4). Maybe that was news to Ananias. Maybe he thought he could gild the lily and look like a big man and no one would ever know. Had Peter not possessed a prescient gift from the Holy Spirit, he might have gotten away with it. But honestly, God would have always known the truth anyway.

Ananias was struck dead and his unwitting wife soon joined him in eternity. They perished simply because they pretended to have piety when in fact, they were just going through the motions.

Our offering to God must be more than financial, of course. Money is only a part of the Lord’s work and what he demands and deserves from his children. The Hebrew writer tells us that he also should receive from us “the sacrifice of praise to God, the fruit of our lips” (13:15). Is God listening to our songs? As surely as he beheld the sacrifice of bulls and goats in Moses’ day, he is beholding the notes and words of our songs today. Paul describes our song service as “singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Col. 3:16). Our songs are directed toward heaven and they are received there.

For our songs to be a pleasing aroma to God, they must be sincere. The most avowed atheist could sing “Amazing Grace” on stage for money, but God would not be worshiped because the grace was not in his heart. We must worship in spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24); that is, our songs must be authorized by God and sincere from the heart. If you don’t mean it, don’t sing it. If you don’t mean it, God won’t accept it.



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What if God calls our songs as evidence in the great day of reckoning? Will they have reflected the thoughts and purpose of the heart and body? Or will they be evidence of hypocrisy and vain worship? We have promised God over and over that we will “Take Time To Be Holy” by speaking oft with him and feeding on his word. We must ask how regular our prayer and study habit is. Or will the Judge convict us of singing insincerely?

When we sing “This World Is Not My Home,” do the words emit from a heart secretly bowing at the altar of covetousness and the evil things of this world? Should God believe we are just a-passing through when we are busy heaping up treasure on earth and accruing nothing where we are supposedly headed for eternity (Matt. 6:19-21)?

We love to sing “Blest Be the Tie” that binds our hearts in Christian love. Do we mean it? Do we live it? Or do we not even consider one another and forsake the encouragement of the assembling together (Heb. 10:24-25)? Do we live to gossip and backbite? Do we count the tie that binds a noose around our libertine necks?

“Into Our Hands” the gospel is given, we sing. “Haste, let us carry God’s precious message, Guiding the erring back to the right.” But how can we say we mean it if we never utter the name of Jesus outside the security of the meeting house? Why should God accept that song from us if we horde the gospel like it might somehow be used up?

“Every time I sin on earth, I feel that I’m the one,” we pronounce in “I’m the One.” How can we even utter the words if we sin like we are sure of tomorrow? Unless we truly hate sin and intend to rid it from our lives, we had better not sing this song — we don’t mean it yet!

“Would you be free from your burden of sin? ‘There’s Power in The Blood.’” Why then do we lust after the premiums offered by denominations like amusements, banquet halls, and dramatic sketches? If we truly believe there is power in the blood, why flirt with anything less?

“Tell Me The Story of Jesus.” How dare we attempt to sing that in God’s presence when we never pick up a Bible to find the story in the first place? How dare we sing such words when we neglect Bible class?

We pledge allegiance to God beneath “The Banner of the Cross:” “Marching on and on! Marching on and on!” Where are we going? Are we marching into our communities, families, and workplaces like Christian soldiers or have we declared neutrality in the world war with the devil? If your faith never leaves the pew — you leave it there on Sunday afternoon and pick it up next Sunday morning — don’t sing like you plan to march under the Christian standard all week.

“Make me as ‘Clay in the Potter’s Hand.’” Singing this means you intend to truly be a disciple of Jesus, a person who is sincerely like Christ. That requires that your life be molded and shaped by the word and will of God. Will you read it? Will you apply what you read to your own life?

Then there’s the best one of all: “Are you ‘Sowing the Seed of the Kingdom’ brother?” You had better be broadcasting the seed of faith yourself before you start asking about your brother’s habits (Matt. 7:1-5).

### Conclusion

Christians must start listening to their songs and learning from them. God is listening. And if we are giving him a blemished sacrifice or keeping back part in pretense, we will be held accountable for it. What part of that offering might we be withholding? Is it the spirit or the truth? Could it be both?

Could God be reacting to our songs as he did to the Hebrews in Amos’ day: “Take away from Me the noise of your songs” (5:23)?

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# Three Things Which Justify

Johnie Edwards

Because man sins, he is separated from God (Isa. 59:1-2) and needs to be justified in the sight of God. The word justify means to be accounted righteous. This study takes a look at three things which will make one righteous before God.

## The Ones God Justifies

Paul wrote the Romans, “Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified” (Rom. 8:30). Please notice the order of justification:

1. *Those Predestinated.* Paul told the Ephesian Christians, “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world. . . . Having predestinated us unto adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will” (Eph. 1:4-5). This kind of predestination is that when God made the plan of salvation, those who choose to obey are predestinated to be saved and those who choose not to obey the gospel are predestinated to be lost. It’s that simple!

2. *The Called.* To be justified, one must be called. Paul says one is called by the gospel. “Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thess. 2:14). As one reads or hears the gospel preached, he is called, of God, to obey it (Mark 16:15-16).

## Three Things Which Justify

1. *The Grace Of God.* Paul wrote the Roman Christians, “Being justified by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 3:24). The favor of God, which is his grace, “. . . that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us” (Tit. 2: 11-12). We must remember that we are not justified by grace alone, but by grace.

2. *Faith.* The Holy Spirit stated, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord

Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1). We cannot please God without faith (Heb. 11:6). We must put our trust in the Lord. Remember Jesus said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). I would caution us that James said, “Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only” (Jas. 2:24).

3. *The Blood of Christ.* Again it is written, “Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him” (Rom. 5:1). The Revelation letter teaches, “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood” (Rev. 1:5).

## When This Justification Takes Place

Many do not have the biblical concept of when this justification takes place. The Bible has the answer. The Roman Christians were told, “For he that is dead is freed from sin” (Rom. 6:7). To be freed from sin is to be justified from sin. Now just what is this death about? A reading of Romans 6:2 will show us, “How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” Then one is “baptized into the Christ,” thus, “baptized into his death” (Rom. 6:3). Christ shed his blood in his death (John 19:34) and when one is baptized into his death, the cleansing effect of the blood is reached, “. . . being then made free from sin” (Rom 6:17-18).

## The Justified Will Be Glorified

The end result of being justified is to be glorified by God. By obeying the gospel call, one, if faithful, will be “. . . obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thess. 2:14). The child of God who obtains “. . . an inheritance . . . should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ” (Eph. 1:11-12). Won’t it be a wonderful day, having glorified God here as a Christian (Eph. 3:21; 1 Pet. 4:16), to have him glorify us over there!

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# Christ, the Disturber of Men

Donald Townsley

Men usually think of Christ as a peacemaker and a comforter to the soul, which is certainly true, but we have not fully seen Christ if we fail to see him as a *disturber of men* as well. He says in Matthew 10:34-36: “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household.”

1. Christ preached a disturbing message. He disturbed the complacent, self-satisfied religious leaders when he:

- Rebuked them for their teaching and practice of the traditions and commandments of men (Matt. 15:1-3; 16:6, 12).
- Rebuked them for their prejudiced hearts (Matt. 13:15).
- Rebuked them for their religious inconsistency (Matt. 23:1-4).
- Rebuked them for their exalted pride (Matt. 23:5-12).
- Pronounced a “woe” upon them for taking “away the key of knowledge” (Luke 11:52; Matt. 23:13).
- Pronounced a “woe” upon them for their religious pretense (Matt. 23:14, 27-28).
- Pronounced a “woe” upon them for making proselytes to their opinions (Matt. 23:15).
- Pronounced a “woe” upon them for their leaving undone “the weightier matters of the law” (Matt. 23:23-24).
- Pronounced a “woe” upon them for their making “clean the outside of the cup and platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess” (Matt. 23:25, 26).

2. When Jesus preached his disturbing message, openly rebuking and denouncing their sins, the religious leaders reacted in an ugly and violent manner:

- They called him names — a “Samaritan” (John 8:48).
- They said he had a demon (John 8:48).

- They claimed he performed miracles by the power of the devil (Matt. 12:22-24).
- They challenged his authority (Matt. 21:23-27).
- They took up stones to cast at him (John 8:59).
- They accused him of blasphemy (John 10:33).
- They sought to kill him (John 7:1).
- They finally had him crucified (Matt. 26:3, 4; 27:1-2, 24-26, 34-35).

3. Christ not only preached a disturbing message, he asked disturbing questions:

And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the publicans so? (Matt. 5:47).

And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? (Matt. 7:3).

Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? (Matt. 16:13).

For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? (Matt. 16:26).

And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? (Luke 6:46).

4. Christ not only preached a disturbing message and asked disturbing questions, he set disturbing standards.

*For the home — his marriage law.* He taught that it was God’s will from the beginning for one man to be married to one woman — a one-flesh relationship that God has joined together and that man is not to put asunder (Matt. 19:4-6; Gen. 2:24). He intended for this to be a permanent relationship. He taught that there is only one reason for divorce and remarriage — fornication (Matt. 19:3-12). Only the innocent party has a right to divorce the guilty party, for this reason, and remarry.

*Husband.* He is to be head of his wife (Eph. 5:23), to love her as his own body (Eph. 5:25, 28-29), to provide for his family (1 Tim. 5:8), and to bring up his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4).

*Wife.* She is to love her husband, to love her children, to be a keeper at home and to be obedient to her own husband (Tit. 2:3-5).

*Children.* They are to obey and honor their parents (Eph. 6:1-2; Col. 3:20).

*For his Disciples.*

- Christ and his church must come first in their lives (Matt. 6:33).
- Christ must come before the family (Matt. 10:34-37).
- They must love one another (John 13:34-35).
- They must correct their sins against one another (Matt. 5:23-24; 18:15-17).

*For Worship.*

Worship is to be in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). The Lord authorized five items of worship:

- The Lord's supper on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7).
- Giving of our means on the first day of the week (1 Cor. 16:1, 2).
- Singing praises to God (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16).
- Prayer (Acts 2:42).
- Teaching (Acts 2:42; 20:7). Worship that is not in spirit and in truth (according to truth) is vain worship (Matt. 15:9).

You can see from this study that Christ is a *disturber of men* when they are in their sins. He came to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10). Men have to become disturbed about their sins before they will do anything about them, so Christ deliberately preached a disturbing message that he might turn them from their sins that they might be saved and serve him. Christ wants gospel preachers today to preach this same message so that people will be disturbed about their sins and turn from them to serve him (2 Tim. 4:2).

One of the sad things in the church today is that members no longer want to hear the disturbing message of Christ. They "will not endure sound doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:3). They want to hear "fables" (2 Tim. 4:4), or a "felt-need gospel" that builds up their ego and deals with interpersonal relationships. They want a religion of entertainment and/or a positive message which soothes them in their sins. They want the preacher to preach "Peace, peace; when there is no peace" (Jer. 6:14)! The lust in the pew for such a message has given us preachers in the pulpit who will preach the kind of message the people crave (2 Tim. 4:3), and many of God's people "love to have it so" (Jer. 5:31)!

Brother Preacher, is your preaching patterned after the preaching of Christ, the *disturber of men*? Or is your preaching simply the kind that satisfies the lust in the pew (2 Tim. 4:3, 4)? Preaching that is patterned after the *disturber of men* will save men from hell! Preaching that satisfies the lusts of men will damn the preacher and those who hear him! Brother, could Christ preach where you worship?

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# Jewish Feasts and Festivals (2)

Kyle Campbell

Last time we introduced our study by examining some background concerning the Jewish calendar and then examined the Sabbath and new moon observances. These were the only two observances that occurred more than once a year. We now turn our attention to the seven yearly festivals in Jewish life.

## **Passover Feast Of Unleavened Bread/Pesach**

The Passover was the first of the three great festivals of the Jewish people. It referred to the sacrifice of a lamb in Egypt when the people of Israel were slaves. The Jews smeared the blood of the lamb on their door posts as a signal to God that he should “pass over” their houses when he destroyed all the firstborn of Egypt to persuade Pharaoh to let his people go. References to the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread include Exodus 12:1-13:16; 23:15; 34:18-20, 25; Leviticus 23:4-14; Numbers 28:16-25; Deuteronomy 16:1-8; Joshua 4:19-23; 5:10-12 and 2 Chronicles 30:2-15. Passover was observed in the spring on the 14th day of the first month, Abib or Nisan, with the service beginning in the evening. It was on the evening of this day that Israel left Egypt. The Passover meal was eaten after nightfall in a family group of at least ten persons, so individuals and small families combined for the celebration. They could not leave Jerusalem during the night of the meal. In addition to roast lamb the meal included unleavened bread and bitter herbs as a reminder of the bitterness in Egypt. It was eaten reclining, a symbol of being free persons.

Passover commemorated this hasty departure from Egypt. Unleavened bread was used in the celebration because this showed that the people had no time to put leaven in their bread as they ate the final meal as slaves in Egypt. Several regulations were given concerning the observance of the Passover, including the cleansing of homes of leaven on the first day of Unleavened Bread, which was a symbol of corruption and evil (Lev. 2:11). Passover was to be observed “in the place which the Lord your God will choose” (Deut. 16:16). This implied the sanctuary of the tabernacle or the temple in Jerusalem.

In New Testament times, Passover became a pilgrim festival. Large numbers gathered in Jerusalem to observe this annual celebration. Jesus was crucified in the city during one of these Passover celebrations. He and his disciples ate a meal together on the eve of his death and of the Passover (John 13:1). Like the blood of the lamb which saved the Jewish people from destruction in Egypt, his blood, as the ultimate Passover sacrifice, redeems us from the power of sin and death.

## **Pentecost Feast Of Weeks/Feast Of Harvest/Shavout**

References to Pentecost in the Bible include Exodus 23:16; 34:22; Leviticus 23:15-21; Numbers 28:26-31; Deuteronomy 16:9-12 and 2 Chronicles 8:13. This feast was observed on the sixth day of the third month (Sivan) on the 50th day after the offering of the barley sheaf at the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Since Pentecost fell on the 50th day after the Sabbath of the Passover, it was always on the first day of the week. Like Passover, it included a holy convocation with the usual restriction on manual labor.

Numbers 28:26-31 describes the number and nature of offerings and Deuteronomy 16:9-12 describes those who were to be invited to this feast. They include servants, sons and daughters, Levites, the fatherless, the widow, and the stranger or foreigner. Israelites were to be reminded of their bondage in Egypt on that day. Pentecost was also originally a harvest festival, celebrating the conclusion of the spring grain harvest. Grain was planted in Palestine, as in other Mediterranean countries, in the fall, allowed to grow during the winter and harvested in the spring. Pentecost is significant to Christians because it was the day in which the Holy Spirit was poured out, signifying the beginning of the Lord’s church (Acts 2:1-47).

## **Feast Of Trumpets/New Year’s Day/ Rosh Hashanah**

This feast commemorated the beginning of the civil or commercial year for the Jews. It was celebrated on the first day of the seventh month (Tishri or Ethanim). This was



the beginning of the autumn equinox and was a special day because of the symbolical meaning of the seventh or sabbatical month in which the great feasts of the Day of Atonement and Tabernacles occurred. Josephus and many other Jewish historians believe that the Jews had kept the distinction between the civil and the sacred years since the time of Moses. The festival is mentioned in Leviticus 23:24-25 and Numbers 29:1-6. The Feast of Trumpets was introduced with the blowing of trumpets in Jerusalem all day long, festive burnt offerings, and the halt of labor.

### **Day Of Atonement/Yom Kippur**

This was the highest and holiest day of the Jewish year. It was held on the tenth day of the seventh month. The Day of Atonement was not a feast day; it was a solemn, holy fast day accompanied by elaborate ritual (Lev. 16:1-34; Heb. 10:1-10). On this day the nation of Israel sought atonement for its sins (Lev. 23:26-32; 16:29; Num. 29:7) and all men would stand cleansed of their sins before God (Lev. 16:30). This was the only fasting period required by the Law (Lev. 16:29; 23:31). The Day of Atonement was a recognition of man's inability to make an atonement for his sins.

The high priest who officiated on this day first sanctified himself by taking a ceremonial bath and putting on white garments (Lev. 16:4). Then he had to make atonement for himself and other priests by sacrificing a bullock (Num. 29:8). God dwelt on the mercy seat in the temple, but no person could approach it except through the mediation of the high priest, who offered the blood of sacrifice.

After sacrificing a bullock, the high priest chose a goat for a sin offering and sanctified it. He then sprinkled its blood on and around the mercy seat (Lev. 16:12, 14-15). Finally the scapegoat bearing the sins of the people was sent into the wilderness (Lev. 16:20-22). This scapegoat symbolized the pardon for sin brought through the sacrifice. Jewish people today continue to observe Yom Kippur as a holy fast day.

### **Feast Of Tabernacles/Feast Of Booths/Feast Of Ingathering/Sukkoth**

The feast of Booths or Tabernacles was the most popular festival with the people. It is referenced in Exodus 23:16; 34:22; Leviticus 23:33-36; 39-43; Numbers 29:12-40; Deuteronomy 16:13-16; Ezra 3:4 and Zechariah 14:16, 18-19. It began on the fifteenth day of the seventh month and lasted for eight days. The first and eighth days included a holy convocation to the Lord and no work was done on those days.

This feast commemorated the wandering of Israel in the wilderness. The Israelites were commanded to live in booths made of palm and willow trees during the festival to commemorate their period of wilderness wandering when they lived in temporary shelters. The feast was also

accompanied by extensive animal sacrifices.

The observance of Tabernacles in New Testament times was quite an event. It included a procession of the people carrying palm, willow, citron, and myrtle branches, which were waved aloft during the daily singing of the Hallel (Pss. 113-118) as an expression of joy. Each morning of the period of the feast priests brought water from the fountain of Siloam and poured it out as a libation on the altar. On the last day the priests marched around the altar seven times, praying for rain during the ensuing rainy season. Four large menorahs were set up around the temple courts and kept burning each night. Dancing and pipe-playing lasted most of the night. The Levites chanted the Psalms of Ascent (120-134), one for each of the steps between the court of Israel and the court of women. The customs at the feast (John 7:2, 14) provide the background for Jesus' statements, "If anyone thirst, let him come to me and drink" (John 7:37) and "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12). The cycle of Torah readings in the synagogue began at Tabernacles.

### **Feast Of Dedication/Feast Of Lights/Hanukkah**

This feast is mentioned only once in the Bible in John 10:22. This feast has been the most popular of the postbiblical feasts in Judaism. It was developed in the era of the Maccabees and celebrated the cleansing and rededication of the temple after its desecration by Antiochus Epiphanes. The feast of Dedication is observed on the 25th day of the ninth month (Chislev) and lasts for eight days. The name feast of Lights appears in Josephus (*Ant.* 12.7.7 [325]) and is associated with the ceremonial lighting of eight lamps, an additional one on each day of the feast. This practice is derived from the legend that only one cruse of oil was found when the Jews reoccupied the temple, but it miraculously lasted for seven days so the lamp in the temple was kept burning until a new supply of oil could be consecrated. Since this feast, commonly now known as Hanukkah, occurs so close to Christmas, it has acquired for the Jews a comparable social significance including the custom of exchanging gifts and greeting cards.

### **Feast Of Purim/Feast Of Lots**

The feast of Purim is only mentioned in Esther 3:7; 9:24, 26, 28-29, 31-32. This feast commemorates the deliverance of the Jewish people from destruction by an evil schemer named Haman during the days of their captivity by the Babylonians and Persians. It took its name from the Hebrew word *purim*, meaning "lots" because Haman cast lots to determine when he would carry out his plan against the Jews.

The feast of Purim took place on the 14th and 15th days of the twelfth month (Adar), and during its celebration the book of Esther is read as a reminder of their deliverance. Purim, which is a very joyous ceremony, is accompanied with the giving of gifts and much celebration.

*continued bottom of next page*

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# Preachers Are Not Immune to the Pitfalls of Life!

William C. Sexton

Preachers, elders, and Christians in general are *not immune* to the common pitfalls of life. That concept, it appears to this scribe, deserves some serious consideration. Over the last forty years, I've seen many fall from grace, often into disgrace for themselves, and often affected many other's lives. At this juncture, however, we'll limit our expressions to preachers!

First, men who are preachers *need* to recognize that they can all fall into Satan's devices (2 Cor. 2:11). Therefore, they need to beware, prayerfully consider situations in which we may be "overcome" in faults (Gal. 6:1ff).

Secondly, people (members in particular) need to recognize that preachers are human beings, with all the potential for evil as everyone else has. One is not to expect them to be iron horses, above temptation, etc.

Thirdly, preachers need to recognize that we are watched by many. Consider the apostle's instruction to Timothy: "Be thou an example of the believers" (1 Tim. 4:12). A preacher's family is often under a greater scrutiny than

others, and some appreciate that and others resent it! Both the wife and the children are expected to live on a higher moral plane than others! How do you evaluate that? I hope we see it as a good thing; rather than a negative element.

I remember reading some writings of the late brother C.R. Nichol, to the effect that preachers at one time could ride trains free. Once, he occupied a seat with a reporter, and in conversation, he was critical of reporters being harder (more critical) of preachers than on other people. They will write a preacher up for things that other people engage in and escape the attention of the newspaper. The reporter said something that is significant: "You should be appreciative of that! When the average person commits such an act, it isn't newsworthy! When a preacher commits such, it is *news*! There is a higher expectation of preachers!"

1. Preachers do neglect their families! I remember reading about one of the highly respected preachers of long ago, who was known for his soundness and effective preaching. But reading about his life, I have said and heard others say: "He was a great preacher, but he sure was not a *family*

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## Conclusion

As was said in the beginning, the Bible student can gain a greater perspective of the events surrounding the life of Christ and the work of the apostles by studying the Jewish feasts and festivals. The Jews had a rich heritage of celebrations to God which marked the beginning or the end of the agricultural year or commemorated historic events in the Jewish nation. When we observe the solemn but joyous and thankful nature in which the Jews celebrated, perhaps we can learn principles for our own worship to God.

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**I regret that I didn't spend more time with my children as they were growing up. That time passes and can *never* be regained. I've found myself trying to give my grandchildren the attention I didn't give my son and daughters!**

*man*. He sure did neglect his family!" A preacher's wife was expressing to my wife once that she told her husband: "Why don't you come home and take care of your 'home work.'"

2. Often, perhaps *pride*, stands in the way: a preacher won't admit that he can be tempted as other men! An older, more experienced, man told me of his conversation with a younger preacher, suggesting that he (the younger preacher) be careful and not get too close to those of the opposite sex. The younger man was offended, saying, "Why, I'm a Christian, you don't need to warn me about that." I've made it a practice, *not* to visit a woman alone! Even, if I knock on an elder's door, and his wife is home alone, I'll stay outside.

Once I had a young lady whom I had baptized recently, come to see me at my home, and I was there alone. She was innocent, studious, wanting to find the answer to some Bible questions. I told her we would sit on the porch. We sat there and studied. Years later she said she told her mother, that I didn't invite her into the house. She thought that was strange. Her mother said: "Don't you see why he wouldn't?" Maturity, helped her to see the prudence of that, but at the time she didn't understand *why*! She thought I was impolite, or something.

How many preachers have we known who lost their dignity, spiritual standing with God, hurt a congregation as well as their family by being imprudent in getting involved with a person they are studying the Bible with! Did they start out to get involved? I don't think most of them did. But they were unwise, failing to understand that the sexual drive can be stimulated and carry one out of control, so *beware*! Flee fornication (1 Cor. 6:18)!

3. It's easy to get so many things going that we neglect our families. I recall a time when I was holding down a 48-hour a week job, taking sixteen hours of college, and driving sometimes a hundred miles to preach each Sunday. From one perspective, I accomplished more in that time period than any others, because I had to meet deadlines! On

the other land, looking back, listening to my wife, I see that I could have very easily lost my family (had they not been of the character to continue to be faithful, even though I was spending little time with them). Thank God they still love me, and "respect" me for the most part, I believe. However, I regret that I didn't spend more time with my children as they were growing up. That time passes and can *never* be regained. I've found myself trying to give my grandchildren the attention I didn't give my son and daughters!

4. Scheduling is a problem. I remember a preacher (O.C. Birdwell) suggesting to me early in my preaching experience (as I was about to embark upon the "full-time" preaching course) that a preacher needs to take some time off — say a Monday or some certain day of the week and be at home with the family. I can attest to the wisdom in following that advise. However, it's *not* easy to do!

I was never one to spend as much time on vacation as I could (although we did occasionally go on a few day's trip — to parks, visiting relatives, sight-seeing, etc). A preacher needs some change-of-pace activities; his family needs to be attended to, also. I have known preachers who scheduled their work so tightly, that they couldn't go for lunch or alter their time slots for hardly anything. I have never been that tightly scheduled. I try to be flexible. But, there is so much time that one *has* to spend studying, preparing, etc. even if it is late at night, or whenever one chooses. So, get started early, but make yourself available to changing circumstances, etc.

Remember that we are *not* immune to the *common* pitfalls of men! Thanks for allowing me this time in your life!

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# Caesarea

Mike Willis

The New Testament speaks of two Caesarea's. Caesarea Maritima is Caesarea along the coast; Caesarea Philippi is in the Golan Heights, about twenty miles north of the Sea of Galilee. This article discusses Caesarea along the coast.

Caesarea was formerly known as Strato's Tower, a name derived from Abdashtart, the Sidonian king. Strato is the Greek form of the name borne by three Sidonian kings in the fourth century B.C. Caesar Augustus gave Strato's Tower to Herod the Great early in his reign. Herod changed the name to Caesarea in honor of his benefactor. Herod the Great felt especially indebted to Octavian since he had taken the wrong side in Octavian's war with Mark Anthony. After Octavian defeated Anthony at Actium in 31 B.C., Herod was allowed to continue to rule. To express his gratitude to Caesar, Herod changed the name of Strato's Tower to Caesarea in honor of Caesar Augustus (Octavian). He rebuilt the city, fashioning it like major Roman cities.

One of the great cities of the ancient world, Caesarea was built in 12 years (22-10 B.C.) by Herod the Great in an attempt to equal the splendor and pomp of Athens. Caesarea soon became the largest city in Judea, a chief port, and the Roman administrative capital of Judea for almost

600 hundreds years.

Herod's massive construction at Caesarea is impressive. He built a Roman theater (seated 4,000), amphitheater, aqueduct (to bring fresh water to Caesarea from Shuni), and a harbor that gave ships protection from the winds and waves. In building this harbor, Herod used underwater cement to build a breaker to protect the ships. The wooden forms were filled with rubble held together by underwater mortar made of lime combined with *possolana*, a volcanic ash from central Italy. The harbour was destroyed by an earthquake in A.D. 130.

The massacre of 20,000 Jews at Caesarea led to the First Jewish War (66-70 A.D.) and the eventual destruction of Jerusalem. The desecration of the Jewish synagogue at Caesarea was one of the contributory causes of the First Revolt.

In 306, the emperor Maximinus had Christians executed before him in the amphitheater that Herod had built. After the Crusades, Caesarea faded from history. Excavations after WWII located the city once more and a program of restoration was started. As an archaeological site it is dramatic, extensive, and accessible. Its ruins cover over 8000 acres (Schoville, *Biblical Archaeology in Focus* 337). Today one sees an area of superimposed walled cities — Herodian, Roman, and Byzantine — overlaid in part by the Gothic remains of a medieval Crusader fortress town. The ruins of a beach side aqueduct remain impressive.

Here are some archaeological remains at Caesarea:

1. Major buildings:
  - a. Temple to Augustus.
  - b. Theater.
  - c. Amphitheater.
  - d. Hippodrome which would seat 20,000 dating to the days of Hadrian (A.D. 130).

An extraordinary find in 1961 was a stone that bore the three-line inscription: "Tiberius (the Roman emperor of the period)/ Pontius Pilate/Prefect of Judea."

- Philip preached there (Acts 8:40; 21:8).
- Paul sailed from Caesarea on his way to Tarsus (Acts 9:30).
- Cornelius, the first Gentile convert, was from Caesarea (Acts 10:1).
- Herod Agrippa I, the grandson of Herod the Great who killed James, resided here. He was the one who was stricken of worms and died (Acts 12:20-23).
- Paul landed in Caesarea after his second missionary journey (Acts 18:22).
- Paul was on trial before Felix there (Acts 23:23-33).
- Paul sailed from here on his way to Rome for trial (Acts 25:11).

Caesarea was also important in church history. Origen taught here. His *Hexapla* (6 translation Bible) was destroyed when the Muslims conquered the city. Eusebius wrote his *Ecclesiastical History* here.

From the Theater one can also see ruins of Herod's palace.

e. Synagogue. "In 1962 excavations at a Caesarean synagogue revealed part of a list of the twenty-four courses into which the Jerusalem priesthood was divided" (Schoville 341).

2. Two aqueducts were built to bring fresh water from 10 miles distant to the city.

3. Of particular interest is an archaeological find at Caesarea which was the first to mention the procurator Pontius

Two aqueducts were built in Caesarea to bring water 10 miles distant to the city.

Pilate who had his residence there. "In 1961 an extraordinary find was a stone that bore the three-line inscription: *Tiberieum/ [Pon]tius Pilatus/ [Praef]lectus Iuda[ae]* — 'Tiberius [the Roman emperor of the period]/Pontius Pilate/Prefect of Judea.' This is the first archaeological evidence of Pilate, under whom Jesus was crucified. . ." (Schoville 341). A replica of the stone is at the theater, the original is in the Israel Museum.

Important Bible events that happened at Caesarea:

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# Reading, Writing and Reflecting

Steve Willis

## Oldest Extra-Biblical Reference to Solomon's Temple

Late last year, an inscription in paleo-Hebrew was announced in *Biblical Archaeology Review* (November/December). It was on an ostrakon, a broken piece of pottery with writing on it. Some doubted its veracity since it appeared on the antiquities market instead of in an archaeological site.

After testing confirmed its antiquity, the inscription was reported to be the oldest extra-Biblical reference to Solomon's temple. It was a temple receipt for three shekels payment, paid by order of a king "to the house of Yahweh" from "the hand of [Z]echaryahu." The full translation given follows:

Pursuant to the order of Ashyahu the king to give by the hand of [Z]echaryahu silver of Tarshish to the House (or Temple) of Yahweh Three shekels.

"BYT YHWH" (Beit Yahweh, House of Yahweh) had been reconstructed on an ivory pomegranate that was thought to have served as the head of a priestly scepter in Solomon's Temple. Since only a part of "YHWH" actually appear on the pomegranate, some scholars suggested "Asherah," the pagan female deity might be the reading. On the newly published ostrakon "YHWH" is "clearly present and easily readable. . . ."

It has been suggested that "Ashyahu" may be one of the alternate names for Yoash (Joash) or Jehoash (Jehoash). They are known to have existed from 835 to 796 B.C. in the case of Joash, king of Judah, and 803 to 787 B.C. for Jehoash, king of Israel. The "-yahu" suffix represents a shorter version of God's name appended to the king's name. We see this in the "-iah" endings in other names, such as "Zecharyahu" (Zechariah) in the third line.

This is a significant find for reasons other than just being

the oldest reference to the "house of the Lord." The way it was written lends credence to another ancient reference that had been under question: "the house of David." In Tel Dan, an excavator and epigrapher found an inscription that he read as "the house [or dynasty] of David." Since some have doubted the existence of David, not regarding the Bible's accounts, they had to doubt that inscription as well because no word divider was present between "House" and "David." The "House of Yahweh" also has no word divider. As it is obvious that "Beit Yahweh" refers to the "House of Yahweh," so must "Beit David" refer to the "House of David."

## A Widow's Plea

The same issue of *Biblical Archaeology Review* reported another ostrakon, which was a widow's plea for justice. Here is the English translation by P. Kyle McCarter, Jr.:

May Yahweh bless you in peace.  
And now let my lord, the [king] near your maidservant.  
[ ] Dead is my husband with no children.  
And may your hand be with me, and may you give into the hand of your maidservant the estate which you promised to Amasyahu. And as for the wheat field which is in Na'amah, you gave it to his brother.

Certainly, this reminds us of the parable of the widow and the unjust king who feared not God nor men, that we should pray and not lose heart found in Luke 18:1-8. Her plea was simply, "Give me legal protection from my opponent" (v. 3, NASB). However, remember that she kept coming before him with her plea until he finally answered her plea lest she wear him out (v. 5). The parable was that we likewise, without losing heart, should petition our just Father in heaven to hear our requests.

The ostrakon indicates that since the dead husband had no children, his land went to his brother, as per Numbers 27:8-11. The widow was requesting, not by legal right, but perhaps by fairness, that she be able to keep the land.

One wonders if she kept coming back until she got her request.

### Lutheranism Comes to Rome

In the fifteenth century, Martin Luther broke from the Roman Catholic Church over his view of “justification by faith” which has been understood ever since as “By grace alone; through faith alone” by Luther’s followers. By this he meant that salvation is entirely out of human hands; “works” has nothing to do with it in his view. This got him excommunicated from the Roman Catholic Church and began what is called the “Reformation.”

The July 6, 1998 issue of *Time* reported on a statement published with Vatican approval, according to Edward “Cardinal” Cassidy. Though there were some “caveats” to the approval, it was a “. . . Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, toward which Catholics and Lutheran theologians have been toiling since 1967.

Together we confess: By grace alone, in faith in Christ’s saving work and not because of any merit on our part, we are accepted by God and receive the Holy Spirit, who renews our hearts while equipping and calling us to good works (International Edition of *Time* 46).

The Catholics refuse to give up some cooperative agency between God and man giving penance or charity as examples. “The Joint Declaration,” says emeritus Yale theologian, George Linbeck, who helped draft earlier efforts, “reflects the conclusion that Catholicism never denied justification through grace; it was simply more focused on the human drama of the transformed sinner than on the exclusively divine origin of his or her transformation.”

This is an interesting move on the part of the Roman Catholics. It comes at a time when some “Protestants” are denying “faith only” as a part of biblical teaching. David Bercot has written, “If there’s any single doctrine that we would expect to find the faithful associates of the apostles teaching, it’s the doctrine of salvation by faith alone. After all, that is *the* cornerstone doctrine of the Reformation. In fact, we frequently say that those who don’t hold this doctrine aren’t really Christians” (*Will The Real Heretics Please Stand Up* 57.) Bercot continued to show from Scripture and from early writings that “faith only” is the “real heretical” position — denied by the early church. “Our problem is that Augustine, Luther, and other Western theologians [and may we *now* add the Roman Catholics? — SPW] have convinced us that there’s an irreconcilable conflict between salvation based on grace and salvation conditioned on works or obedience” (62). “The early Christian doctrine of salvation gave equal weight to both” (64).

It looks like the Lutherans may finally be “reforming” the Roman Catholic Church, but not in the right direction

of Scripture.

### What’s Your Sign? Ophiuchus?

Occasionally someone will ask you, “What’s Your Sign?” trying to be friendly. They are asking about your “astrological” sign — not to be confused with “astronomical.” When someone answers, “Aries,” what they mean is that they were born when the sun was in front of the Aries star constellation. Well, maybe they *used* to be!

As the Earth moves in orbit around the sun, the pole wobbles a bit, so that the constellations no longer appear during the same time of year. They have drifted westward. So the old monthly designations for each of the Zodiac signs no longer correspond, and there has not been an update by astrologers to reflect this change.

In addition to that, the Zodiac signs are not the same equal size, so there really is no way of having an evenly divided year to fit the “12 Zodiac signs.” When astronomers faced this problem 70 years ago, they redrew the “Zodiac” to come up with equidistant spacing. However, they also came up with a 13th Zodiac sign: Ophiuchus, “the serpent bearer,” which is visible in the Summer sky (above and between Sagittarius and Scorpio).

Here are the present dates for the signs according to the sun’s position, but the dates actually fluctuate by a day from year to year:

- Capricornus: January 19 to February 15
- Aquarius: February 16 to March 11
- Pisces: March 12 to April 18
- Aries: April 19 to May 13
- Taurus: May 14 to June 19
- Gemini: June 20 to July 20
- Cancer: July 21 to August 9
- Leo: August 10 to September 15
- Virgo: September 16 to October 30
- Libra: October 31 to November 22
- Scorpius: November 23 to November 29
- Ophiuchus: November 30 to December 17
- Sagittarius: December 18 to January 18

I don’t include these so you’ll be a *better* astrologer. We should *not* trust in such things as astrology (see the condemnation to Israel in Deut. 18:9-13 and Isa. 47:13-14). I present them here so you may *not* trust in them when you see them in the newspaper or shopping lines. Perhaps you can show them to a friend as well.

If you have access to a computer and the Internet, you can see more at this web site: <http://www.griffithobs.org/SkyOphiuchus.html>.

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# Preacher On The Run!

Roger L. Taylor

I have never written an article for *Truth Magazine* before. I've never thought that I was good enough to do so with my limited ability as a writer. I've been a member of the Lord's church and fellow laborer with God in the preaching and teaching of the gospel of Christ for 30 years. *Truth Magazine* has been a blessing for me over the years. For 30 years I have preached and taught the gospel in the area that I presently live. I have been a member of a small congregation for 18 years. *Truth Magazine* has been an excellent aid and tool for me in learning the will of God. Of course an open Bible has been the final say so on religious matters. It is a sad thing though when brethren will not even read a religious paper such as *Truth Magazine* because I believe they can't take the truth on certain of their pet sins. I guess they have not read 2 Timothy 2:2 lately. They seem to read everything else.

Recently in *Truth Magazine* I read brother Fultz's article dated July 16, 1998 on "Quarreling Brethren." That particular article mirrored my experience as a teacher and preacher of the gospel. The wide range of issues he struggled with in his early years were also a time of confusion for me. But through reading *Truth Magazine* and checking the Scriptures, line upon line and precept upon precept, I came to see those issues fall into place and for me were resolved. I don't mind to say at this point, faithful brethren such as Foy E. Wallace, Jr. and Roy E. Cogdill and all the writers of *Truth Magazine* played an important part in my resolving these issues.

Brethren, over the years I have taught what I thought and understood to be the truth on such issues as divorce and remarriage, dancing, wearing of shorts, social drinking, mixed swimming, long hair on men, etc. I've taught what faithful writers in God's word over the years have taught concerning such matters, solely for the purpose of saving souls.

I now find myself *on the run!* The door has been shut in my face with cold calculation by brethren who are supposed to "love one another." The brethren it seems do not want

to hear sermons which deal with these issues for fear that it will drive away the young ones that are coming into the church. So the plan is to get somebody younger and one who will evade these issues and just "preach the gospel."

So today fundamental gospel obedience and such like are what people want to hear. Tell me what I need to be doing and *not* what I am *not* supposed to be doing is the cry heard today.

"Go ahead if you can squeeze in an opportunity some time to preach on these subjects," they say, "but give us a 'thou shalt not dance, and thou shalt not wear shorts, or a thou shalt not chew tobacco or be involved in mixed swimming.'" "Where is the chapter and verse?" they wail. No, brethren, you must have a "thou shalt not!" No, words such as *lasciviousness*, or *modesty* are not enough to say. We want the verse! As one can tell by this letter and my simple plainness of speech that I am somewhat rude or crude in my explanation of my present feelings as a "preacher on the run."

Yes, I am discouraged, disheartened, disenchanted, and, it seems, alone when it comes to members of the Lord's church caring whether or not a brother is cast out and cold shouldered because of this kind of preaching. Brethren, use all the tact you want, or the compassion and kindness and harmlessness as a dove you may — it won't be enough to prevent the appearing of some brethren through some tactical means of low, underhanded dealing to say in essence, "smile," you are on your way out and we will have peace and happiness here in the church with one who will just preach the gospel. Of course he will just preach the gospel, but in order to keep his job he will mention not one of the aforementioned sins. Well surely they will let some old buzzard preach every once in a while? No they won't either. Brethren, you try and change the minds of members of the church today on these subjects! The ones that run the church will not, and just not a few preachers will have enough courage and honesty to teach the truth for fear of loosing a job. Maybe it's time to start all over



# One, Yet Three

Paul K. Williams

Some of the Pentecostal groups teach error concerning the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. They teach that there is only one person in the Godhead, and that his name is Jesus. They refuse to baptize in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, but baptize in the name of Jesus only. I have a chart put out by one of those groups. It has a large number of Scriptures which say that there is *one* God. But the verses which show that the one God is made up of *three persons* are left out! Right at the beginning of Genesis there is clear indication that there is more than one person who is God. “. . . and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters” (Gen. 1:2). The Holy Spirit was working in the creation.

Then in Genesis 1:26, “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image.’” Did you ever ask yourself, “To whom was God speaking?” God was speaking to the other persons in the Godhead! Jesus is *not* the Father, and the Holy Spirit is *not* Jesus! They are separate persons. In Acts 2:34-35 Peter quotes from David, “For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: The Lord said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand, Until I make Thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet.’”

Notice two things: The Lord spoke to David’s Lord. There were two persons. The Lord was God the Father. David’s Lord was the Messiah, who was in heaven with

the Father. That was Jesus Christ.

Second — Jesus is sitting at the right hand of God the Father. He is not the Father. He is sitting at his right hand. They are *two* persons. The Holy Spirit is a person, and he is *not* Jesus. Jesus said, “I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper.” The Holy Spirit is another helper *like* Jesus, but he is *not* Jesus! And he is God! In Acts 5:3 Peter said that Ananias had lied to the *Holy Spirit*. In the next verse he said that Ananias lied to God. The Holy Spirit is God. How can it be that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are three persons, yet are one God?

It is not hard to understand. Jesus prayed for his disciples, “that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us” (John 17:21). When we understand that all disciples can be *one*, we can understand how the Father and the Son are *one*. Never does the Bible say that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are *one person*! They are *three* persons! But they are *one* because they are united in purpose and in nature. Jesus is God, the Father is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. Three persons — completely united. The *one God*!

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and build another church for those preaching the gospel (????). I can still “make tents” and support my family, but a real present danger is confronting me daily as I try to be a Christian and preach the gospel (Matt. 28:18-20). I find myself a preacher *on the run* and nowhere to go. The answer cannot be to just remain silent as a tomb as some do and watch souls slide the slippery slope to hell!

Although frustrated enough, like Jeremiah the prophet, I contemplate doing so. These few words are written in hopes my brethren who write for *Truth Magazine* might

encourage me to stand fast and from “such to turn away” that won’t listen to the whole counsel of God.

Brethren, keep writing articles, but I hope while you are doing so that you are saying the same things to those who are Christians that are there at the church where you preach and teach. *From a preacher on the run!*

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R.R. 1, Shoals, Indiana



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# Public Reading Of The Scriptures

Donnie V. Rader

I'm not sure that the public reading of the Scriptures is given the place that it had in Bible times. I wonder if it is not minimized in the mind of some today as one of the less important things we do as we assemble. Some may think that those who read Scriptures publicly are doing something "less" than those who preach or lead the singing. After all, it takes some ability to preach and some musical talent to lead singing and anyone can read the Scriptures. So, maybe Scripture reading is for those who can't lead singing.

To the contrary, in the Bible, public reading of the word of God was treated with the utmost respect.

## Examples

God's word has always been read publicly to his people. After all, it is his word and it is how he communicates his will to them.

1. Moses — Exodus 24:7: "Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, 'All that the Lord has said we will do, and be obedient.'"

2. The Priest — Deuteronomy 31:11-13. Moses gave the written law to the priest and told them to read the law every seven years. He said, "When all Israel comes to appear before the Lord your God in the place which He chooses, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing" (v. 11).

3. Joshua — Joshua 8:34. As the children of Israel gathered (half in front of Mount Ebal and half in front of Mount Gerizim), Joshua read the law that Moses gave to them. "And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessings and the cursings, according to all that is written in the Book of the Law. There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded which Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel, with the women, the little ones, and the strangers who were living among them" (vv. 34-35).

4. Ezra — Nehemiah 8:5, 8, 18; 9:3. Ezra worked with post-exile Israel trying to restore the law in their hearts. In so doing he read to them from the word of God. They stood in respect as he read for long periods.

5. Baruch — Jeremiah 36. This chapter records the reading of the scroll in the temple (vv. 1-15). "Then Baruch read from the book the words of Jeremiah in the house of the Lord, in the chamber of Gemariah the son of Shaphan the scribe, in the upper court at the entry of the New Gate of the Lord's house, in the hearing of all the people" (v. 10).

6. Jesus — Luke 4:16-19. Jesus read from Isaiah in the synagogue at Nazareth. "So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read" (v. 16).

7. The Jews — Acts 13:27. It was the practice of the Jews to read from the Old Testament Scriptures every Sabbath day in the synagogue.

8. The Thessalonians — 1 Thessalonians 5:27. When Paul concluded his letter to the Thessalonians, he told them to read his letter to all the brethren.

Thus, we conclude that there has always been a place for the public reading of the will of God.

## Points To Consider

1. *It is important.* The public reading of the Scriptures is very important. It is as important as prayer. Prayer is man talking to God. Through the reading of the Scriptures, God talks to man. That's important!

The reading of God's word was thought to be so important that the people stood when Ezra opened the book (Neh. 8:5).

Let's not minimize Scripture reading whether we are the reader or the listener.

2. *Prepare.* Those who are assigned to read the Scriptures should think of themselves as privileged. If you were asked to be the one to read a letter that the President sent to the local church, would you be honored? How about being asked to be the one to read what God, the creator, has written to us?

That being the case, the reader should be well prepared as the song leader, preacher, and class teacher should be. If it is worth doing, it is worth doing it well. Read over the verses more than once to make sure you can read them well. Make sure you know how to pronounce the words. Don't forget how that Ezra read "distinctly" to the people (Neh. 8:8). Speak out loud and clear; else the listener can't hear.

3. *The listeners should listen.* I wonder if we don't think that the "Scripture reading" is just good "space filler" during our services. Many of us don't even bother to follow

along.

We must listen with respect. Remember, those in Ezra's day stood when he read from the law. *I don't think that's a bad idea for us today.* **Literally!** The reading of the Scriptures ought to be given great reverence.

Our listening should accomplish more than showing a little respect. In the case where the Priests were reading the law it was for the effect it would have on God's people:

Gather the people together, men and women and little ones, and the stranger who is within your gates, that they may hear and that they may learn to fear the Lord your God and carefully observe all the words of this law (Deut. 31:12).

Public reading of the Scriptures has an important place and purpose. Let's lift our attitude and practice to the level that we have described.

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## Are You More Than What You Have Become?

Richard Boone

A few months ago I was watching Walt Disney's *Lion King* one night with my two daughters. In this movie the main character, Simba, is searching for his identity and place in the "circle of life" as the future king of his pride. In one scene he makes contact with his dead father, King Mufasa, through the sorcery of the sage baboon Rafiki. During that seance Mufasa said, "Simba, you are more than what I have become!" I had heard that line several times, but this time it hit me like a ton of bricks. The moral? Become what you are capable of being rather than settling for what you are! How many times do we as Christians settle for what we are rather than becoming what we can? Are you more than what you have become . . .

*As a personal disciple of the Lord?* Is your personal relationship (scripturally defined) with Jesus as it ought to be, or are desires and tangles of life hindering your service (cf. Mark 10:17-22)?

*As a student then teacher of the Bible?* Compared to where you were in your understanding of God's word a year ago, how far are you progressing in 1998? This is a vital part of strengthening and maintaining your personal relationship with Jesus (1 Pet. 2:2). We must not, however, keep what we learn to ourselves; we must

also share it with others (2 Tim. 2:2; Matt. 10:1; Acts 3:6-20:35).

*As an active member of a faithful local church?* Each member of a local church impacts the other members who comprise a local church (Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:25). We must do all we can to insure that our impact is positive, not a hindrance to a local work.

*As a contributing family member?* Each member in the fleshly family has specific roles (Eph. 5:22-6:4). Are you, as a spouse, parent or child, being what you can and should be, or are you settling for what you are?

*As a good citizen in your community?* We are to be good citizens, thus good influences on those around us (Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:14-17). How well does your light shine in your community? Are you hiding it under a bushel or keeping it on the lampstand God gave you?

For the benefit of all, *are you more than what you have become?*

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# Did Your Baptism Benefit You?

Bobby Witherington

With the exception of the so-called “Christian Scientists” and the Quakers, virtually every religious denomination requires something they call “baptism” in order for a person to become a member thereof. I say “something they call ‘baptism’” because the word “baptism” (Gk. *baptisma*) is defined as “the process of immersion, submersion, and emergence” (*Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, by W.E. Vine). The word “baptize” (Gk. *baptizo*), even before being given its religious connotation by New Testament writers, “was used among the Greeks to signify the dyeing of a garment, or the drawing of water by dipping a vessel into another, etc.” (*Ibid.*). Hence, baptism, by definition, denotes “immersion, submersion, and emergence.” That being the case, it should be evident that sprinkling and pouring do not constitute Bible baptism. Regardless of what it may have been called, a person who has merely had some water sprinkled or poured on him has not been baptized! Calling sprinkling “baptism” no more makes sprinkling baptism than calling a cow a “pig” makes the cow a pig!

However, it is possible for a sincere person to be baptized (immersed) and still be no better off in the sight of God. While I firmly affirm the necessity of baptism in order for an accountable person to be saved, I deny that baptism alone will save anyone. This fact is substantiated simply by reading Acts 19:1-5 which cites the example of some twelve men, who had formerly received “John’s baptism,” having to be baptized again — this time “in the name of the Lord Jesus.” The baptism they had received (evidently after “John’s baptism” had gone out of effect) had not benefited them. Yes, even in the first century some people had to be baptized again for the simple reason that their former baptism did not accomplish its objective.

**For years, false teachers  
have denied the necessity  
of baptism, contending that  
baptism is a work, that we  
are saved “by grace  
through faith,” and that  
salvation is “not of works”  
(cf. Eph. 2:8, 9).**

## **Baptism Is Invalid When**

*1. It involves the wrong subject.* Every biblical example of a person being baptized was one which involved a responsible individual. There is not one case of infant baptism recorded in all the Bible! Bible baptism is “for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38), but infants are not sinners (Matt. 18:3; 19:14). Bible baptism is preceded by faith (Mark 16:16), repentance (Acts 2:38), and confession (Acts 8:37, 38), but infants are capable of doing neither.

*2. It is carried out by the wrong authority.* Now-a-days we hear preachers affirm that “there are two ordinances of the church — baptism and the Lord’s Supper.” An ordinance is “an authoritative rule; an order, decree, or law . . .” (Funk and Wagnalls *New Practical Dictionary*). However, the church has no authority to issue any rule, order, decree, or law. Jesus Christ has “all authority” (Matt. 28:18), which leaves no authority for the church, the Pope, or any man-ordained ecclesiastical body. Hence, if one is baptized simply because some church or denominational body has so decreed, then, from the standpoint of the hereafter, his baptism availed him nothing!

*3. It is designed to put one into the wrong church.* The Lord’s church “is his body” (Eph. 1:23), and the Bible teaches that we are “baptized into one body” (1 Cor. 12:13). However, the “one body,” or church, is as different from a human denomination as Castro is from Thomas Jefferson. Surely any church which wears the wrong name, was founded by the wrong person, which began at the wrong time, has a different creed, is organized differently, and has a different program of work from the church described in the Bible, cannot be the church described in the Bible! What spiritual or heavenly benefit can be obtained by being baptized into that which

our “heavenly Father has not planted,” and which in that last day will be “uprooted” (Matt. 15:13)?

4. *It is preceded by the wrong confession.* Multitudes have made the confession, “I believe that God for Christ’s sake has pardoned me of my sins,” and then upon that confession were then baptized. In the first place, in the Bible (which is the only creed book our Lord allows us to follow) one never reads of a person making such a confession. We do, however, read of the Eunuch confessing “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God,” and then being immediately baptized (Acts 8:37, 38). In the second place, if baptism is “for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38), then a person who, before being baptized, confesses, saying “I believe that God for Christ’s sake has pardoned me of my sins,” is confessing a lie. Notwithstanding how sincere a person may be when he makes that confession, we ask, can true baptism be based upon a confession which is untrue?

5. *It is entered into with the wrong understanding of its very purpose.* Multitudes have been baptized with the belief that “baptism is an outward sign of an inward grace” — the “inward grace” signifying the fact that they were already saved (at the point of faith), and thus their baptism served as a public attestation of a salvation experienced before baptism. The only thing wrong with this understanding is the fact that it is false; it is a baptism based upon a misunderstanding of the very purpose of baptism. Please answer the following questions: If “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16), then what is the state of the believer who has not been baptized? If baptism is “for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38), then have the sins of one who has not yet been baptized been remitted? If one is “baptized into Christ” (Gal. 3:27), then is he “in Christ” before he is baptized? If “salvation . . . is in Christ” (2 Tim. 2:10), then is one who is out of Christ saved?

6. *It is entered into after having gotten permission from the wrong source.* Legion are the ones who have “gone forward,” claiming to have “accepted Jesus as my personal Savior,” stated their “experience of grace,” but whose candidacy for baptism was still based upon the vote of the members of that denomination! On the one hand, the Bible is completely silent about such a practice. And on the other hand, what human being has the right to vote on whether or not you can do what the Lord has commanded (cf. Matt. 28:18, 19; Mark 16:16; Acts 10:48)?

7. *It is entered into with the wrong understanding concerning who is really doing the work accomplished in baptism.* For years, false teachers have denied the necessity of baptism, contending that baptism is a work, that we are saved “by grace through faith,” and that salvation is “not of works” (cf. Eph. 2:8, 9). It is true that we could not be saved apart from the grace of God. In like manner,

no person could ever do enough work to earn salvation! But that misses the point of the whole discussion. God is the One against whom we have sinned (Gen. 39:9); hence, he is the One who pardons our iniquities (Isa. 55:6, 7). But the pardon he provides is based upon our compliance with his conditions. One condition he has stipulated for this the Gospel Age is baptism (Mark 16:16). When all is said and done, the person being baptized is not performing a work. But if the one being baptized has been properly taught, he, in the process of being baptized, is manifesting his “faith in the working of God,” for it is God who then forgives the person of “all transgression” (Col. 2:12, 13), and it is God who then adopts this person into his family (Gal. 3:26- 4:6).

### Conclusion

If obedience is “from the heart” (Rom. 6:17, 18), and if the “heart” includes the mind, the will, and the intellect (Matt. 13:15; Rom. 10:10; 2 Cor. 9:7), then it is impossible for one to be taught wrong, and then be baptized right! When all is said and done, a person who is scripturally baptized is a correctly taught (Matt. 28:19), penitent (Acts 2:38) believer (Mark 16:16), who has confessed his faith in Jesus as “the Son of God” (Acts 8:37), who came “unto” the water, went “down into” the water, and came “up out of the water” (Acts 8:35-38) wherein he was “buried with Christ,” and from which he was raised “to walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:3, 4). Through this process, he entered “into Christ” (Gal. 3:27), into his “one body” (1 Cor. 12:13), or church, to which he was “added” upon his obedience to the true gospel of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:41, 47).

Incidentally, we want to add this concluding thought. Many people, who were immersed for all the wrong reasons many years ago, later learn the true meaning and significance of baptism. They then predicate the purpose of their past tense baptism, upon their present tense information, and thereby assume that all is well with their souls. This is analogous to the builder who erected a structure many years ago while inadvertently using defective building material, and then years later he learns about the materials he should have used, but didn’t. If that builder concludes that the building is a quality building because he now knows about quality building materials, he may be likened to the person who justifies his former unscriptural baptism upon the basis that he now knows the truth regarding the purpose of baptism! In the material world some things cannot be repaired; they must be re-made. The same is true in the spiritual realm. Consider ye well!

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# “Well, It Seems Right To Me!”

Alexander Caldwell

## Introduction

A. This is a statement that is used by many people to justify their religious beliefs: “Well, it seems right to me, and that is all that’s important.”

B. But can you truthfully say that your religious practices are scriptural? (Prov. 14:12; Isa. 55:8; Jer. 10:23).

C. We cannot guide ourselves, we must look to God for direction in our lives.

D. God’s way is the right way and the only way that brings salvation (1 Cor. 1:18; John 14:6).

## Examples

A. To Eve — it “seemed right” that the fruit was good to eat (Gen. 3).

B. To Cain — it “seemed right” that his vegetable sacrifice was just as good as the animal sacrifice Abel brought (Gen. 4).

C. To Nadab and Abihu — it “seemed right” to offer that strange fire before God (Lev. 10:1-2).

D. To King Saul — it “seemed right” to spare the best of the animals to bring back sacrifices to God (1 Sam. 15:22).

E. To Naaman — it “seemed right” that other rivers were just as good as the Jordan (2 Kings 5:1-13).

Point: What seemed right in most of these cases brought nothing but tragedy. Why? Because (they) it opposed God’s will (Rom. 10:1-3). In the world today, there are many things that “seem right” to good and honest, religious people, but they are not.

### I. “The Good Moral Man” Will Be Saved.

A. No one in their right mind would argue that the immoral man will be saved.

1. 1 Corinthians 6:9-19.
2. Homosexuals, liars, stealers, fornicators . . .
3. Morality is good, but it will not save!
4. There are a lot of good people in the world.

B. That is why Christ came. He died on the cross and shed his blood so that we might be forgiven.

1. Our morality, no matter how good, could never

gain forgiveness (Matt. 26:28; Heb. 9:22).

2. If morality was enough, there would have been no need for God to send his Son to this world!

3. John 3:16; 14:6; Acts 4:12.

4. All spiritual blessings are in Christ (Eph. 1:3).

5. Morality without Christ can never offer any spiritual blessing.

6. Cornelius was a good man, but in order to be saved, he had to hear and obey the Gospel (Acts 10:33; 15; 11:14).

### II. “One Church is as Good as Another.”

A. Most religious people believe this statement because it “seems right.”

1. When you look around and see all the different denominations and sincere people in them, you might be tempted to think this too.

2. But that idea ignores what the Bible says (Matt. 16:18).

3. The Lord adds the saved to his church (Acts 2:47).

4. The Lord purchased the church with his own blood (Acts 20:28; Heb. 9:22; Eph. 5:25).

5. That church is his bride (Eph. 5:22-32).

6. His body (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18).

7. His kingdom (Col. 1:13-14).

Point: All of these Scriptures show the value of the Lord’s church.

B. If one compares churches which were built by men, he may be right to assume that one is as good as another.

1. But no church built by man can compare with the church which Jesus built.

2. Denominationalism assumes that Christ’s church is not important.

3. Division is sinful (John 17:20-21; 1 Cor. 1:10-13; Eph. 4:3-6).

4. One church is as good as another is nothing but false teaching.

III. "We Are Saved by Faith Only."

- A. A favorite text a lot of people use is Eph. 2:8-9.  
1. If we are saved, it will be by God's grace: we do not deserve it, but God offers us complete forgiveness in Christ.  
2. Now that is grace (Heb. 2:9).  
B. This must be a working faith (Jas. 2:24-26; Luke 6:46; Rom. 5:1-2; Gal. 5:6; 1 Pet. 1:22; Phil. 2:12; Acts 6:7; Rom. 2:8; 1 Pet. 4:17).

IV. "Women can be preachers." (Women can teach children and other women but they can't preach over men, Tit. 2:4).

- A. Women evangelists? (Acts 21:8; Eph. 4:11; 2 Tim. 4:5).  
B. A woman's place is not in the pulpit (1 Tim. 2:9-11).

V. "You Don't Have to be Baptized to be Saved."

- A. Many say, "There is no power in water to save any one. So, baptism has nothing to do with being saved."  
1. Friends, this is not true. Listen to Jesus (Mark 16:15-16).  
2. Now, where did God put salvation? (1 Pet. 3:21). Water!  
3. Before or after baptism?  
4. Compare the accounts of the cleansing of Naaman and the healing of the blind man.  
B. On Pentecost (Acts 2:38).  
C. Some claim that we are saved by the blood of Christ and they think that nullifies baptism. Don't need it.  
1. But Paul tied the two together (Rom. 5:8-10; 6:13; Matt. 26:28).  
2. Search the Scriptures for yourself (John 5:39).  
D. The apostles forcefully preached that it is only in Christ that anyone can be saved (Acts 4:12; Eph. 1:3).  
1. Every spiritual blessing is found only "in" Christ.  
2. Salvation is found "in" Christ (2 Tim. 2:10).  
3. All promises of God are "in" Christ (2 Cor. 1:20).  
4. Forgiveness is "in" Christ (Eph. 1:7).  
5. We are children of God "in" Christ (Gal. 3:26-28).  
E. But, what does being "in Christ" have to do with baptism? Answer: Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:26-27.  
1. Baptism puts us into Christ.  
2. Unless, one is baptized in Christ, he is not in Christ.  
3. God reveals no other way to enter into Christ. No other way.  
4. It does not matter what "seems right" to man, we need to do what God says.

VI. "We Don't Have to Study Daily."

- A. Matthew 22:39; John 5:39; Acts 17:11; Ephesians 5:17; 1 Timothy 4:13; 2 Timothy 2:15; 1 Peter 3:15; Jude 3; 1 Thessalonians 5:21.

VII. "We Should be Able to Dress Like we Want to Regardless of What People Say."

- A. What does the Bible say? (Matt. 5:16; Phil. 2:15; 1 Tim. 2:9-11; 1 Pet. 3:16).

VIII. "Church Attendance is Not That Important."

- A. Hebrew 10:25.  
1. Bible classes.  
2. Worship.  
B. Where does the Bible authorize the church to arrange assembling for the following:  
1. Fellowship meals?  
2. Group singing?

IX. "Where Does the Bible Say 'Not To'?"

- A. It seems right to some brethren to have the following without any Scripture:  
1. Social meals, birthday socials, recreation activities, entertainment, Preacher's Day, ball teams.  
2. Supporting orphan homes and colleges out of the Lord's treasury.  
3. This is not the work of the church (Eph. 4:11-14; 3:10).  
B. Book, chapter, and verse please? We must know where the Bible says to do something, not just where it says "not to."

**Conclusion**

There are many things which seem right to man that are not revealed in the word of God. Please do not assume that something is right because someone tells you or because "it seems right." Go to the word of God for the answer. *Search the Scriptures for yourself!*

(Note: Some good ideas for this outline were borrowed from Clem Thurman in *Gospel Minutes*, but sad to say he approves of the unauthorized things covered in the last part of this outline.)

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New!

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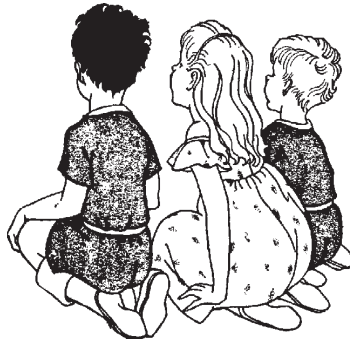
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# Children Deserve the Best

Irvin Himmel

Our children are precious. "Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that bath his quiver full of them" (Ps. 127:3-5).

Like arrows, children need to be straight. A crooked arrow will not shoot straight. Some parents wait until it is too late to start molding and shaping their sons and daughters. Our children deserve the best training in their tender years. We must not wait until they are too old to bend. Work with them while they are pliable.



An arrow must be accurately aimed. Parents have the obligation of aiming their children toward things noble and virtuous. This requires firm discipline. It cannot be done by pampering and spoiling. Some children in later life are as arrows in the heart of father and mother. This comes as no surprise when those children in their early years were allowed to have their own way.

Some parents want their children to have the best in secular education. They see to it that the children attend school regularly, do their homework, and make good grades. They may assist them with a college education. All of this is fine, but the youngsters deserve something far more important.

Many parents provide the best in material things for their offspring. Their children never lack in good, wholesome, nourishing food, or clothing, or in having a good house in which to live. Teenagers are provided with automobiles, liberal allowances, and many luxuries. There is a danger in giving youth too much prosperity.

Please remember that children deserve to be under the influence of a godly mother and father. If one parent is a Christian and the other is not, the child grows up in a divided household. He sees a conflict in spiritual values. The parent who is a Christian has a doubly difficult task under these circumstances.

Our children deserve to be taught righteousness by example. They deserve to see Christianity in action at home. Parents who quarrel and fight are not setting a good example. Parents who give little attention to the church and its work are training their children to be more interested in other things than in the Lord's kingdom.

Our children deserve to be brought to Bible study and church services regularly. They deserve parental encouragement and help in preparing Bible lessons. They deserve to have principles of integrity and hard work instilled in their hearts. They deserve to have other spiritually-minded young people invited to their home for association.

Fathers, can your children see that you are making a sincere and ongoing effort to "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4)? Mothers, are you teaching your sons and daughters to love the Lord, to love his word, to be obedient to God, and to keep themselves pure? They are depending on their parents. Don't fail them. Their spiritual welfare should be your chief concern.

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## "Line in the Sand" continued from front page

of the world don't want to be labeled as sinners and called names and, as stated in this article, don't appreciate "using God as an excuse for name-calling" but then the very next line of the article calls those ministers an "intolerant, homophobic chorus." See what I mean? The homosexual community can take a stand and call names but when it gets thrown back their way they cry "foul!"

### Calling It Like It Is

When Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, R-Miss., compared homosexuality to kleptomania and Green Bay Packers star Reggie White called homosexuality a sin during a speech to the Wisconsin legislature they drew immediate fire from the homosexual community. Brethren and friends, homosexuality is lawlessness and those engaging in this act and who do not repent will not be in heaven. God drew this "line in the sand" a long time ago. We can either accept his word or reject it.

### Must Do All of the Word of God

By the way, I also find it interesting that all these re-



ligious denominations find it necessary to take a stand against homosexuality (that which is lawlessness), but will not take a stand on many, many other things that God has also condemned such as instrumental music in worship, partaking of the Lord's supper only once or twice per year, raising money for the church treasury in ways not authorized and then using money from the church treasury in support of organizations or institutions not authorized in Scripture, sprinkling instead of immersion, teaching that baptism is not necessary for salvation, etc. The same God that condemned homosexuality is the very same God that instructed us how we must worship him (John 4:24). There is no such thing as a smorgasbord religion as far as God is concerned. We must eat that which has been set before us and that is the *all* of the Word of God. The "line in the sand" has been drawn by God since creation and he expects man to do *all* of his will (Matt. 7:21), and to teach his *whole* counsel (Acts 20:27). May we all do our very best to live and defend *all* of which God has taught us (Rev. 2:10; 1 Pet. 3:15; 2 Tim. 2:15).

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## "Subjection" continued from page 2

### Lessons From Isaac

1. *Isaac yielded to the Lord's command not to go to Egypt (26:2-3)*. The land of Egypt was notoriously prosperous at the time, but it was outside the land of promise. The Lord commanded Isaac not to go there and he yielded. His desire to move was not motivated in pleasure, but in necessity. Nevertheless, he yielded to the Lord's command.

Thomas Whitelaw observed, "But the behaviour of this Hebrew patriarch is sometimes outdone by that of modern saints, who not simply project, but actually perform, journeys, of pleasure or of business, across the boundary line which separates the Church from the world, into places where their spiritual interests are endangered, and that too not only without the Divine sanction, but sometimes in express violation of that authority" (*The Pulpit Commentary: Genesis 325*).

2. *Prosperity sometimes causes envy and conflict (26:12-14)*. Isaac's success caused the Philistines to envy him. One sometimes can bear another's prosperity easier than he can another's prosperity. Rachel could not rejoice in Leah's children (Gen. 30:1, 15). Joseph's brothers were jealous of Joseph's place in the family (37:4-11, 19, 20). Miriam and Aaron could not enjoy the place Moses had over Israel (Num. 12:1-10).

The proper attitude toward a brother's success should include: (a) *Joy*. We should rejoice with those who rejoice,

just as we weep with those who weep (Rom. 12:15; 1 Cor. 12:26). Elizabeth's neighbors shared her joy at the birth of John the Baptist (Luke 1:58). The friends of the one who lost the sheep and coin rejoiced when they were found (Luke 15:5-10). Barnabas shared the joy at Antioch at the conversions that occurred in that city (Acts 11:23). Think of some of the occasions of joy that we should share with our brothers: (1) A raise in pay; (2) A promotion; (3) A new car; (4) A new house; (5) New furniture; etc. Surely, none of us would be like the Philistines who became envious at Isaac's prosperity and drove him from them. (b) *Thankful* that one of our brothers was blessed of God to be so prospered. Who had we rather see so blessed as one of our brothers? See 3 John 2.

Some attitudes one should not have toward a brother's prosperity are: (a) Envy; (b) Jealousy; (c) Suspicion. Abimelech seemed to suspect that Isaac's increase in power was some threat to his kingdom.

3. *The efforts Isaac made to live at peace*. He gave up three very precious possessions (wells) rather than fight with the Philistines over them. In an age that demands its rights, this spirit is rare. Indeed, some would even equate it with pusillanimity.

The spirit of Christ teaches his children to give up their rights for the sake of the brother who might stumble because of exercise of their rights (1 Cor. 8:10-12). One is to pursue those things that make for peace (Rom. 14:19). Why did Isaac not fight for those wells? There is no indication that he did not fight because of his inability to win. The Scriptures imply that his giving up the wells was a reflection of Isaac's peaceful nature.

Isaac was a peacemaker (Matt. 5:9). He chose to be defrauded rather than contend (1 Cor. 6:7). He manifested the attitude toward his enemies that Christ commanded (Matt. 5:39-42), as shown by his willingness to enter a covenant with Abimelech even after he had been so abused (26:30).

### Conclusion

How many church conflicts would end if brethren reflected the magnanimous spirit of Isaac! Rather than belligerently standing for one's own way, sanctifying it of course with "I'm standing for the truth," why not display more of the spirit of Isaac? Sometimes brethren display more of the spirit of a pit-bulldog which bites and holds on in a death struggle rather than turning loose of something. We are not stating that one should sacrifice the revealed word of truth for the sake of peace, but in matters of judgment and personal preference, such a yielding spirit should characterize each of us.

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6567 Kings Ct., Danville, Indiana 46122

## Preachers Available

**Edward T. Rangel, 1508 NCR 1140-7, Midland, TX 79706 (915-570-6845):** I am a young minister looking for a Spanish congregation that needs a preacher. My family and I are currently working the Permian Basin area but I would like to begin a full-time work.

**Richard C. Sims, Jr., P.O. Box 539, Gatesville, TX 76528 (254-865-6965):** After fourteen years with the Downtown church in Gatesville, Texas, I am ready to relocate. I am 50 years old and married. I have 25 years of preaching experience, having worked with churches in Illinois, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Gatesville, Texas. I would prefer to stay in Central or East Texas. Elders and full support would be nice after 21 years of raising support to work with small churches. E-mail: Richjr@htcomp.net.

## New Congregation Started

**St. Robert, Missouri:** A group of non-institutional believers has started a congregation in St. Robert, Missouri. Our address is 430-1 Route 66, St. Robert, MO 65573. We are located just off I-44 on the Fort Leonard Wood Exit. (Mailing address is P.O. Box 986, 65583.) Our phone numbers are: 573-329-4506 or 329-3019. **Randy DuVall and R. Wendell Stevens.**



### Book Sought

Tommy McClure would like to buy a copy of *Nichol's Possibility of Apostasy*. If you have one to sell, please contact him at 1543 Highway 318, South Road, Marvell, AR 72366, 1-870-829-2288, tmcclure@arkansas.net.

### One Nation, Many Faiths

"... The United States is now home to almost 4 million

Muslims, five times as many as there were in 1970. Close to half of these faithful are black. At this rate, by 2000, Islam is likely to outpace Judaism, which has leveled off at 5.5 million members.

"Two million Americans identify themselves as Buddhists, a tenfold increase since 1970. Hindus have grown to 950,000 from 100,000 in the same time, Sikhs to 220,000 from 1,000.

"'Cultural pluralism is changing America's religious life,' says Diana Eck, a professor of world religions at Harvard University. 'It is making our spiritual tradition much richer and broader.'

"While the United States remains predominantly Christian — 85 percent of Americans claim this faith — the same forces that have broadened the nation's religious base are remaking many of Christianity's institutions.

"... During the last quarter of the 20th century, the country's fastest-growing religious communities have been Pentecostal, Mormon and Jehovah's Witnesses. Of the churches that served the rural South or the remote West, these now are outstripping such mainstream Protestant congregations as the Presbyterians, Episcopalians and United Methodists, whose numbers continue to drop" (Mary Rourke [*Los Angeles Times*], *The Indianapolis Star* [July 19, 1998], D1.

### Bishops Accept Differences, Find Some Common Ground

"Canterbury, England — ... Western bishops also heard complaints from Third World colleagues that a decision by a U.S. bishop to ordain a homosexual is flashed quickly around a world made smaller by technology and can have repercussions elsewhere.

"In African and Asia, where Anglican and other Christian churches frequently compete with Islam for adherents, decisions in the West on issues such as gay rights can provide an opportunity for the church's opponents to undermine its efforts and even persecute its believers, Third World bishops said.

"... On Thursday, with traditionalists securely in control, the conference approved a resolution saying that traditionalist bishops should not be compelled to ordain women. That advisory resolution contradicts — but does not override — a law the U.S. Episcopal Church passed last summer that requires its bishops to ordain women" (*The Indianapolis Star* [August 9, 1998], A23.

### Anglican Vote Denounces Homosexuality

"Canterbury, England — The world's Anglican bishops voted overwhelmingly Wednesday to endorse a resolution declaring homosexual activity to be 'incompatible with Scripture.'

"The resolution, which also advised against the ordination of

homosexual individuals, was adopted by a vote of 526-70. It represented a victory for an international group of conservative bishops, particularly those from the fast-growing Anglican churches in Africa and Asia.

“The resolution was passed at the Lambeth Conference, the once-a-decade gathering of the leaders of Anglican churches representing 73 million Anglicans in 160 nations.

“The strength of the vote shows that the leadership of the Anglican Communion stands to the right of the U.S. branch, the 2.4-million-member Episcopal Church, on issues relating to homosexuality” (*The Indianapolis Star* [August 6, 1998], A1).

### **Methodists Act Against Same-Sex Marriages**

“Dallas — The United Methodist Church on Tuesday elevated a guideline against same sex marriages into church canon and said ministers who perform the ceremonies could be defrocked.

“The Judicial Council of the church, the nation’s second largest Protestant denomination, ruled that ministers who violate the ban on homosexual unions are ‘liable to be’ brought to church trial.

“The guideline, which was part of the congregation’s Social Principles, states: ‘Ceremonies that celebrate homosexual unions shall not be conducted by our ministers and shall not be conducted in our churches.’

“Tuesday’s ruling has the effect of transforming the standard into church law” (*The Indianapolis Star* [August 12, 1998], A10).

### **San Francisco Votes to Expand Policy on Benefits for Partners**

“San Francisco — City politicians voted unanimously Monday to expand a domestic partners policy despite congressional pressure that might have cost the city millions.

“. . . Less than two weeks ago, the House voted 214-212 to block the city from receiving federal housing money because of its year-old Equal Benefits Ordinance, which requires businesses with city contracts to extend health benefits to its workers’ partners.

“‘We should not force or coerce (businesses) to adopt policies they find morally objectionable,’ said Rep. Frank Riggs, R-Calif., who sponsored the measure. Democrats attacked the Riggs measure as mean-spirited and bigoted.

“. . . ‘It boils down to, San Francisco values the domestic partner relationship as much as other family relationships,’ Flaherty said” (*The Indianapolis Star* [August 11, 1998], A5).

### **Clergy Declare War on Homosexuality**

“Washington — Conservative religious leaders faced off against gay activists Wednesday and declared it is time for clergy to act decisively to oppose homosexuality.

“Religious people must ‘draw a line in the sand,’ said Rabbi Yehuda Levin of New York, a member of the Union of Orthodox Rabbis of U.S. and Canada. ‘We the religious people have to start to act up.’

“‘Homosexuality is a sin,’ said the Rev. Jerome McFarland, a Baptist minister from Washington, D.C. ‘It’s contrary to the express will of God.’

“. . . Dispute goes public — Wednesday’s news conferences were the latest in a recent public dispute over homosexuality. Several religious groups took out full-page newspaper advertisements last month denouncing homosexuality.

“The Judicial Council of the 9.5 million-member United Methodist Church, the nation’s second-largest Protestant denomination, ruled at a meeting Tuesday night in Dallas that a minister who performs a marriage of two people of the same sex can be removed from the ministry.

“Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, R-Miss., recently compared homosexuality to kleptomania” (*The Indianapolis Star* [August 13, 1998], A12).

### **Cale Yarborough**

“Race-Car Driver Cale Yarborough’s reason for not engaging in an argument with a fellow driver: ‘Don’t ever wrestle with a pig, You’ll both get dirty, but the pig will enjoy it’” (*Reader’s Digest* [April 1996], 70).

### **NewsBytes**

“Reno Removes ‘Last Barrier’ to Physician-Assisted Suicide — U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno overruled a policy statement that called for prosecution of physicians who prescribe lethal doses of medication for terminally ill patients. *The New York Times* called this policy of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) ‘the last legal obstacle to the full operation of Oregon’s landmark assisted-suicide law.’ Reno’s ruling may encourage other states to follow suit. Rep. Christ Smith (R-NJ) said that he believed Congress would attempt to reverse Reno’s ruling (*New York Times*).

### **Age of Consent**

“Britain’s House of Lords, the upper legislative body in Parliament, voted 290 to 122 to overturn a law reducing the age of consent for homosexual acts to 16 from 18. The House of Commons earlier had overwhelmingly support the change in age (CT, Aug. 10, 1998, p. 27). The archbishop of Canterbury led the reversal move, with support from a variety of religious leaders, including the UK’s Evangelical Alliance” (*Christianity Today*, [September 7, 1998], 27).