

Magazine

Hymn Survey on the Web

As announced in the March 16 issue of *Truth Magazine*, the Guardian of Truth Foundation plans to publish a hymnal produced by Sumphonia. Also as announced, the foundation is providing an Internet survey to collect input from you. Your input will help the hymnal editors decide which hymns to publish, and it will allow you to offer other suggestions for production of an excellent hymnal. In the end, your input will give you the opportunity to influence the make-up of a hymnal used in churches.

Who can fill out the survey?

If you are interested in worship, you are qualified to fill out the survey. You need no formal training in song leading, hymn writing, or music composition. In fact, even if you do not have such training, your input is as valuable as anyone's; this hymnal needs to appeal to the entire congregation.

How do I get started?

To fill out the survey, begin by calling up the site at www.truthmagazine.com/hymn-survey. Next, fill out the data regarding your background; the editors need this preliminary information to ensure that the collective input

comes from a wide range of backgrounds. Finally, fill out the survey by categorizing each hymn; categories range from "must include in the hymnal" to "must not include in the hymnal."

As you fill out the survey, consider these two requests. First, please categorize only those hymns that you know; the survey lists nearly 2000 hymn titles, and you will probably not know hundreds of these titles. Second, don't be alarmed if you cannot complete the survey in one session; the website provides a way to save your results along the way, thereby allowing you to complete the survey in multiple sessions.

When can I get started?

The survey is online now. It will remain open throughout the summer, but the most valuable input will be that received by June 1. So we encourage you to get started right away. The editors are eager to listen to your suggestions and comments on these hymns!

For more information, contact the editors directly. Their contact information is posted at www.sumphonia.com/hymnal.

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Jesus Walked on Ice?

Larry Ray Hafley

“MIAMI (Reuters) — The New Testament says that Jesus walked on water, but a Florida university professor believes there could be a less miraculous explanation—he walked on a floating piece of ice. . . . Nof, a professor of oceanography at Florida State University, said on Tuesday that his study found an unusual combination of water and atmospheric conditions in what is now northern Israel could have led to ice formation on the Sea of Galilee.

“Nof used records of the Mediterranean Sea’s surface temperatures and statistical models to examine the dynamics of the Sea of Galilee, which Israelis know now as Lake Kinneret. The study found that a period of cooler temperatures in the area between 1,500 and 2,600 years ago could have included the decades in which Jesus lived. A drop in temperature below freezing could have caused ice thick enough to support a human to form on the surface of the freshwater lake near the western shore, Nof said. It might have been nearly impossible for distant observers to see a piece of floating ice surrounded by water.

Nof said he offered his study—published in the April edition of the *Journal of Paleolimnology*—as a “possible explanation” for Jesus’ walk on water. “If you ask me if I believe someone walked on water, no, I don’t,” Nof said. “Maybe somebody walked on the ice, I don’t know. I believe that something natural was there that explains it.”



Comment

Professor Nof needs to explain how Jesus got to that “floating piece of ice.” Did he swim to it? No, since, according to the professor, the water was cold enough for ice floes to form, he would have died of hypothermia had he tried to swim to the ice. Did he fly to it? No, for that would have been a miracle, too. Did he get to the “floating piece of ice” in a boat? No, for then there would have been no reason for him to get out and walk on an ice floe with the heavy winds blowing (John 6:18). Too, the next morning, the only boat that made it to the other shore is the one in which the disciples came (John 6:22). (But why should we invent a boat to help answer a man who has inserted an ice floe into the text?)

Nof’s explanation is almost as miraculous as is the accounts of Matthew, Mark, and John (Matt. 14:22-33; Mark 6:45-51; John 6:16-22). The gospel accounts speak of “great,” “strong,” “contrary,” and “boisterous”

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Troubled Over Immorality

Connie W. Adams

Nothing can create more havoc in a home or a congregation than immoral behaviour on the part of Christians or their children. Webster defines immoral as “Inconsistent with purity or good morals.” Immorality is defined by Webster as “the quality or state of being immoral: wickedness, esp. unchastity.” It is immoral to steal, lie, cheat and a host of other things opposed to righteousness. But the term is often used of sexual misconduct. The word fornication (*porneia*) is used of illicit sexual intercourse, including incest (1 Cor. 5:1), adultery (Matt. 5:32; 19:9), homosexuality (Jude 7), and cohabitation of the unmarried (1 Cor. 7:2).

Immorality was a common problem in the first century, especially among Gentiles. “For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries” (1 Pet. 4:3). This had been a pattern of life among some of the Corinthians before their conversion. “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

Our bodies belong to God who made us. “What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Cor. 6:19-20). Paul said that sin is not to rule over us. “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lust thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God” (Rom. 6:12-13).

Troubled Over Immoral Mates

Jesus said that fornication is the only reason one can put away a spouse and marry another (Matt. 19:9). It is the ultimate betrayal of trust and vows made before God and man. The husband’s body belongs to his wife and to

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nobody else. The wife's body belongs to her husband and only to him (1 Cor. 7:3-4). How many hearts have been broken and how many tears have been shed over this sin? This immoral act causes great trouble for the innocent party in the marriage. Even if the guilty is penitent, it is a fact that trust has been betrayed and the question arises as to whether you can ever fully trust again. The problem is compounded when there are children involved and agony arises over what is best for them.

But there is also trouble for the guilty one. Should the innocent exercise his/her right to put that one away, then the guilty has now forfeited the right to marriage. Some think that is too heavy a price to pay. But the Lord said, "Whoso marrieth her that is put away committeth adultery" (Matt. 5:32; 19:9). The worst problem of all is that God is offended. A soul is at stake. God made his marriage laws strict on purpose. Marriage is ordained of God for the good of the human family. It is the basic unit of all orderly society. While present culture tends to treat adultery as a normal (even expected) thing, God does not view it so. And neither should we.

But *must* the innocent exercise the right to put away the guilty when repentance is evident? Some think that unless the innocent remains in this marriage, now betrayed by fornication, that forgiveness has not been granted. Of course, unless we forgive those who sin against us, we cannot expect God to forgive us either (Matt. 6:14-15). But actions have consequences. It is God's law that the innocent may put away the guilty. Some are able to re-establish the relationship and make the best of it. Others have difficulty. Those on the outside do not know how many times the innocent has been wronged. Was it a one-time fling? Or a part of a pattern of infidelity? It does not take long to betray your vows, but it might take a long time to restore trust and rebuild credibility. What trouble would be avoided if people would just do right.

Troubled Over Pornography

This is an age old problem. It is rampant in our culture in recent years. The viewing of pictures and images of people engaged in every form of sexual activity has spawned a huge industry in this country and around the world. "Adult" bookstores and video houses are springing up, not only in seedy neighborhoods, but up and down the interstate highways. The computer age has brought it into homes all across the world. Businessmen and women, housewives, husbands who stay up late and surf the web, children in their own bedrooms, or at the family computer when they are unsupervised, and sometimes preachers have been caught up in this immoral trade. Homes have been broken up because of it.

The works of the flesh include "fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness" (Gal. 5:19-20). Peter described those who

have "eyes full of adultery" (2 Pet. 2:14). Can there be a more accurate description of this sin? Jude describes them as "filthy dreamers" (Jude 8). Jude also said, "But beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; how that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own lusts. These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit" (Jude 17-19). Paul warned Titus of those to whom nothing is pure "but even their mind and conscience is defiled" (Tit. 1:15-16).

If we could keep our minds thinking on the kind of things Paul mentioned in Philippians 4:8, there would be no room or taste for pornography. "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true . . . honest . . . just . . . pure . . . lovely . . . of good report . . . of virtue . . ." and worthy of "praise"; then he added, "Think on these things."

In addition to violating what is taught in the foregoing passages, the trouble with pornography is that it arouses passion, distorts reality, creates false and unreasonable expectations in marriage, causes women to be seen as objects rather than persons of worth, and reduces people to the level of the brute. When you purchase such material, you help subsidize an evil which is contributing to the downfall of souls and our nation as well.

When a husband (or wife) is found to have such an attraction for pornography, it is time to sit down and have some soul searching talks. It is not a time to scream and yell and sharpen sarcastic tongues. Talk frankly about your sexual life. It may be that one has unrealistic expectations. Or that one has not been satisfying the other. The pressures of daily work and life may contribute to it. One may tend to be cold, prudish, or unresponsive. And sometimes there are much deeper problems. Some are just given to sensuality. They have allowed their minds and hearts to be corrupted.

When children are found to be caught up in this sin, it is time to have some no-nonsense education about sexuality, keeping it within the bounds of dignity and casting it in a context of what the Bible teaches on the subject. Children caught in this snare may have a hard time ever being realistic about their own expectations in marriage. Parents need to supervise what movies are seen, what television shows are watched, and the use of computers must be monitored. Again, yelling will not solve the problem.

Like Job, we need to "make a covenant with mine (our) eyes" (Job. 31:1). "The lust of the eye" (1 John 2:15-17) is a powerful force leading us in the wrong direction. The images we see have a direct influence on what we think. And "as he thinketh in his heart, so is he." Pornography corrupts the heart and so corrupts the person, preventing him from being fashioned in the image of Christ.

Out of the Heart

Steven F. Deaton

The nation was shocked to learn that a seemingly meek preacher's wife murdered her husband. What went wrong? How could she do this? Why did she do it? We do not yet have all the answers, but there are some observations to make and lessons to learn.

Sinful actions come from a corrupt heart. Mary Winkler's heart was corrupt. Her outward appearance was one of meekness and kindness, but on the inside she entertained sinful thoughts. Jesus said,

What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. For *from within, out of the heart* of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, *murders*, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, and evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these things come from within and defile a man (Mark 7:20-23).

Whether she dwelled on it day after day or it came to her in a moment of rage, at some point Mary thought about killing her husband. When the thought last crossed her mind, she failed to exercise self control and reportedly shot him in the back twice (2 Pet. 1:5-7). Her heart was corrupt and this led to tragedy for her, her husband, children, and many others.

We need to take heed and see that we dwell on that which is holy and righteous (Phil. 4:8). "For as he thinks in his heart, so is he" (Prov. 23:7). How many homes with Christians in them are like the Winkler's home—outwardly peaceful, inwardly in turmoil? Will your family be the next on national news because of a shocking tragedy?

"The wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God" (Jas. 1:20). Some people who are normally calm and

sedate may have a wrathful side. Their temper can flare in a moment, and be gone just as quickly. The thing is, their outburst often causes great damage. Mary Winkler's actions show that a "moment" of wrath can destroy lives forever. Not only is her husband in the grave, but she is in jail and her children will be forever without a daddy—and likely a mommy. Is your selfish desire to erupt in anger worth the consequences that follow?

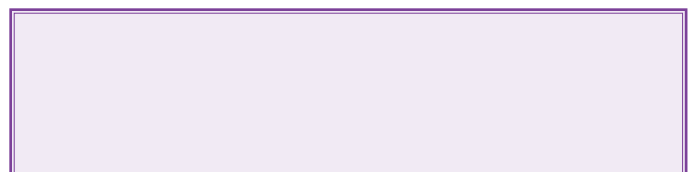
Satan tries to get us to ignore the consequences of our sins. When Mary was pulling the trigger on the gun, she was not thinking about jail, her children being orphaned, or even the reality of what she was doing to her husband. Likewise, she did not have before her mind the awfulness of hell (Mark 9:42-48). Yes, the reports are that she has apologized; we suppose that is the media's way of saying she repented. No doubt, she was sorry shortly after she did it. However, at the moment she was killing her husband, she was not thinking about what followed.

Satan does the same with the rest of us when he tempts us and leads us into sin. The drinker does not think about the damage to his health, vomiting, or the car wreck when he is taking a drink. The fornicator does consider pregnancy, venereal diseases, or the wrecked lives that follow a sexual encounter. We need to be oft reminded of the temporal and eternal consequences of sin—even though it is "negative."

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The Winkler Family



Good Sermons, Wrong Audience

William C. Sexton

Recently, Lois told me, relative to a sermon I preached: “A Good sermon but wrong audience,” in that it was a sermon on *Fathers Remembering Their Creator*. Since there were just two grandfathers in the audience and the rest women, Lois’ evaluation perhaps seemed just and correct.

I remember years ago a preacher telling about his experience (as a young preacher) going out to speak at some small congregation, and had prepared a sermon on lukewarmness (cf. Rev. 3:15-19). And the only people present were three elderly people who were surely *not* lukewarm, being very dedicated, evidently. But, being young and inexperienced, he was unable to change his sermon.

I remember in a speech class, one section we dealt with was “Audience Analysis.” Surely, the lessons mentioned above were not in line with that idea. The idea is that one should speak what the people need to hear, that can be applicable to them; lessons they can relate to. Although at times people may come out and say, “If they had been here you sure would have got them told,” when the lesson was very applicable to them, but they didn’t see it!

Yet, my aim in the sermon I preached, was with knowledge of the audience. I knew who the audience probably (most likely) would be, but wanted to impress on us—all present, including myself—the value of *good* fathers in our nation/communities, the sphere that we live in and can have some influence as well as responsibility! And O, how we need good father today in the family!

Yet, I recognize the point Lois was making is a valid one, and it is one that each of us should think about and pray for wisdom that we will use our time, resources, and opportunities to do the most good possible.

Recently I read something that made me *think*, that was reportedly written by brother Homer Hailey.

An individual that does not teach what people need, even though what he preaches (is) truth, is a false prophet, a

false teacher. I think we have brethren who, when they preach, one couldn’t find error in what they are saying, but what they are saying, though it is truth, is not what the people need. When one shuns to teach what men need that man becomes a false teacher. I can be just as much a false teacher coming into your community and not preaching what is needed, if I know what is needed, as is the man who preaches error. Both are false prophets (*Truth Magazine*, June 20, 2002, 26).

That is a challenging thought, to say the least. Perhaps we need to recognize that we may not know exactly what men need in each particular situation, but many of us are inclined, it seems, to shun away from things that we do indeed see as being needed!

Paul says that he held back nothing that was profitable to the Ephesians the three years he worked with them (Acts 20:20-21): “And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” Having done that, even though the context shows that he was not always treated well (in fact very often mistreat terribly), he could leave with a clear conscience, that he had done his job as the Lord required. I remember being told by a preacher that years ago, perhaps in the 1950s in a meeting, he was told that if he preached on a particular topic he had announced, he would not be permitted to preach there again. He said, “Well, I’ll leave town with a clear conscience!”

It does appear to me that approach can play a big part in effectiveness, and thus needs to be recognized. I need to come across as one who loves the truth and the soul I’m trying to persuade. Yet, I need to be fully convinced that *only the truth*, as revealed in the New Testament, will save a person (Jas. 1:21). I need to humbly present it, but do it courageously—believing fully that the Lord requires it of me, that the person I am teaching *must* have it, and genuine love on my part will move me to present the truth that is needed in each case! There is an old say-

“Coming and Going” Christians

Lewis Willis

There are some Christians who are always “coming.” They “come” to worship, to Bible study, to gospel meetings, and to any other public activity of the local church. You can always count on them. They are always in their places, supplying what they alone can give.

There are other Christians who are always “going.” They “go” on vacations, go visiting, go hunting, go fishing, go to school activities, they’re sick, or they’re too tired, or too busy to “go” to worship, to Bible study, to gospel meetings, and to any other public activity of the local church. You cannot count on them. More often than not, they are not in their places, supplying what they alone can supply.



An Option?

I’ve never quite figured out how some of us conclude that involvement in and support of the activities of the church is an option. The “I will” or “I won’t” mentality is prevalent everywhere except in the New Testament.

The Bible still says: “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching” (Heb. 10:25). Can you see the “option” in that verse?

ing: “Silence is golden at times and at other times it is yellow.” Growth comes from speaking the truth in love (Eph. 4:15). One can know the truth and it will make him free (John 8:32).

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There Is Work To Do

The apostle Paul told Christians at Corinth of this work and of their individual responsibilities in relation to it. He said, “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye *stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord*, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58). Paul also told these brethren (as he was telling us!), “. . . and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour” (1 Cor. 3:8). The “going” Christian, who is elsewhere while all the labour is happening, will have no good reward at the end.

Each Must Do His Own Work

When other Christians, the “coming” ones, have done all they can do, they have only been able to do their own work. They can do none of yours! Only you can do that! The body of Christ consists of many different members, with several different abilities. The “head” cannot function for the “foot,” nor can the “eye” do what the “ear” or the “hand” are expected to do (1 Cor. 12:14-27).

Apparently the “going” Christians think the “coming” Christians can do what the collective body is supposed to do. I wonder how those “going” Christians plan to convince God their “going” was acceptable. I just wonder!

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Samson, An Alternative View

Kyle Pope

If you have studied what the Bible says about the Old Testament judge, Samson, you may, like many of us, have come away from the study puzzled and questioning how such a seemingly carnal and impulsive man could be considered among the great figures who acted “by faith” (see Heb.



11:32-40). The usual explanation of Samson is that, in spite of his shortcomings, God used him to deliver Israel. This may be the best way to understand Samson, but in doing some study of the book of Judges recently I became uncomfortable with the fact that I found myself apologizing for the behavior of one whom the Holy Spirit counts among the faithful. A closer look at the texts which describe this man made me wonder if my own view of Samson’s “wild man” image had been colored more by Hollywood than by what the Scripture actually says about him? In light of that I found the following points which are offered as a possible alternative interpretation of this puzzling man.

A Nazirite for Life. Before Samson is even born his parents are told, “. . . the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb to the day of his death” (Judg. 13:7, NKJV). The Nazirite vow was an institution set up by God under the Law of Moses whereby a person dedicated himself to God for period of separation. During this time the person was to neither eat or drink anything that came from the

vine (Num. 6:3, 4). The Nazirite was not to touch a “dead body” (Num. 6:6). Even if a family member died, he could not touch him (Num. 6:7). If he accidentally came in contact with a dead person, there were sacrifices that had to be offered to cleanse the Nazirite (Num. 6:9-11).¹ Most notably the Nazirite was not to cut the hair of his head (Num. 6:5). This served as a visible indication that the person was set apart unto God. Of such a person it is said that “his separation to God is on his head” (Num. 6:7b). While this was usually a temporary thing, Samson was set apart to God in this way his entire life. He would tell Delilah shortly before his death that he had “been a Nazirite to God from my mother’s womb” (Judg. 16:17). Visibly any Israelite could see that Samson was dedicated to the service of God.

The Spirit of the Lord Moved Him. One of the first things that is said of Samson is that “the Spirit of the Lord began to move him” (Judg. 13:25). The Hebrew word translated “move” here is *pa’am* meaning “to thrust, impel, push, beat persistently” (Gesenius). Throughout the book of Judges the operation of God’s Spirit in the lives of the judges is often manifested in great strength or military prowess (e.g. Othniel, 3:10; Gideon, 6:34; Jephthah, 11:29). It is significant to note that there are more references to this fact in the life of Samson than any other judge (see Judg. 13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:14). Hand in hand with some

of the incidents where we “scratch our heads” puzzled by Samson’s behavior Scripture declares that the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, or moved him. This should make us cautious about jumping too quickly to conclude that Samson is acting sinfully, if God’s Spirit is with him and working through him.

Taking A Philistine Wife. One of the first things that puzzles us about Samson is his request that his parents arrange a marriage for him with “a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines” (Judg. 14:1). The Israelites were expressly forbidden to intermarry with pagans (Deut. 7:3). Because of this his parents were disturbed by this request, but the Bible says “his father and mother did not know that it was of the Lord—that he was seeking an occasion to move against the Philistines. For at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel” (Judg. 14:4). Many translations have capitalized the pronoun “He” in the phrase “He was seeking” making it sound as if God was seeking an occasion. In the Hebrew the antecedent of the pronoun “he” may be found in the phrase “his father and mother” at the beginning of the verse. If that is the case, it tells us that Samson was setting up this marriage “of the LORD” and that he was “seeking occasion to move against the Philistines.” If we consider this as his motive, we can see Samson every step along the way acting upon the opportunities that are set before him to “move against the Philistines.”

For example, before his marriage can be consummated, Samson throws a feast (14:10). During this seven day feast he poses a riddle to thirty of the Philistine men at the feast (14:12, 13). During the feast the men threatened to kill his betrothed wife, if she will not find out for them the solution (14:15). She does and Samson travels from Timnah to the coastal Philistine city of Ashkelon and kills thirty men bringing their clothes to the thirty men at the feast (14:19a). Was this carnal

impulsiveness or “seeking an occasion to move against the Philistines”?

He does not go back to his betrothed wife but home to his parents (14:19b). Thus, the wedding to a pagan woman in never actually consummated. When sometime later he does go to her at Timnah, she has been given to another man (14:20-15:2). In response to this Samson sends foxes with torches on their tails to burn Philistine crops (15:3-5). Again, is this carnal impulsiveness or “seeking an occasion to move against the Philistines”? The Philistines in their anger over the burned crops burn his betrothed wife and her father (15:6). Samson, in response to the murder of his betrothed wife, moves against them “hip and thigh” (a Hebrew idiom for ferocity) with a “great slaughter” (15:7, 8). Again he is “seeking occasion to move against the Philistines.”

As he holds up in the cleft of the rocks of Etam, men of Judah, feeling the pressure from Philistines who had come up to seize him, come and take him bound to the Philistines at Lehi (15:9-13). Samson, through the Spirit of the Lord breaks the bonds and kills 1000 Philistines with the jawbone of a donkey (15:14-17). He again finds another “occasion to move against the Philistine.”

Water From the Rock. After this slaughter the care that the Lord has for Samson is seen in a tender event in which his life is preserved. Thirsty after the battle with the Philistines Samson prays to God for water and is miraculously given water from a rock that splits (Judg. 15:18-20).

The Harlot of Gaza. The most puzzling events for many of us come in the last chapter that describes his life. It begins, “Now Samson went to Gaza and saw a harlot there, and went in to her” (Judg. 16:1). Does this man, moved by the Spirit of God, separated unto his service as a Nazirite, who is seeking occasions to move against the Philistines give himself to fornication

with a Philistine whore? Perhaps. However, let’s be careful to recognize what is and what it not said about this situation.

Gaza was a major coastal city in the heart of Philistine territory some distance from his own home near Zorah and Eshtaol. Samson, by then notorious for his slaughter of scores of Philistines, walks into the heart of his enemies’ territory. Where would one stay in such a city? The homes of ordinary citizens of a Philistine stronghold would probably not be open to such a noted enemy. On the other hand, the home of a harlot would be much less discriminating. The Hebrew does not use language that is explicit with respect to whether he committed fornication with the woman or simply stayed with her. The phrase “went in to her” in Hebrew is literally “went to her.” The same wording is used in Genesis 38:16 of Judah and Tamar where fornication is clearly involved but also in Joshua 21 of Rahab and the spies where fornication is not involved. The text says that the men of the city hearing that he had come into the city wait to seize him in the morning (16:2). Samson has other plans. The text says, “Samson lay till midnight, and arose at midnight” (16:3a). The New King James Version, perhaps optimistically adds in italics “Samson lay *low* till midnight.” Then, in the middle of the night, he removes the gates and bars of the city gate and carries them into Israelite territory near Hebron (16:3). Is this the behavior of a wild impulsive fornicator or a man “seeking occasion to move against the Philistines”?

Love for Delilah. Finally, the Bible tells us that Samson, “. . . loved a woman in the Valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah” (16:4). Hollywood, and even some biblical reference books jump to the conclusion that Delilah was a Philistine. The text doesn’t say, as was said of his betrothed wife, that she was “of the daughters of the Philistines” (14:1). Sorek was a river valley running be-

tween Zimnah and the area of Zorah and Eshtaol where he lived. The text doesn't tell us the complete nature of their relationship (i.e. whether they were married or not). Nor does it explicitly indicate that it was a sexual relationship, only that Samson was in her room (16:9) and lulled to sleep (16:19). We often conclude that Delilah was Philistine because she so readily agrees to deliver him to the Philistines for 1100 pieces of silver (16:5). This fact may tell us merely that she was wicked, greedy and like the men of Judah, willing to deliver a fellow Israelite over to the Philistine overlords.

At any rate, Delilah begs Samson to tell her the secret of his strength. Three times he deceives her and three times she arranges for Philistines to come and seize him. After each incident, Delilah pouts and complains that Samson must not really love her to have deceived her so. Is Samson really so blinded by his love for her that he doesn't recognize that he was the one who had the right to be angry at a woman who had tried three times to deliver him to the Philistines? Either Samson is behaving foolishly or he is again "seeking occasion to move against the Philistines."

At last he reveals to her, "No razor has ever come upon my head, for I have been a Nazirite to God from my mother's womb. If I am shaven, then my strength will leave me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man" (16:17). This seems foolish to us that Samson would give such important information to this wicked woman. Perhaps he did allow his love to blind him. Or perhaps, as he had done by allowing the men of Judah to bind him, he was even them "seeking an occasion to move against the Philistines." Samson does lose his strength when this is done (16:19). When he awakes for the first time in the entire record of Samson the Bible says, "the LORD had departed from him" (16:20). Was this because God saw his behavior as rebellion against him? Perhaps. Or, was it simply that it could no longer be said of Samson that "his separation to God is on his head" (Num 6:7b)? Had Samson been granted strength in such a condition it would have appeared that Samson's own strength delivered him.

Samson is taken, his eyes are put out and he is forced to be a grinder in a Philistine prison (16:21). Over time his hair grows back and he is brought to a temple of Dagon that the people might make a spectacle of him. He prays to God, pushes down pillars of the temple collapsing it on the people and killing 3000 Philistines and himself in the process (16:23-30).

Conclusion

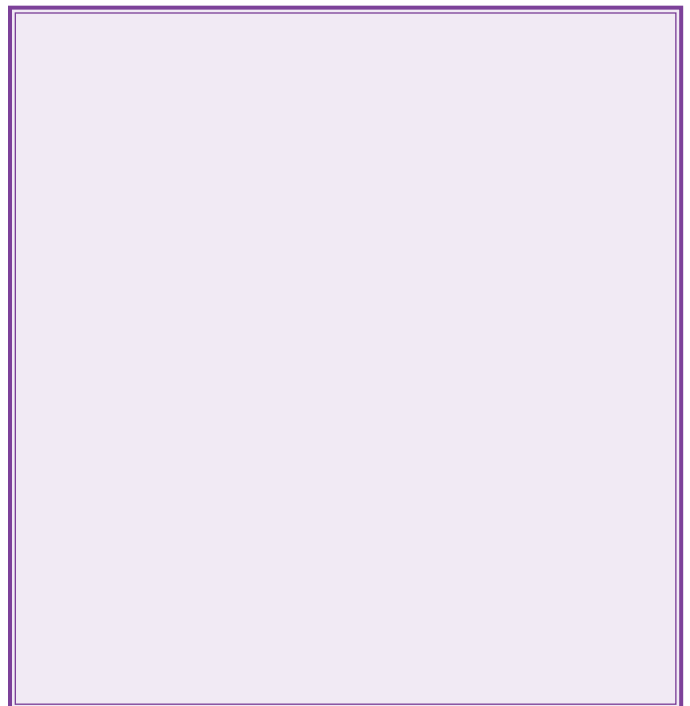
Was Samson a carnal impulsive wild man ready to violate his separation to God and fornicate with pagan women at will? Perhaps. It may be that God worked through him to deliver Israel in spite of these failings. However, given the fact that the Holy Spirit counts Samson among the faith-

ful, works through him time and time again, and Samson himself claims to have kept his Nazirite separation from the womb, it seems only fair to give him the benefit of the doubt and consider that his actions all along the way may have been "of the Lord" as Samson was "seeking an occasion to move against the Philistines." If so, Samson is seen not as a foolish, impulsive wild man, but one who creatively infiltrates the homes, lives, and strongholds of the enemy to undermine and and tear down their dominion over Israel.



¹ The emphasis in this instruction for Nazirites seems to involve human bodies. The same phrase in Hebrew translated "dead person" when used in Leviticus 21:11 refers to human bodies. Uncleaness from the carcass of an animals with paws in general only made one unclean until evening (Lev. 11:27, 28). Samson doesn't consider the touching of the lion's carcass to have broken his Nazirite separation to God (see Judg. 14:9; 16:17).

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“Lord, Is It I?”

Mark Mayberry

Introduction

As Jesus observed the Last Passover with the disciples, he said, “One of you will betray me.” Being deeply grieved, they each one began to say to him, “Surely not I, Lord?” (Matt. 26:20-25; Mark 14:17-21; Luke 22:21-23; John 13:21-30).

Various Translations

The KJV says, “And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I?” The NASB says, “Being deeply grieved, they each one began to say to Him, ‘Surely not I, Lord?’” The CEV says, “The disciples were very sad, and each one said to Jesus, ‘Lord, you can’t mean me!’”

All Were Guilty

On the night of his betrayal, all of the Lord’s disciples failed. All forsook him; one denied him; one betrayed him. The epic failure of humanity was crystallized in the events of this one evening—all have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:9-23; cf. also 1 Kings 8:46-50; 2 Chron. 6:36-39; Job 14:1-4; Ps. 143:1-2; Prov. 20:9; Eccl. 7:20).

The Disciples Forsook the Lord

The Messiah is oft pictured in prophecy as a Shepherd (Isa. 40:11; Ezek. 34:23-24; 37:24; Micah 5:2, 4). Note the prophecy of Zechariah: “Strike the Shepherd that the sheep may be scattered” (13:7) and the prediction of Jesus: “You will all fall away because of Me this night” (Matt. 26:31-35; Mark 14:27-31; Luke 22:31-34; John 16:32). In forsaking the Lord, the disciples evidenced a failure of faith (Matt. 26:47, 55-56; Mark 14:43, 48-50).

Peter Denied the Lord

When the soldiers came to arrest Jesus, Peter offered a brave but foolhardy defense (Matt. 26:47-56; Mark 14:43-52; Luke 22:47-53; John 18:1-11). Afterwards, alone in the midst of a hostile crowd, disillusioned and confused, he denied the Lord (Matt. 26:69-75; Mark 14:66-72; Luke 22:55-62; John 18:15-18, 25-27).

Judas Betrayed the Lord

Instead of resisting the devil (Jas. 4:7; cf. Eph. 4:26-27; 1 Pet. 5:8), Judas sinned deliberately and persistently, becoming one with Satan (John 6:66-71; cf. John 8:44; 13:1-4). Thus he is counted as one uniquely unclean (John 13:5-11), the very son of perdition (John 17:12), whose earthly end tragically foreshadows eternal desolation (Matt. 26:24; Mark 14:21).

Judas demonstrated covetousness by his complaint regarding the woman who anointed Jesus (John 12:1-8; 1 Tim. 6:10; Col. 3:5-6). He demonstrated disloyalty by plotting with the enemies of Jesus (Matt. 26:14-16; Mark 14:10-11; Luke 22:3-6), and afterwards pretending to be Jesus’ friend and ally (John 13:12-20; 13:21-30; Pss. 41:7-9; 55:12-15). He demonstrated hypocrisy by asking, along with the other disciples, “Lord, Is it I?” when Jesus said, “one of you will betray Me” (Matt. 26:20-25; cf. also 23:27-28). He demonstrated callousness by betraying Jesus with a kiss (Matt. 26:47-50; Luke 22:47-48; John 18:1-9; cf. Prov. 27:6). He demonstrated cowardice by yielding to despair and committing suicide (Matt. 27:3-10; Acts 1:15-26).

Conclusion

In forsaking Jesus, the apostles committed a sin of weakness. In denying Jesus, Peter did the same. Jesus, our great high priest, offers help to penitent sinners (Heb. 4:14-16; 5:1-3). In betraying Jesus, Judas Iscariot committed an act of premeditated, willful transgression. No assistance or pardon is extended to those who are impenitent (Heb. 6:4-8; 10:26-31; 1 John 5:16-17).

Contrasting Peter’s restoration with Judas’ final act of desperation, one may also observe the difference between the sorrow of the world and godly sorrow—one repented, the other did not (Matt. 3:7-10; Luke 22:31-32; John 21:15-17; Acts 26:19-20; 2 Cor. 7:8-11).

We must also ask the haunting question: “Lord, Is it I?” God knows the answer (Ps. 139:7-12; Heb. 4:12-13). If we are honest with ourselves, we do also (1 Cor. 11:28; 2 Cor. 13:5; Gal. 6:4).

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How the World Began

Sarah Brooks

There are two different stories
For a single tale.
One says the world began in a bang,
With fire and storm and hail.

The other says there was a Designer,
Who filled the seas and made skies blue,
And gave breath into all life,
And made the mountains too.

So let's look at these different sides,
This problem try to solve,
We shall first try the Evolutionist's view,
And how all things evolve.

Now, the beginning of the world
Was great. It started as a BOOM!
Suddenly all things were perfectly aligned,
And we had our earth and our moon.



But there was not a speck of life,
No frog, no leaf, no tree,
There were no animals or plants,
No birds of sky or fish of sea.

Then—suddenly—a speck of life
Came as a tiny cell.
It grew and multiplied and changed—
Just how I cannot tell.

That cell became many a fish,
And those fish multiplied,
And suddenly a fish had an idea:
To live out of the tide!

He grew two legs and climbed on land,
Just how I cannot tell.
For how could a little lizard thing
Come from a little cell?

Well, that lizard eyed a tree
And decided he'd still evolve.
He grew fur and a curly tail,
And then that problem was solved.

He was now a little monkey,
As happy as can be.
He cooed and cawed and leaped
All over that little tree.



And then one day that monkey decided
That he didn't like the tree,
So much change for a little monkey,
Tree from land and land from sea!

Well that little monkey came down
And evolved again for some odd span,
And guess what he became, tail shed?
He was now a man!

And so you now know the Big Bang,
And how life through evolution began.
It started as a cell and then a fish,
Then a lizard, then a monkey, then a man!

But I think there's a better way,
A truer and wiser one, too.
I'll tell you of a wonderful Creation,
Sit back and I'll tell you.

On day one a Mighty Being
Spoke forth and created light,
He spoke a word that separated
The day from the night.

Now the next day—day two,
A new thing He had given,
He spoke a word that separated
The day from the night.

On day three He spoke again,
His voice great and grand,
Plants came into full bloom then,
And water was separated from land.

Now on day four He spoke again,
And His words are always true.
This time when He spoke
The sun, moon, and stars came into view.

On day five He decided
To make things that swim and fly,
And so He spoke and He created
Fish of the sea and birds of the sky.

On day six—such a short time,
To create a world in such a little
span!
He spoke and came more life
As beasts and as man.

On day seven He did not speak,
His new world at its best.

And so He did not create:
Our great Creator did rest.

And so now you know the Creation
If that was what you seek,
'Tis grand, for only our Creator
Could create a world in less than a week.

Two different stories, two different views
About this one operation,
It takes only Faith to trust in either:
The Big Bang or the Creation.

But I know which one is true:
Surely all should know,

For the Creation is the way,
The Bible tells you so.

A Designer created our world,
A Designer created man.
A Designer created animals
and plants,
That's how the world began.



“All Things . . .”

Work Together For Good

Billy Moore

It was a sad day! He was only 52 years old! His wife, now a widow, was left with four children at home and crops in the fields, which must be tended for this was their source of livelihood. How great was the sorrow in her heart! Her family rallied around her, and dear brethren came to comfort her. Amid all the heartache, one kind brother said, “We’re so sorry, but you know, ‘all things work together for good to them that love God,’” calling to mind Romans 8:28. But how could this be good!

A few months later this widow returned home late one afternoon and as she turned the last corner about one-fourth mile from her house, she looked toward the house and saw only smoke, rubble, and ashes—her house had burned with all the furniture and personal belongings. But, according to some, this too would work for her good!

Such scenes have been repeated time and again! And somehow, in someway, the greatest of life’s tragedies are said to be “for good” if we love God. I knew the above situation and did not believe it was “for good” then and do not believe it now. But what does the Scripture mean?

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose (Rom. 8:28).

It is true of this verse, as of all others, that it must be taken in its context. If the “all things” is to include *anything* and *everything* that happens in life, or that exists around us, absolutely everything there is, then it should have that same meaning when the expression is used in other passages. So, get your concordance and check some of the many times “all things” is to be found in the New Testament. When you do such, “the light may turn on” in your thinking.

May I suggest that “all things” may have reference to “all things” in this context, things about which Paul had

been speaking. And what is the context in Romans 8? He is writing of the Spirit.

There is no condemnation to those who walk after the Spirit, for the law of the Spirit has made us free from the law of sin and death (vv. 1-2).

This Spirit shall quicken your mortal body (v. 11).

The Spirit bears witness that we are the children of God (v. 16).

We, as the first fruits of the Spirit, shall have the redemption of our body (v. 23).

The Spirit helps our infirmities, making intercession for us (v. 26).

And we know that “all things” work together for good to them that love God. What things? All these things he has talked about, not just everything that happens to us, or around us.

The little boy was playing with his dog in the front yard. The puppy ran into the street and the boy ran after it. A fast approaching car could not avoid hitting the boy! As the mother and daddy weep in the overwhelming sorrow, a dear brother or sister says, “It was all for good, for you know ‘all things work together for good.’” Then they try to explain that it was for the eternal good of the child, for had he grown up he might not have believed the truth and may have been lost eternally but now we know he will be in heaven. (You see, we’ve got to try to make every thing harmonize with the preconceived notion that “all things,” what ever they are, will work out for our good if we really “love God.” Puts us in a bad situation sometimes trying to figure it all out.)



The Social Gospel: A Disaster in Churches of Christ

W.R. Jones

In the past fifty years a majority of the churches of Christ have jumped on the “Social Gospel” band wagon. The expression “Social Gospel” is used to describe that kind of preaching and practice that emphasizes the *material* and *social* needs of man to the extent that it diminishes the emphasis upon the *spiritual* and *eternal* needs of man. The masses cry out for something that will give immediate relief to their material and social needs. “Keep my kids happy and entertain my family.” Most of these people have very little concern for their eternal well being. Catholicism, Protestantism, Judaism and “liberal” churches of Christ have answered this cry by offering people the “Social Gospel.” Church members who are shallow in the truth and light in spirituality are the ones who are more likely to embrace this false gospel. Perhaps it would help if you

understood what this idea is based on and where it started. Stay with me.

What Is the Whole Man Concept? Where Did it Originate?

The advocates of this view look to (Luke 2:52) for what they consider to be their authority. This passage is a statement made about Jesus while he was still quite young. “And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.” This Scripture is divided as follows. Jesus increased in wisdom (mental growth), stature (physical growth), favor with God (spiritual growth), and with man (social growth). I quickly admit that we all need to develop as the “whole man.” All concerned parents

Do you really think “all things” that happened to Paul were for the *good* of Paul? Those who hated him for what he preached, dragged him to the outskirts of town and stoned him, leaving him for dead. Some of the brethren saw that he was not dead, cared for him, nourished him and while he was recovering said, “You know Paul, that was one of the best things that could have happened to you.” Who can believe it!

Oh, you can believe that “all things” will work out for the good of those who love God. Such may be a source of consolation to you in times of trouble, distress, sorrow, etc. For none of us knows how God in his providence works in the lives of men. Believing such will not cause you to stumble or turn from the faith. But I don’t believe that’s what the passage is teaching, in spite of the fact that this is what many great preachers have taught, and many commentaries may say. Just check out the other passages where Paul, or other inspired writers, used “all things” and you too may come to see that such an expression does not mean any and every thing that ever happens, or could, might possibly happen. Now read the following quote from brother R.L. Whiteside:

“All Things”

What is included in the *all things* of the verse? Does Paul include the devil and all his works and agents? Does he include the lusts of the flesh, which war against the soul, and to our infirmities in which we need help? It seems to me that the context and the very nature of the case demand that we take the *all things* in a limited sense. In all that he had said up to this point Paul was talking about what God had done and is doing for us through Christ and by the ministry of the Holy Spirit. He had also shown how hope sustains us and how the Holy Spirit interprets to God the unutterable longings of our hearts. Why not understand Paul to refer to the things he had been talking about? And all of God’s dealings in the past with men and nations worked for the good of those who love God, and whom God had called. Paul’s statement is a sort of conclusion from what he had said. It is not fair to him to make his conclusion include things he had not mentioned. Why, then, should we conclude that he now speaks of every conceivable thing, every conceivable force and circumstance, and that he affirms that all these things, both good and bad, work together for the good to those who love God? To do so is to entirely miss the trend of his thought” (*Commentary on Romans* 187).

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would desire that their children develop accordingly. What then is wrong with this “whole man” concept? Absolutely nothing, until it is misapplied. Misguided people are using this passage about the young Jesus to prove that the “whole man concept” is the mission of the church of Christ. Absolutely not true!

Is the “whole man concept” the mission of the church of Christ? The answer is NO! They make a fatal mistake when they make this concept the mission of the church of Christ. In so doing, they are charging things to the church for which there is no Bible authority. This passage (Luke 2:52) is simply a statement made about the young Jesus and his development. It does not set forth the mission of his church. In fact, his church was not established until after his death and resurrection. Certainly, spiritual development is a mission of the church, but the social, physical, and mental aspects are not. These are the responsibility of the home and community. One should develop “socially” in the home and in his or her relationship with the community. One should develop “physically” through hard work and worthwhile recreational activities. People should develop in “wisdom” (mental growth) through home training, education and interaction with others about them. This is not to be confused with a far greater “wisdom from above” that comes from God’s word and in answer to prayer (Jas. 1:5) Under no circumstances is it the purpose of the church of our Lord, a divine arrangement, to finance any of these temporal ends.

This concept perverts the mission of the church when “physical development” becomes the work of the church then the church must provide for it. This calls for a gym, playground, playroom, or perhaps a full Family Life Center. When “mental development” becomes the work of the church then the church must provide facilities and resources for a secular school. When “social development” becomes the work of the church then the church must provide social halls, kitchens, and parlors. Some call these “fellowship halls,” but that is a misuse of the word “fellowship” concerning the work of the church. When a church of Christ gets involved in such things it makes the members soft and compromising. Their energies are diverted away from truly preparing people for eternity. It causes the church to *major in minors* instead of putting the true work of the kingdom first. The problem will never get better by itself, it will never cure itself. If allowed to continue it always moves Christians further from the truth.

Now, where did this “whole man concept” come from? My understanding is that it started in secular education, from there it got into Sectarian Teacher Training Books, and it made its way into churches of Christ because some of our brethren fell for the material. Many of our teachers purchased their teaching material books from denominational publishing houses and the Moody Bible Institute.

Being poorly informed, they failed to properly screen it. They took the bait in the late forties. The following statement appeared in some teaching material published by our own brethren. “The church should provide for a recreational year-round program. Too many people still think that the church has no business dealing with such things, that is the job of others. Just so long as this attitude exists, our present unfortunate condition will remain. Places of amusement will be provided and they will be patronized by our young people.”

In 1955, when I spoke out against church gyms and fellowship halls it was not well received. One prominent preacher in the church told me, “I believe it is as much the responsibility of the church to provide good ‘fellowship’ (social) for her members as it is to preach the gospel to them in the first place.”

How has this affected the church? It has caused the church to turn to the “material” instead of that which is “spiritual.” It moves brethren away from the primary work of the church, which is soul saving. This material interest has been voiced in the church bulletins which I received over many years. I read language like this, church kitchens, fellowship halls, parlors, recreation rooms, gyms, playgrounds, baseball teams, basketball teams, pink and blue showers, ping pong tables, tacky parties, Christmas parties, banquets, potluck dinners, forty-two parties, coffee and donuts, and much more which space will not permit. I talk with brethren who travel quite a bit and they tell me it is not at all uncommon to find yourself in worship services of the church where much is said about various social and recreational events, but very little from the word of God.



What shall we do about it? Forsake this false social gospel and get back to the true mission of the church. Zero in on evangelism, edification, benevolence to needy saints and acceptable worship to God. Let us prepare for eternity! When God’s people are influenced by the world, they are like the Israelites who made the golden calf. Of these people it was said, “And the people sat down to eat and to drink and rose up to play” (Exod. 32:6). Let us turn back to spiritual matters.

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“Life Is Too Short . . .”

Jarrod Jacobs

The quibble which says “life is too short” to take time to deal with false doctrine and false teachers is as wrong as it can be. We find New Testament heroes standing and dealing with sin and error in an attempt to bring lost souls to Christ, and this is what we need to be doing today.

Perhaps all of us at one time or another have heard the above phrase being used. At times, this phrase may be appropriate. Someone may say to you, “Life is too short to stay mad at _____. Forgive them and move on.” Yes, based on the teachings of the Bible, we see that our life on earth is very brief. David said, “The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away” (Ps. 90:10). James said, “For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away” (Jas. 4:14). These are just two examples, but they certainly impress upon our minds the brevity of this earth-life.

At the same time, let us understand that while our life on earth is short, that is no excuse for justifying evil practices or false doctrine. I am afraid that sometimes we have the attitude that “life is too short” to worry about sin, so “live and let live.” This attitude is apparent in many in our society. Such an attitude tries to take the heat off of the one in error, and place it on the one asking and searching for the truth. One variation on this theme is for someone to say, “I am too busy trying to save lost souls to be involved in the _____ controversy.”

When faced with a situation where one is living in sin, or is teaching false doctrine, some have been met with the justification: “Listen friend, life is too

short. . . .” The problem is that in such cases, the men using such justifications have it wrong.

Life Is Too Short To Live In Sin.

When it comes to the subject of living in sin, then yes, “life is too short” for people to continue such behavior. It is for this reason that there is a continued emphasis in the Bible on teaching and practicing the truth, and repenting of one’s sinful ways. This is emphasized throughout the Bible because man’s time on earth is “too short” to waste living in error and leading souls astray.

Note the urgency of some of God’s people to teach and spread the truth to those in sin. Jeremiah said that God’s word was “in my heart like a burning fire Shut up in my bones; I was weary of holding it back, And I could not” (Jer. 20:9, NKJ). Jeremiah was one who had to speak when it came to preaching against the wickedness of Judah. To him, life was “too short” for the people of God to die in their sins.

When Christ lived on this earth, his continued emphasis was upon people turning to the Lord, and doing it right away. On one occasion, a man stated his intention to follow Christ, but intended on doing so at a later time. Notice Christ’s response, “Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead” (Matt. 8:22). Our responsibility is to Christ first, and then to others! We

make a grave mistake when we put things/people before Christ.

Yes, friends, “life is too short” to live in sin and outside of Christ. There is a change that is demanded of all of us, and it is something which must be done before it is too late (2 Cor. 6:2)!

Life Is Too Short to Not Condemn the Sin in Which People Are Living.

This is really where the problem is! I imagine most all would agree with the above point, and see that one cannot afford to live in their sins as if they had all the time in the world. David said, “there is but a step between me and death” (1 Sam. 20:3). While we’re not being pursued by Saul right now, the principle is still true which stresses the brevity of our time on earth. We have no guarantee of tomorrow.

Yet, when it comes to the matter of identifying sin, and identifying false teachers, it is then that some people say, “Life is too short!” Or they say words to the effect, “If you’d just stay busy preaching and trying to save souls, you wouldn’t have time to worry about these matters.” Is this true? Let us examine a few cases in the Bible, and determine from Bible examples how our brief time on earth is best spent.

Consider the example of Christ. While “the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10), we find Christ condemning those who were living in their sins. He condemned the scribes and Pharisees as hypocrites (Matt. 23:13-15, 23, 25, 27, 29). Christ also said that such people as the publicans were sick and sinners in need of repentance (Matt. 9:12-13). What would you think, dear reader, if someone called you sick and a sinner? Would you think “life is too short” to talk like that? Jesus would not agree with that assessment.

Another example we can study is

Paul. Paul had no problem identifying sin and naming false teachers; and we ought not have a problem with that, either. After Elymas the sorcerer’s attempt to turn away Sergius Paulus from the faith, Paul spoke to him, saying, “O full of all subtlety and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?” (Acts 13:10). Paul warned Timothy of such men as Hymenaeus, Alexander, Philetus, Demas, Alexander the coppersmith, and others whose actions had led many astray (1 Tim. 1:20; 2 Tim. 2:17, 4:10, 14).

One might recall how Paul used a significant amount of space in the book of Galatians, to condemn the Judaizing teachers of the day. Who is ready to say that Paul’s time and ink would have been “better spent” speaking on other subjects? Paul also told the Corinthians that if he got to see them a third time and they hadn’t repented of certain sins, “I will not spare” (2 Cor. 13:2). Evidently, the Holy Spirit, who inspired Paul to write what he did, and speak what he spoke, did not think that life was “too short” to deal with false doctrines and false teachers who were leading people astray!

John also spent some of his brief time on earth condemning false doctrine and false teachers. Read 1 John 4:1-6, and learn that there is such a thing as truth and error, and John expected those Christians to know the difference! In writing his second epistle, he spent time talking about who it was that had fellowship with God and Christ (2 John 9). He went on to warn those Christians that they had better be careful as to who they accepted, and not be bidding “Godspeed” to false teachers (2 John 10-11). Further, in writing his third epistle, he named Diotrephes as one who was doing that which was wrong. John said if he got to come there, he would not forget what Diotrephes had done, and would deal with it (3 John 9-10). Though John’s last two epistles weren’t long,

who will say that his time would have been better spent talking about other things? John called himself “the elder” (2 John 1; 3 John 1). I imagine he knew quite a bit about the brevity of life. Yet, notice what the Holy Spirit thought necessary to cover in those two shorter letters to the brethren. A little more than one third of his second letter, and about one fourth of his third letter focus on false teachers and false doctrine. Some might have told John that his letter was “too short” to devote that kind of space to such controversies. What might you have said, friend?

Conclusion

What can we learn from this study? Let us learn and learn well that yes, “life is too short” to spend it living in sin. We have a limited amount of time on earth and must be about our Father’s will while we have this day and breath in our bodies. Our Lord said, “I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work” (John 9:4).

At the same time, the quibble which says “life is too short” to take time to deal with false doctrine and false teachers is as wrong as it can be. We find New Testament heroes standing and dealing with sin and error in an attempt to bring lost souls to Christ, and this is what we need to be doing today (1 Cor. 11:1). The next time someone tells you, “We need to get busy saving souls, and not be fighting and writing about false teachers” (or words to this effect), just ask that person the following question: “When one deals with false doctrine and erroneous practices, what can we be doing but attempting to save that lost soul?” One who has turned from the Lord in rebellion is just as lost as the one who has never known God.

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He Lied and Spoke of Great Love

Jay Horsley

Can you identify the speaker of the following tender sentiment? “We want to assure you that . . . you are more beloved to us than ourselves.”

Was it the apostle Paul? No, it wasn’t him, but he did say: “Having thus a fond affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us” (1 Thess. 2:8) and “Do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others” (Phil. 2:4).

Was it the apostle Peter? No, it wasn’t him, but he did say to “fervently love one another from the heart” (1 Pet. 2:20).

Was it the apostle John? No, it wasn’t him, but he did say, “Beloved, let us love one another” (1 Pet. 2:20).

Maybe it was Jesus? No, but he said, “Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13).

No, the sender of this loving greeting was Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, leader of Al-Quida terrorists in Iraq speaking to the people of Jordan.

Why did the dedicated killer want to assure them of his love? It wasn’t because he was ending his terror campaign that has killed so many of his co-religionists in the “religion of peace.” It was only to try to calm his fellow countrymen after three of his subordinates blew up themselves and seventy-two other people at hotels in Amman, Jordan. Outrage there has been heightened because thirty-one of those people were killed at a wedding—including the groom’s father and sixteen other of his relatives, and both the parents of the bride and nine other of her relatives.

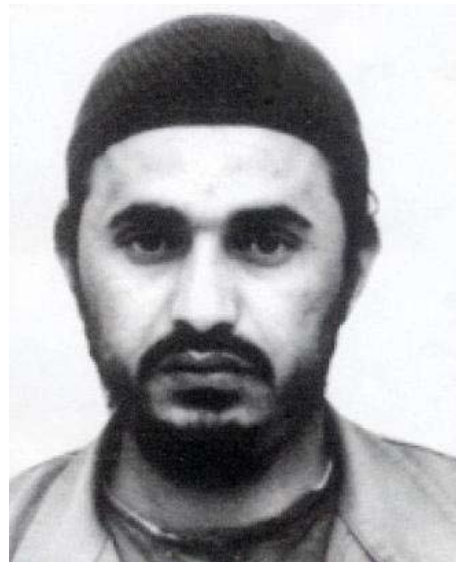
It appears that Zarqawi finally stumbled onto an atrocity so repugnant (blowing up a Muslim wedding) that an entire Muslim country is publicly and outspokenly outraged. After all his murders and outrages, he might finally have gone a bomb too far.

Since Jordanian rage might hinder his efforts, Zarqawi assured them that he really does love them and that he wasn’t trying to blow up a wedding—just kill American and Jewish secret agents in those hotels. However, surviving witnesses report that the “bomber talked his way into the wedding hall, watched it for a while, then jumped on a

table in the hall to detonate his explosives.” The bomber’s wife, a sister to some of Zarqawi’s chief men killed by U.S. troops in Iraq, admitted to going with her husband to the wedding with explosives strapped under her clothes as well, and she tried to blow herself up first. After her attempt failed, her husband climbed on table and blew up himself and thirty others. Don’t you think that from his table-top view the bomber could see that it was a wedding and not a meeting of spies in the hotel ballroom? Yet the terrorist speaks words of love.

Further insight into the hateful mind of the terrorist can be seen in the actions of other Zarqawi subordinates in Iraq on the very day that he spoke so “lovingly” to the Jordanians. Others of

his people blew themselves up *in a mosque during a time of prayer* so that they could kill as many worshipers as possible. Why would people interested in Islam be killing worshipers in a mosque? Because they are not interested in Islam (or Muslims) generally, but only in their extreme Whahabi version of it. They do not consider Muslims of other sects to be true Muslims and are willing blow up as many Kurdish and Shiite Moslems as it takes to create civil war.



A Last Will and Testament

Dave Morrison

Oftentimes when you are studying with people they will mention the thief on the cross. The argument goes something like this: “The thief was saved without baptism, therefore I can be saved without baptism.”

Was the thief saved? Absolutely! Is his salvation applicable to our salvation today? Emphatically, no! 2 Timothy 2:15 says that we are to “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” Here is the key to understanding the thief on the cross and why the terms of his salvation differ from ours. If we “rightly divide the word of truth” we will realize there is a division between the Old Testament and the New Testament. We also learn that there is one significant event that separates the two testaments, the death of Jesus Christ! Hebrews 9:15-17 makes this clear, “And for this cause He (Jesus) is the mediator of the New Testament that by means of death, for the redemption of transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.” The testa-

ment is simply a will and the testator is the will-maker. In other words, as long as Jesus is alive and on earth the first testament is in force and after his death the new testament is in force.

Do you have a will? Do you expect your properties (the conditions of your will) to be enforced before or after your death? In fact, while you live that property is yours to do with as you please. What blessings does the Lord possess? “The Son of man came to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10). Among the blessings that are his to distribute is “salvation.” While on earth he could set the conditions of that blessing in any way he saw fit, just as you can distribute your blessings as you see fit. Consider several events in the life of Christ.



And at the same time the worshipers in the mosque were being blown up, a two-vehicle team of suicide bombers tried to take down a hotel full of westerners. Additionally (still on the same day!), Zarqawi threatened to cut off the head of the king of Jordan and attack tourist sites and other places in Jordan where Westerners might be found. What might Jordanians face if Zarqawi didn't love them so much?

Of course if Zarqawi wants to convince Jordanians that he really does love them—even while he continues to bomb them—he's going to have to get a lot better at his apologies. His first attempt didn't end too well: “For those Muslims who were killed, we ask God to show them mercy,

for they were not targets. We did not and will not think for one moment to target them even if they were people of immorality and debauchery.”

It is obvious (and truth is often most easily seen in extremes) that Zarqawi speaks of love but is full of hate. As Jesus said, “A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. So then, you will know them by their fruits” (Matt. 7:18-20). And that's true of terrorist, saint, and all in between.

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“And behold they brought to Him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee” (Matt. 9:2-7). The Scribes thought Jesus had committed blasphemy. Jesus explains to them in verse 6, “but that you may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith He to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed and go to thine house.”

Jesus has the power on earth to distribute his blessing of salvation to anyone under any conditions he desires. I find it curious that no one ever argues that a condition of salvation should be “take up thy bed and walk,” don’t you? It is just as appropriate as the conditions of the thief on the cross.

The Penitent Woman

There are examples that are just as pertinent as the thief. The penitent woman in Luke 7:48 had her sins forgiven. What did she do? She washed the Lord’s feet with her tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Again, no one ever points to the penitent woman and says, “she was saved by these conditions, therefore I can be saved by these same conditions.”

Zaccheaus

What about Zaccheaus? What were the conditions that the Lord set for him? Whatever the Lord desired (the testator liveth!) See Luke 19:7-10.

The Rich Young Ruler

What about the rich young ruler of Luke 18:18-25? No one says, a condition of salvation is to “go and sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor.”

The conditions of salvation were different because the testator liveth. After Jesus’ death the conditions are uniform,

that is, they are same for all men everywhere. Not only are the conditions uniform, they are unchangeable. Jesus set the conditions of his will. The conditions are found in Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; and Luke 24:46-48.

Now, a will does not have to have conditions but if it does, those conditions go into effect after the death of the will-maker. The conditions must be met precisely as declared in the will. Therefore the Gospel is preached, men hear, believe, repent, confess, and are baptized in order to be saved according to the last will and testament of Jesus Christ.

Those that would continue to argue, “The thief was not baptized therefore I do not need to be baptized,” fail to see that they are under a different law (testament). They fail to “rightly divide the word of Truth.”

In 1913 the sixteenth amendment was added to the Constitution setting up a personal income tax. On April 15, do you think the Internal Revenue Service is going to accept the argument that, “George Washington did not have to pay a personal income tax, therefore I am not going to pay a personal income tax”? No one would make such an argument and expect to convince the IRS. Why, not? We are under a different law and to point to someone who was not subject to that law as proof that we may avoid the conditions of personal income tax is faulty reasoning.

When we point to the conditions of salvation “while the testator liveth,” we are using the same reasoning. We must look to the conditions after the “death of the testator,” if we desire to fulfill his last will and testament.

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Insurmountable Problems For the Theory of Evolution

Don R. Hastings

Those, who believe that the theory of evolution is a valid explanation for the origin of plant and animal life on earth, believe that science supports this theory. Does science support evolution? It has never been proven by science that:

- Out of chaos comes order.
- Inorganic matter can produce life.
- Life spontaneously generated.
- Plant life could produce animal life.
- One-celled animals evolved into more complex multi-celled animals.
- One species of animals evolved into another species.

The evolutionary theory is outside the realm of science for it cannot be observed and tested. The origin of the universe and life are a non-repeatable process, therefore, cannot be proven by science.

Science teaches that life begets life. This scientific fact agrees with the Bible. The “living and true God” created plant and animal life (1 Thess. 1:9; Gen. 1). Science agrees with the Bible that plants and animals produce offspring “according to its kind” (Gen. 1:11, 12, 21, 24).

Let us suppose that somehow algae did produce a one-

celled animal. The evolutionist still must blindly believe that this one-celled animal divided into two cells and this process went on until another animal was formed. However, for the evolutionary theory to be valid there are still some insurmountable problems to explain. There must have been more than just one one-celled animal dividing into a multi-celled animal of the same kind or the new original animal would have become extinct when it died! These newly formed original animals must have evolved within a few years of each other. They must have evolved at the same place on earth. There must have been at least one male and one female. These must have successfully mated. Their offspring must be at least one male and one female and they must have successfully mated. This same process must have occurred thousands of times with every new animal. These animals must have evolved into more and more complex animals for evolution to be true. Who can believe it?

The only reason one would believe in the theory of evolution is because their mind has been closed to the possibility that there could be a Creator whose power and wisdom far exceeds mankind. How sad!

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Flirting With Denominationalism

Johnie Edwards

The November 2005 issue of *The Christian Chronicle* ran a story of Monroe Hawley, reflecting sixty years of Midwest ministry. A statement which caught my eye was: “Today, Hawley watches efforts to bring closer ties between churches of Christ and independent Christian Churches. We have to be willing to receive one another as fellow-Christians—as brethren, not as step-brethren or erring brethren. . . . If a person has obeyed the gospel of Jesus Christ, they are my brother or sister.” These words need some attention.

1. Christian Church Folks As Fellow Christians? When did members of the Christian church get to be fellow-Christians, and “erring brethren?” One can only be a “fellow-Christian” and “erring brethren,” if they are a member of the Lord’s church. The Christian Church is a human denomination, the same as other religious bodies one cannot read about in the Bible!

2. Christian Churches Not the Lord’s Church. Jesus said, “I will build my church” (Matt. 16:18). Nothing is said about building Christian Churches. The Lord did say: “Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it” (Ps. 127:1). The Christian Church began too late to be the church prophesied by Isaiah 2:2-4. He said the church would begin in the “last days, when all nations would flow unto it, in the city of Jerusalem.” The Christian church was not listed until 1906 and did not begin in Jerusalem!

3. A Christian Church Is Not the One Body. Paul said, “there is one body” (Eph. 4:4) and later he said, “the body is the church” (Col. 1:24). Only the church that adheres to New Testament teaching is the one body of Christ. Christian Churches wear an unscriptural name; have added mechanical instrumental music to the worship; and many of them provide for unscriptural works and the list goes on.

4. Christian Churches and Gospel Obedience. One cannot be taught wrong and baptized right. Often churches will even take into their membership, folks who have not even been immersed, much less baptized properly, with the scriptural confession and for the right reasons. Bible baptism is for other reasons than “the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38). The Bible teaches one is to be baptized to be in Christ (Gal. 3:27), and one must be “baptized into one body” (1 Cor. 12:13). With the kind of teaching floating around, encouraging folks to flirt with the Christian Church, no wonder some weak members of the church of Christ join up with a Christian Church! We just have to get to teaching folks the difference in the Lord’s church and Christian Churches.

“Walked on Ice” continued from front page

winds (Matt. 14:30). Imagine a man calmly walking and talking while on an ice floe which is being tossed about by strong, “boisterous” winds in the midst of the sea. Why, even our champion surfers and skateboarders would have to be impressed!

Note the article and Nof’s use of the expression, “could have,” what “could have” happened. He speaks of what he imagines. If it is granted, as the article seems to do, that someone walked on the sea, why not accept the testimony of those who were there and who were awed by the miracle they witnessed (Matt. 14:26, 32, 33; Mark 8:49-51; John 6:19)? If one denies that Jesus walked on the water, why invent an ice floe? Why not simply say, “I do not believe it happened”?

Let us not forget that Jesus is not the only one who is said to have walked on the water that night. Peter did, too (Matt. 14:28-33). Peter “walked on the water, to go to Jesus.” I suppose that means he walked on the water to get to the ice floe Jesus was walking on! Or, did Peter have his own private, “floating piece of ice”? What say ye, professor Nof?

The article notes that, “It might have been nearly impossible for distant observers to see a piece of floating ice

surrounded by water.” Indeed, Sherlock Holmes lives! Since it was in the middle of the night, one might well conclude that, “It might have been nearly impossible for distant observers to see a piece of floating ice surrounded by water” (Mark 6:48, after 3:00 A.M.). What a brilliant deduction, Sherlock Nof!

Yes, Nof says it is unlikely that anyone there could have seen the ice upon which Jesus walked, but two thousand years later he has seen it. If they, who were close enough to converse with the Savior, did not see the “floating piece of ice,” how does he affirm that it existed?

Conclusion

So, we are to believe that Jesus walked on an ice floe, which no one saw. We have no clue how he came to locate the ice. We are to believe that he walked on it while it was being tossed by “great,” “contrary,” “boisterous” winds, and that while doing so he carried on a conversation with his terrified disciples, one of whom also walked on the water. Is it not easier to believe the miracle objectively described by those who were there than to accept the wild conjectures of one who was not?

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Quips & Quotes

Feeding the 5,000 and Ice Water

“After the feeding of the 5,000, the Gospel of John records the miracle of Jesus walking on water—the Sea of Galilee (John 6). In another attempt to explain away the miracles of the Bible, Doron Nof, a Florida State University Professor of Oceanography, and his co-authors of a study (‘Is There A Paleolimnological Explanation for “Walking on Water” in the Sea of Galilee?’) said that it’s more likely that Jesus walked on an isolated patch of floating ice(!) called ‘springs ice’: ‘As natural scientists, we simply explain that unique freezing processes probably happened in that region only a handful of times during the last 12,000 years,’ Nof said. ‘We leave to others the question of whether or not our research explains the biblical account.’ They said it didn’t happen very often and that in today’s climate, would only happen about once in 10,000 years. Of course this doesn’t explain how the 5,000 found it comfortable to follow Jesus around and sit down to eat, or how his Disciples were able to launch their boat in ice water. Are we to presume that Peter, too, walked on ice, then broke through until Jesus took his hand?” (<http://www.fsu.edu/news/2006/04/04/ice.walk/>)

Polls

“Scripps Howard/Ohio University poll reported that most Americans don’t believe they will experience a resurrection of their bodies after they die, putting them at odds with Scripture’s ‘one hope’ (John 5:28-29; 1 Cor. 15; Eph. 4:4; 1 Thess. 4:14-18) and creeds of most denominations. 36% of the 1,007 adults polled said ‘yes’ to: ‘Do you believe that, after you die, your physical body will be resurrected someday?’ 54% said ‘no’ and 10% were undecided. However, 59% of those claiming to be ‘born again’ (among Protestants) said they believe in personal resurrection, the highest level of belief among any group in the poll. The same poll found that most Americans believe in a God or a Supreme Being; 65% were ‘absolutely certain’ that God exists. 72% said they believe in some sort of conscious afterlife, while 47% said they are ‘absolutely certain’ of this.” (http://www.shns.com/shns/g_index2.cfm?action=detail&pk=RESURRECTION-04-05-06)

“Another recent U.S. poll gives us more hope, for a majority of college students say religion is important in their lives and that they’re concerned about the country’s moral direction. This is interpreted by the Harvard University Institute of Politics, who conducted the poll, to mean that this religious concern could influence upcoming elections. Seven out of ten of 1,200 American college students said that religion was ‘somewhat’ or ‘very important’ in their lives; one in four said they had become more spiritual since entering college. 54% were concerned about the moral direction of the U.S. citing these moral concerns: abortion policy, stem

cell research and marriage of homosexuals. 50% said the government’s response to Hurricane Katrina raised moral questions. The poll results suggested that 44% of the student population could be considered traditional liberals, 16% would be traditional conservatives, 25% considered religious centrists and 13% as secular centrists.” (<http://www.mercurynews.com/ml/mercurynews/news/politics/14319360.htm>)

“Sex Commandos”

“Jewish ultra-Orthodox computer hackers are waging a war against Israeli pornographic web sites by hacking the sites and replacing their content with a picture of Menahem Mendel Schneerson, the late leader of the Jewish Lubavitch movement, thought by some to be their messiah. Beneath the picture they leave their purpose: ‘We, the Da-Net group, have hacked into this site and erased all its abomination’ and that the pornographic site is ‘a violation which has caused many people’s death, troubles and calamities. What is this violation? It is a man who has spilt his sperm for nothing!’” (<http://www.breitbart.com/news/2006/04/10/060410201707.xhydd92h.html>)

Gnostic Gospel Found

“After being shopped around for about thirty years, the National Geographic society has purchased a 66-page codex (book) written in Coptic and in bad repair, which includes these texts: James (or the First Apocalypse of James), the Letter of Peter to Philip, and, most notably, one called the Gospel of Judas (or Book of Allogenes). The codex is said to be 1700 years old, but the Gospel of Judas was known as one of the heretical Gnostics books as early as AD 180, when it was condemned by Irenaeus his anti-Gnostic work *Adversus Haereses*, saying the members of this sect ‘declare that Cain derived his being from the Power above, and acknowledge that Esau, Korah, the Sodomites, and all such persons, are related to themselves. . . . They declare that Judas the traitor was thoroughly acquainted with these things, and that he alone, knowing the truth as no others did, accomplished the mystery of the betrayal; by him all things, both earthly and heavenly, were thus thrown into confusion. They produce a fictional history of this kind, which they style the Gospel of Judas’ (*Against Heresies*, I.31.1).

“The assumption is that this recently produced text is likely the same to which Irenaeus referred. In it Judas said to Jesus, ‘You are from the immortal realm of Barbelo’—Barbelo being the first thought, Ennoia, in Gnostic accounts; other Gnostic-beings are also named: Nebro, Yaldabaoth, Saklas and Adamas. One sentence has Jesus praising Judas: ‘You will exceed all of them. For you will sacrifice the man that clothes me.’ The account ended with Judas receiving ‘some money’ for betraying Jesus. We would agree with the Adventists scholars who ‘See “Gospel of Judas” as Neither an Authentic Gospel Nor ‘Good News.’”” (<http://news.adventist.org/data/2006/03/1144783031/index.html.en>)



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