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Will the "real" Church of Christ please stand up!

by Mike Pace

There used to be a fairly popular program on the television in recent years that caught the attention of many. On this particular program, if you'll recall, three participants were each asked to assume the role of one certain individual. Standing before a panel, a concise bibliography was given of this "one" individual. Then each of the "three" would claim to be this person. A period of questioning was provided so that perhaps the panel could in fact decide upon the "real" person, and eliminate the other two imposters. Some very revealing and significant questions were asked of the three to aid the panel in making a correct decision. Finally, after the allotted time period, the moderator would simply ask, "Will the real _____, please stand up!". At that time the real person in question would identify himself. I believe the program we are talking about was called "To Tell the Truth."

Perhaps there is a lesson that can be learned from this program when applying these same ideas to the church that our Lord built. (Matt. 16:18).

As a person takes a look at the congregations of the Church of Christ all across this nation in which we live, it is easy to see that there is an ocean of souls that are often driven by the winds of various doctrines. There are even congregations which have completely forsaken the Word of God, and then have the audacity to plead immunity from criticism because they wear the name "Church of Christ". Then one notices that there are also congregations which stand firm on such matters as the plan of salvation, they worship according to the Word, and they even go to the extent of contending for the faith within themselves; but they refuse to separate themselves from those congregations which do not teach correctly on matters of salvation or worship. Then we could observe that there are congregations that are over-reacting and go off the strait and narrow way in the

opposite direction. Those congregations often differ with the others in matters such as support of children's homes, support of a local preacher, to have or not to have Bible classes, etc.

Then in the midst of all this confusion, there are a few that hold to the simple Word of God, not making it foggy, not cluttering it with dogmatic opinions, or rationalizing it away into oblivion. These

"true" congregations of the Church of Christ do not fear in making a distinction between the church that Jesus died for (Eph. 5:25), and the "false" Churches of Christ. For it involves more than just wearing the name "Church of Christ" that makes one synonymous with the church of the New Testament. One can call himself a "doctor", but unless he conducts himself as a doctor and does the

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Is there Hope or Security?

By Terry Frizzell

In the case of Peter, he said of himself and those living the same type of life, "But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they." (Acts 15:11.) Peter had been personally associated with Jesus. He had been promised the "keys of the kingdom" (Matt. 16:19.), and had been baptized in the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:1-4.) He also had power to heal the sick, and to raise the dead (Acts 3:9). Yet, even with all this what was the proof of his salvation? Peter says it is faith in the Lord's promise! (Acts 15:11.)

It is not God's desire that man be lost, but that he might be saved. This is why God gave His Son! Why would God give His Son and promise eternal life if there is no hope or security for man? Look if you will at Hebrews 6:13-15, God made a promise to Abraham, and God kept His promise! God's promise to His saints (of eternal life), and His oath backing the promise, are immutable (unchangeable). (Hebrews 6:18.)

The promise of eternal life is available to those who are "in Christ". ("And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." 1 John 5:11). However, this is the promise, and where that promise is made, now where is the security? Peter, says

that the security "in Christ" is in moving our life in the right direction and knowing that in doing so we move closer to God. He stated for those "in Christ" that they can have security by (II Peter 1:5-7) "adding to faith virtue, to virtue, knowledge, to knowledge, temperance (self control), to temperance, patience, to patience, godliness, to godliness, brotherly kindness, to brotherly kindness, charity." Then in verse 10, he concludes by stating, ". . . give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall." All of these are practical, men can do them, they can be a part of every life. Doing them, making them a part of a person's life assures an entrance into eternal life. If one does these things it is not a matter of, "Can he be saved?" but "Can he be lost?"

When we do not allow sin to control our life and allow Christ through His Word to do so, then we have hope and security. Then, even considering we are human and sinful, "if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And He is the propitiation for our sins:" (1 John 2:1-2).

There is no hope or security by following the sin in this world, but there is hope and security by *abiding "in Christ"*.

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EDITOR Mike Pace

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WILL THE REAL CHURCH OF CHRIST PLEASE STAND UP

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things that a doctor must do, he is a "doctor" in name alone. The same is true with the church. Unless we practice the things that the church of the New Testament did, and unless we follow explicitly the pattern for the church that the Lord gave us, we then are the "Church of Christ" in name only. The name we wear is special because it was prophesied of old, (Isaiah 62:2), that the Lord's people would wear a new name. And then Acts 4:12 reminds that there is only "one" name by which we can be saved. That new name denotes a manner of life, and not a title only. Those that truly wear the name of Christ, live and conduct themselves upon Jesus Christ in all matters. (Ephesians 2:20.)

It is significant to notice that God's people, the church, is made up of some very special people according to I Peter 2:9. We are special because we wear Christ's name, and we are special because He died for us. (Romans 5:8.) God's people truly are a people for God's own possession according to Titus 2:14. However, take heed, the warning is sounded, "ye that think that ye stand, lest ye fall" (I Cor. 10:12). The Jews of Jesus' day thought because they were called the children of Israel, God's people, and the children of God, this would cover a multitude of their sins. However, nothing could have been further from the truth, as God expected a faithful way of life as well as wearing the appropriate name. Likewise, wearing the name "Christian" or "Church of Christ" today cannot camouflage a person's true identity. It is a shame for any to use the name of Christ to cover a rejection of God's Word, or to conceal one's religious idiosyncrasies. Just as Romans 2:17-29 teaches that a true Jew was not the one who had been only

The 144,000 and the Great Multitude

By Bobby Bates

In Revelation chapters 7 and 14 we read about the 144,000 and the Great Multitude. The Jehovah's Witnesses have taken these passages and have built an entire doctrine around them. They teach that the 144,000 are those who will inherit heaven and the Great Multitude are those who will inherit the earth. The 144,000 are spirit beings who will have sacrificed the right to live upon the earth. The Great Multitude will be living upon a regenerated earth in perfect human bodies.

The main thing wrong with this doctrine is that it is not taught in the Bible. It is falacious to take a figurative passage and build a doctrine around it that is not taught in plain language elsewhere in the Bible.

In an effort to justify their two-party system, they quote John 10:16 "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold . . ." They quote Jesus as saying he has two folds. But that is not what the Lord said. He said he had "other sheep." That is not the same as saying he has another fold. It is evident Jesus is talking to Jews, who were often alluded to as God's fold, about Gentiles. But this passage does not help Jehovah's Witnesses because the latter part of the verse says, "and they shall become ONE flock . . ." This completely annihilates their two-class system.

Furthermore, Ephesians 2:15-16 tells us that Jesus has reconciled both Jew and Gentile into ONE body. Ephesians 4:4 informs us there is only one body. Eph. 1:22-23 identifies the body as the church. In Romans 12:5 Paul says, "we, who are

many, are ONE body in Christ." Then he tells us in I Corinthians 12:13 that we enter the one body through baptism. The two-class system is simply not taught in the Bible.

If there are two classes, there are two hopes, two faiths, and two bodies. We have already seen that there is but one body, and Ephesians 4:4-5 shows that there is only one hope and one faith.

It is important to note that Revelation 7 is describing two different ACTIONS and not two different groups. In verse 4 John said he "heard the number of them that were sealed, a hundred and forty and four thousand." He did not SEE them; he only HEARD the number called out. Then in verse 9 he saw a great multitude, which no man could number. First of all John HEARD the number of the group, and then he SAW them. It was the SAME group.

The number 144,000 is the multiple of the square of twelve (the symbol of organized religion) and the square of ten (completeness). Thus, the number 144,000 represents all of the saved.

Notice that both the 144,000 and the Great Multitude are described as being before the throne of God. In Revelation 7:15 the Great Multitude are "before the throne of God; and they serve him day and night in his temple." In Revelation 14:3 the 144,000 "sing as it were a new song before the throne." The Jehovah's Witnesses attempt to get around this dilemma by saying that the Great Multitude is indeed before the throne, but

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circumcised in the flesh and demonstrating an outward appearance, but was one that was inwardly circumcised of the heart. And so it is with the true Church of Christ.

So here then is our plea, "Will the real Church of Christ please stand up!" Identify yourself by fulfilling your purpose, by demonstrating the proper attitude of love, by diligently seeking unity, and all this without compromising nor rationalizing the truth.

"For we are laborers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise

masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." (I Cor. 3:9-15.)

THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

By Harold Turner

Today much is said about the providence of God. This expression is not found as such in the Bible, however there are numerous expressions which teach us about the providence of God. The word providence is used only once in the Bible, and though it is not used in reference to God, its use helps us to understand its meaning. In Acts 24:2 Paul is being accused by Tertullus before the governor Felix. The record states, "And when he was called forth, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying, Seeing that by thee we enjoy great quietness, and that very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by thy providence . . ." It seems evident from this that providence means to provide for, or to care for. Webster defines providence as "The act of providing, exercising foresight, or preparing. Divine guidance or care: also, an act or instance of it."

Through his providence, God provides for all our needs. In James 1:17 the Bible states, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights . . ." This expression teaches us that every good blessing that we need is supplied by our heavenly Father. This is an expression of God's providential care for his people. This is also seen in Phil. 4:19 where Paul said, "But my God shall supply all your needs according to his riches in glory by Jesus Christ." And in 1 Tim. 6:17 Paul said that God gives us richly all things to enjoy. Though these passages do not use the word providence, they teach us that God provides for all our needs. Our daily existence depends upon the providential care of God. In Acts 17:28 Paul said, "For in him we live, and move, and have our being . . ."

Though most of us would agree that God provides for all our needs, there are questions concerning how he does the providing. Jesus taught his disciples to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." (Matt. 6:11.) And in the latter part of this chapter he said, "Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? . . . But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matt. 6:25,33.) In these words, Jesus teaches us that God

will provide for our physical needs. It is through his providence that we have food to eat, clothing to wear, and our shelter from the heat and cold. But, how does God provide these things? Can we expect him to bring the food and place it on our table for us? We know that God has provided the elements in the soil that are necessary for plants to grow. He has also provided the sunshine and the rain, which are also necessary. But, he does not plant the seed in the soil for us. He does not cultivate the soil for us, nor does he harvest and cook the food for us. God provides what we cannot provide. God expects us to work to provide our food. In 2 Thess. 3:8,10 Paul said, "Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you . . . For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat." Now, does the fact that we have to work in order to eat mean that God is not providing our food? No, God has provided everything necessary for the food to be produced, and even provides us with the health and strength to work.

Too, through his providence, God has made it possible for the lost to hear the gospel. But, again, we have a part to carry out before the gospel reaches the lost. Through his providence God may help us to be in the right place at the right time, but it is by and through his people that the gospel must be preached. Unless we are willing to go and teach the lost, they will not be saved. God doesn't speak to

us audibly and tell us to go to a certain place to preach, but he may, in some way, make it possible for us to be in the right place to teach others, but we must ever be looking for the opportunities to teach, and be ever willing to teach before we can be a part in carrying out God's plan in saving the lost. God will open the doors of opportunities, but we must be seeking them. God has ordained that the lost be saved through our efforts to preach the gospel (Mark 16: 15-16). This is an unchangeable law. God has provided every thing necessary for the lost to be saved, but he has planned that we have a part in reaching and saving the lost.

Every blessing we enjoy has been provided by our Father. Every soul that has been saved, has been saved by the providence of God. We may not always understand how God works things out in providing for our needs, but we should believe and be thankful that he does the providing. What we need to realize is the part we are responsible for fulfilling in order for God to supply these needs. We should be actively seeking ways to carry out his will for us so that his blessing may be enjoyed by others. If we pray for God to bless those in need, we need to realize that we are the instruments through which he blesses them. If we pray for God to save the lost, we need to realize that we are the instruments through which this can be accomplished, if we will teach the gospel to them. We must never just sit down and expect God to do everything for us and others. He has provided and still provides, but he has designed that we have a part in receiving the blessings.

Watch for their Souls

By W. R. Smith

"The church is on the march" where the shepherds are watching their flock as well as praying for them. The more scrutinizing and diligent they are the purer and more effective the church will be. If the watching is consistent and thorough the number of delinquents will decline steadily and decidedly. Strictness in administering the divine plan of watching will cut to a minimum the number of chronic transgressors in the church. This will result because:

- (1) Divine power (Romans 1:16) applied in the right way purifies.
- (2) A forthright and consistent assault on sin among the members serves

as a potent warning to others whose conduct might fall into the pattern of the free and careless ways of the world.

- (3) Non-members who are potential weaklings will consider the church a very unhealthy place for their type.

When the Holy Spirit had finished His work with Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5: 1-10) it had a sobering effect on saints and sinners alike (verse 11). If there were any liars thinking in terms of church membership, they were either scared away or were impressed with the need to

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put this practice aside. In either case, it resulted in less "doctoring" to be administered by the shepherds. If there were members of the church in Jerusalem who were careless in speaking the truth, their great fear resulting from what they had seen and heard caused them either to straighten up - crucify the flesh (Gal. 5:24) - or to withdraw from the group altogether. In either case it meant less work for the leaders.

The church, then, that administers faithfully God's love - chastening - (Heb. 12:6) will learn to their great surprise and entire satisfaction that the benefits extend much further than to the chastened. "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (1 Cor. 5:6). For the leaders, then, to proceed boldly and unhesitatingly to stamp out spiritual infections as they arise is to save the body from moral rot. On the other hand, the spineless leadership which had rather follow the path of least resistance and maintain a soul destroying peace is going to turn its back away from and refuse to deal sternly with sin in the church. If this is the practice, and no doubt this "do nothing" policy is the rule and not the exception, it is positively in defiance of a plain directive from Heaven. (Hebrews 12:6-11.)

To follow divine instructions is to be obedient and fruitful and to create conditions by which others in the church may also serve and be saved. In Ephesians 5:5 Paul states that no unclean person nor covetous man hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Church members who are thusly afflicted are lost! How can any Christian, not to mention the overseers, ignore the frightful spectacle of lost brethren? And yet, this sort of inertia characterizes many congregations. When asked by a visitor, "What does Brother X do for a living?" one of the elders of the congregations where Brother "X" was a member replied, "He is a racketeer." This meant to the visitor that this brother gains his livelihood and makes his money by dishonest practices. Was anything being done to save this lost man? None at all! Is this failure to help the fallen very common among churches? Yes, sad to say, it is.

In the example just cited the sin was known by the leaders, and possibly by everybody else, including non-members. If such a condition is allowed to continue indefinitely without offering aid, both the sinner and the church are under condemnation. Why? "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." As discipline ad-

ministered to the sickly has its wholesome effect on the entire group, in like manner, the evils of iniquity, if unchecked, will stimulate others to walk carelessly in their chosen fields of indulgences. The strong members who are immune to the degrading influences of their ungodly brethren will stand guilty by reason of apathy or indifference.

It is incumbent upon the leaders to do even better than admonish and try to save the known transgressors in the fold which they oversee. Their watching must be so thorough as to bring to light the concealed sinners also. Iniquitous operations under cover are as devastating to the sinner and the church as open violations of God's will. What would happen to a church if the bishops should suddenly adopt a positive plan to ferret out and do something with the fornicators, covetous, extortioners, railers, and such like? In most places the conditioning and indoctrination of the membership is so inadequate that this procedure which is so plainly set forth in 1 Corinthians 5 would not succeed at all. First, to be successful, the plan would have to be sold to the congregation. Second, it would have to be inaugurated very gradually. Likely, a period of ten years would be required for a few congregations to operate fully and successfully on such a scriptural basis.

There is no challenge which faces the church today more serious than that of watching for the souls of church members (Hebrews 13:17).

THE 144,000 AND THE GREAT MULTITUDE

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down here on earth. However 7:15 says, "they" (the Great Multitude) "serve him day and night in his temple." Where is the temple located? Revelation 11:19 tells us: "And there was opened the temple of God that is in heaven." Revelation 4:2 says the throne is in heaven.

The Jehovah's Witnesses would have a much better case if they taught that the Great Multitude is in the heavenly class. But from the information we have assembled, it is evident that both are heavenly classes, and we believe they are one and the same group.

Another reason we believe the Great Multitude is not the earthly class is that they are described as being dressed in white robes. (Revelation 7:9.) The Lord says in Revelation 3:5, "He that overcometh shall thus be arrayed in white garments." Then Revelation 6:9-11 tells us the souls who had been slain for the word of God were each given a white robe. In Revelation 7:13-14 one of the Elders says to John, "These that are arrayed in the white robes, who are they?" Then he answers his own question: "These

are they that come out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb." Revelation 22:14 says that those who washed their robes "have the right to come to the tree of life and may enter by the gates into the city." Where is this city? Revelation 22:3 tells us that "the throne of God and the Lamb shall be therein." In other words, Revelation 22 is describing HEAVEN! The city is heaven and the Great Multitude are there because they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb.

If the Great Multitude is not in the city, it is in bad shape, because Revelation 22:15 informs us that outside of the city "are dogs, and the sorcerers, and the fornicators, and the murderers, and the idolaters, and every one that loveth and maketh a lie." If Revelation 21:8 has any bearing on this passage, it means that those who are not in the city are in hell.

Another difficulty lies in the fact that only the 144,000 were sealed. Revelation 7:3 ". . . hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we shall have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads" (v.4), "and I heard the number of them that were sealed, 144,000 . . ." Revelation 9:4 ". . . it was said unto them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree, but only such men as have not the seal of God on their foreheads." This means that the Great Multitude is in serious trouble because only the 144,000 were "sealed." Therefore, the Great Multitude will have to undergo the things described in Revelation 9:4-5.

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