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THE "RED LETTER" JESUS PART ONE

by Ted J. Clarke

There are no words capable of fully expressing the magnificence of Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul styled Jesus as God's "unspeakable gift" (2 Corinthians 9:15). At the Transfiguration of Jesus, God said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him" (Matthew 17:5). Christ noted that his words will judge us in the last day (John 12:48). It is impossible to put too much emphasis on the need to hear Christ and obey his words (Matthew 7:24).

However, a serious error is made by those who study the Bible and insist that Christ's words, which are printed in red letters in many editions of the Bible, are more important than the words not printed in red. When studying with someone, you may make a point from something said by Peter, Paul, or others, only to have that person reply, "But Jesus didn't say that. It isn't in red letters." There may be two things intended by such comments. One is that maybe Paul or Peter said something that contradicts what Jesus said. If so, then Jesus ought to carry more authority than any of his apostles. A second point which may be intended is that since Jesus didn't say it, it is not as important as what he did say. This might also imply that we ought to concentrate more on what Christ said during his personal ministry than on what the apostles and other New Testament authors said. **Both concepts are wrong** and may lead those who believe them to neglect some essential teachings in the Scriptures.

No Contradictions Between Christ and Apostles

Regarding the first point, neither Peter or Paul nor any other New Testament author ever contradicted anything that Jesus taught. Christ said that the Holy Spirit would take what he received of Jesus and reveal it to the apostles (John 14:26; 16:13-14). Therefore, the apostles could only speak and write what Jesus directed them to do, through the Holy Spirit. While praying to the Father about his apostles, Jesus said, "I have given them thy word...Sanctify

them through thy truth; thy word is truth" (John 17:14, 17). Later in his prayer Jesus asked that his apostles might be "one" in him and the Father, "that they may be made perfect in one" (John 17:21-23). This oneness for which Christ prayed included "them also which believe on me through their (apostles') word" (John 17:20). Jesus and his apostles never contradicted each other in their teachings. They were directed by the Spirit whom Christ sent. "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning" (John 15:26, 27). When someone fails to do something that the apostles or other inspired men taught, because one believes that it contradicts Jesus, it simply means that that person misunderstands either Christ or the apostles, or perhaps both. There is harmony in all that Jesus and the inspired writers said, even though at times **some things** may be difficult to understand (cf. 2 Peter 3:15-16).

The Gospels, PLUS Acts, the Epistles and Revelation Are Christ's Words

The second point sometimes claimed, that if Jesus didn't say it, it must not be too important, is also a critical error to believe. The only record that we have of Jesus writing anything is what he wrote on the ground in John 8:1-11. We do not know what he wrote and God did not consider that important to our salvation. However, what Jesus did and taught while he was on earth that is essential is recorded in the four gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Note that Jesus did not write these accounts, but he did inspire men to do so through the Holy Spirit. Luke said, in his gospel that he wrote, "of all that Jesus began both to do and teach" (Acts 1:1). John 20:30-31 says, "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is

the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." John wrote his gospel last, about A.D. 96, yet he says he could not tell of everything which Jesus did (John 21:25). While we do not possess anything which Jesus personally wrote, and while we do not have a record of everything which Jesus did, the Lord did cause his apostles to accurately reveal and record the gospel accounts of his life for all future generations (John 14:26; 16:13-15).

An all important point in these matters is this: **while he was on earth, Jesus did not reveal to his apostles everything that he wanted them and all of the world to know!** If he had, we would not need anything other than the gospel accounts, the red letter parts of the New Testament. Instead, Christ said to his apostles on the night he was betrayed, "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now" (John 16:12). In the next verse Christ told them that these "many things would be revealed to them by the Holy Spirit when he came (John 16:13). The Holy Spirit came on Pentecost (Acts 2:1-47) and Peter taught things that had not previously been known. Of course, all of the apostles received the same Spirit and taught the same thing (Acts 2:37,42). This Spirit stayed with these men throughout their lives, guiding them in what they spoke and wrote (Matthew 10:19-20; 28:20). In 1 Corinthians 14:37 Paul said that the Corinthian Christians needed to "acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord." Notice that these words claim that the writings of men like Paul are just as much the words of Jesus as the red letters in the gospels! Think about that, brethren and friends. The words which Paul, Peter, James, John and other New Testament authors penned are **just as important** as the words of Jesus in red! They all have their source in Jesus. "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me" (Luke 10:16). See also Matthew 10:40; John 13:20. If you fail to "hear" what an inspired New Testament writer says, you fail to hear Christ himself and God who sent him. That is serious business!

Jesus speaks to us from every verse

(Continued on page 2)

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THE RED LETTER JESUS

(Continued from page 1)

in the New Testament, not just from Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. What Peter teaches about salvation, Christ is saying (Mark 16:16; 1 Peter 3:21). What Paul teaches about the church is what Jesus says (Matthew 16:13-19; Ephesians 1:20-23). What James emphasizes about works, the Lord proclaims clearly (Matthew 7:21-27; James 2:14-26). When Acts, the epistles and Revelation tell us something that Jesus didn't say during his personal ministry, they are still giving us the words of Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

There is nothing wrong with having a "red letter" edition of the Bible, just as long as we realize that the words of Jesus are not all found in red. Nothing that Jesus taught was ever contradicted by any New Testament writer. Christ wanted us to know that everything which he inspired the apostles and disciples to write are just as much his words as if he spoke them personally while on earth (John 16:12-15; Luke 10:16). While the New Testament is Christ's covenant with man today, even the Old Testament is filled with valuable lessons for us in the Christian Age (1 Corinthians 10:6, 11). "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). - [To be continued.]

One cannot lose reverence for things spiritual without losing reverence for the Author of spirituality.

**MECHANICAL MUSIC
IN WORSHIP**

by Allen Webster

(The first article in this three part series entitled, "Music In Worship," ran in the July, 1991 issue. We apologize to the author and our readers for the delay in continuing the series. Ed.)

Usually the first thing that one notices who visits the church of Christ is that mechanical music is not used in worship. They are surprised and often inquire as to the reason behind this practice. Since Christians are to "be ready always to give an answer to every man" (1 Peter 3:15), we gladly take this opportunity to explain what the Bible teaches regarding music in the worship of God.

Since there are only two kinds of music - vocal and mechanical, - we must determine which kind God wants, or if He wants a combination of the two. Since Christians do not live under the Old Testament law (Col. 2:14; Hebrews 8:6,7), we appeal to the New Testament for our answer (Jn. 12:48).

**IN THE NEW TESTAMENT
WE FIND THAT...****CHRIST NEVER COMMANDED
MECHANICAL MUSIC.**

Jesus has all authority (Mt. 28:18), yet He never used instruments or commanded His followers to do so. We do have an example of Jesus singing (Mt. 26:30).

Since God speaks through His Son (Mt. 17:5; Heb. 1:1-3), it follows that God also has given no authority for instruments in worship. But someone may ask, "Do we need authority from Christ to use them?" Yes! Paul wrote, "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Col. 3:17). So all ("whatsoever") we do in worship must be done by the written authority ("name") of our Lord.

**THE HOLY SPIRIT NEVER
SANCTIONED MECHANICAL MUSIC.**

Before Jesus left the earth, He promised to send the Holy Spirit to guide the apostles (John 16:13; cf. 14:16-17). Since the Spirit was to guide the apostles into all truth, and playing instruments of music in worship is not found, it must be concluded that mechanical music was not a part of the truth that Christ gave.

Peter wrote, "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness..." (II Pet. 1:3). Since the Bible contains all that we need to be godly, nothing essen-

tial has been left out.

**THE APOSTLES NEVER USED
MECHANICAL MUSIC.**

The known worship habits of the apostles show that they did not use instrumental music. If the apostles' doctrine included playing instruments in worship, would it not be reasonable to conclude that an example could be found in the New Testament? We have examples of them singing (Acts 16:25), teaching, praying, partaking of the Lord's Supper, and giving (Acts 2:42; I Cor. 16:1-2), but never playing.

**CHRISTIANS MUST NEVER ADD
MECHANICAL MUSIC.**

John wrote, "...if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book" (Rev. 22:18). He added, "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God" (II Jn. 9). To "transgress" is to "step out of bounds." One who steps out of the bounds of the Scriptures by adding mechanical music to singing is out of fellowship with God.

Paul warned that one who perverts the gospel of Christ would be accursed (Galatians 1:6-9). Adding unauthorized practices to worship perverts it (Mk. 7:7-9). When men teach things that are different from Christ, we must not put their opinions "above that which is written" (I Cor. 4:6), knowing that men can be wrong (I Jn. 4:1).

Music is important in worship and God is not pleased if it is left out. But of the two kinds of music, vocal and mechanical, the Scriptures allow only vocal (specifically singing) to be used (Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:19). It is wrong to add mechanical music to singing because it is unauthorized by Christ, unsanctioned by the Holy Spirit, unused by the apostles, and unsafe for Christians to practice.

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The tears of Christ are the pity of God. The gentleness of Jesus is the long-suffering of God. The tenderness of Jesus is the love of God. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father"

(Jn. 14:9)

Here is one lesson that Israel never did learn, nor has the world yet learned it: "O Jehovah, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." (Jer. 10:23)

- R. L. Whiteside

MY TYPEWRITER DOESN'T KNOW JESUS

by Ted J. Clarke

Modern technology is great in so many ways. Recently, our church purchased a new electronic typewriter, replacing an older model which had none of the features developed during the past fifteen years or so. The new machine has the ability to use different printwheels to vary the size and style of print. It has the **bold type** and automatic underlining, plus an automatic correction key which is frequently in use.

One valuable feature of the new typewriter is a 75,000 word vocabulary built into its computer memory. This feature allows you to be warned by the machine if you misspell a word as you are typing. If you do, you will hear a "beep, beep" and a warning light flashes on the keyboard. You will also get the beep and light if you type a word that is not in the computer memory of the typewriter. A 75,000 word vocabulary is very extensive. For example, it is said that Edgar Allan Poe, perhaps the most prolific writer ever, only used a vocabulary of 42,000 words in all of his writings.

Since this new typewriter has such an extensive vocabulary, you can imagine my surprise to find out that my typewriter doesn't know Jesus. While working on an article for this paper, I typed out J-E-S-U-S, only to hear a "beep, beep" and see the light flashing on the display board. Thinking that I had probably hit a wrong key and misspelled the word, I checked the spelling. It was correct, Jesus. That left only one alternative. My typewriter really didn't know the word Jesus. "Jesus" was not even one of the 75,000 words programmed into its memory! I couldn't believe it! The Man who has had a greater impact on the world than any number of men did not qualify to be included in a 75,000 word vocabulary. This is both shocking and sad.

My first reaction was to think, "Stupid typewriter!" However, I quickly realized that **people**, probably several, were involved in choosing the words to include in the vocabulary. Do we realize the tragedy of lost souls who do not know Jesus? This Jesus said, "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24). To fail to give the name of Jesus a proper place in such an extensive vocabulary indicates the kind of world in which we live. The apostle said, "And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness" (1 John 5:19). Sometimes Christians forget that while Jesus is everything to them, he means little or

nothing to the world.

Another feature of this new typewriter allows one to add new words to its memory. I could program "Jesus" into its memory and stop the beeping and flashing every time I typed the Lord's name. Again, it is sad to think that Jesus would have to be added to a 75,000 word vocabulary, like some obscure medical term which is not commonly used by the general public. I have decided against adding Jesus to the computer memory. Instead, I want the beeps and flashing light to remind me that not everyone knows Jesus. These are not just people who program typewriter vocabularies. They are our friends, our families, our neighbors and co-workers!

Listen as you live each day! Can you hear the "beep, beep" warning you that many do not know Jesus? **Look** around at those whom you contact! Can you see the warning light flashing, telling you that they need to know Jesus? We dare not stop up our ears nor close our eyes. The Savior reminds us, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh to the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). "Jesus" means God is salvation. Only through **Jesus** can one be saved. See the chart on page four of this publication for God's plan of salvation through Jesus.

GOOD ADVICE

I never knew an early-rising, hard-working, prudent man, careful of his earnings and strictly honest, who complained of bad luck. A good character, good habits, and iron industry are impregnable to assaults of all the ill luck that fools ever dreamed of.

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AN ILLUSTRATION OF SALVATION

by Shan Jackson

For salvation to be fully appreciated, it must be fully understood. Salvation is an entire process which not only rescues man from his sins but also restores man that he might work for God. Note this illustration.

A house is burning, and a music lover knows there is a Stradivarius violin inside. Realizing its worth and realizing his appreciation for it, he rushes inside at great risk to save it. We say that is salvation. But what if the Stradivarius was in some way damaged in the fire. Would the music lover feel compelled to take the precious instrument to a skilled craftsman for repair? Is that not also salvation? Now, the violin is not only saved from the fire but it is also repaired from the fire's damage. Now, a great musician can take the violin, tune it, and pull the bow across the strings so that all may appreciate the beauty. That is also salvation.

Complete salvation requires rescue, repair, and use. As Christ rescues us from sin's danger, he restores and heals our souls, and then he puts us to work in his vineyard. That is complete salvation. (See 1 Thessalonians 5:23. - Ed.)

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There are three kinds of people in the world; the WILLS, the WON'TS, and the CAN'TS. The first accomplish everything, the second oppose everything, the third fail in everything.

CRITICISM

It is easy enough to pick out the flaws
In the work that others have done;
To sneer at the little they have achieved
When your task you haven't begun.
It is easy enough to fuss and find fault
When others are doing their best;
To point out error others have made
When you have done nothing but rest.

It is easy enough to cavil and carp,
To criticize, scoff and deride,
For few of us ever have done perfect
work
No matter how hard we have tried.
It is easy enough not to think of the best,
And to dwell all the time on the worst;
And perhaps it is proper sometimes to
find fault
But be sure you have done something
first.

- Selected.

NESTS IN OUR HAIR

by Bill Brandstatter

Many today think that unity in religion is not possible. Some feel that we must have "unity in diversity." This is the idea that we can simply agree to disagree. What good will this do to the cause of Christ? The Bible teaches that we can't keep the birds (false teachers) from flying over our heads, but we can prevent them from building nests in our hair.

Jesus gave the first warning in Matthew 7:15. "Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing." If one man came teaching ten different doctrines, he would be labeled by the world as a heretic. Yet, when ten different men teach ten different doctrines, many in the world think nothing is wrong. The Bible teaches something is wrong. Paul indicated that if the apostles, angels in heaven, or any man preached a different gospel from that in the New Testament, condemnation would follow (Galatians 1:6-9). Christians must therefore avoid any teacher or church which doesn't teach that which is sound doctrine (I Timothy 1:10). Men are bound to arise who will speak perverse things (Acts 20:30). It is almost impossible to keep men from speaking as they wish, but we need to take heed lest we let them win us to the way of error.

The only way to prevent the false teachers from building nests in our hair is to be scripturally strong. This must come through faithful attendance to services and dedicated devotion in our lives. Elders in the Lord's church must keep birds out of the hair by being able to "exhort and to convince the gainsayers" (Titus 1:9). Christians should always be ready to give an answer for their faith (I Peter 3:15). Don't let the birds of false doctrine build nests in your hair. "Contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3).

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When the mighty oak tree is felled the whole forest echoes its fall, but a hundred acorns are sown by a silent unnoticed breeze.

If you make people think they're thinking they'll love you for it; but if you really make them think they'll hate you.

I am not absentminded. It is the presence of mind that makes me forget everything else.

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; I Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical Name (Romans 16:16).
3. Established at the right place (Isaiah 2:2,3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God's commands including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; I Corinthians 12:13).

GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

1. Hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian Living (I Peter 2:11, 12; Revelation 2:10).

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