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## CHRIST AND THE CHURCH

BY CLOVIS RAGSDALE

A popular theory in present day religious thinking, especially among younger people is; Jesus yes, the church no. By this they mean that Christ is to be accepted, but not the church. Much of this thinking was brought about by so called churches departing far from the teachings of the New Testament concerning the church and its function.

While Christ was here in the world he stated that he would build his church (Matt 16:18). Paul stated years later to the Ephesian brethren (Eph. 1:20-23), "Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church. Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."

In Acts 2:47, we are told that those who were being saved were added to the church by the Lord. Christ and his church are inseparable. He gave himself for the church, purchasing it with his blood (Acts 20:28; I Peter 1:18, 19).

The church is like a human body. The head supplies the body with direction of what to do and how to carry on life. The head coordinates the different organs of the body. It works in unity and harmony for the best interests of the entire body.

In like manner Christ is head of the church, which is his body (Eph. 1:22, 23). Christ gives life to the church. He guides and controls the church. He is the Savior of the church (Eph. 5:23). Yet Christ, the head, depends upon the church, the body, to accomplish his purposes.

The church is the hands, feet, and mouth by which Christ works and speaks to the world. He has committed his cause to earthen vessels (2 Cor. 4:7).

Christ stated the purpose of his mission to this world. "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was

Lost." (Luke 19:10.) This is still the mission of the church today. The church is not for social reform, although if people will abide by the teachings of Christ they will obtain social justice. It is not to entertain although when one commits his life to Christ he obtains a joy that passeth all understanding. The church is not a financial institution to raise money and build ornate buildings, as some are doing, but is to do good works and preach the gospel, which of course requires money. The Lord gave a plan which if followed will raise what is needed to carry out the work of the Lord (1 Cor. 16:10).

The church is an everlasting body. While it is in the world today, there is coming a day when Christ will return to gather his own and take them with him to an everlasting home. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with him in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." (1 Thess. 4:16-18.)

Notice that Paul said the dead IN CHRIST should rise first. This teaches that only those in Christ will go to heaven. To be in Christ is to be in the Church. When we by faith come to Christ we are taught to confess his name (Romans 10:10), and be baptized (Mark 16:16). In every case of New Testament conversion, baptism is mentioned as a part of coming to Christ -- Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3-5; Acts 8:13; Acts 9:18; 16:33, etc. Paul told the Galatians that as many as had been baptized into Christ have put on Christ (Gal. 3:27). When we put on Christ we become a part of the church. As a part of this spiritual body we live in the body forever if we remain faithful.

*"The only difference between stumbling blocks and stepping stones is the way we use them."*

## Persecuted for Righteousness' Sake

BY TERRY FRIZZELL

*"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 5:10.)*

The promise of this last beatitude is the same as the first one, "Blessed are the poor in Spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 5:3.) In the first beatitude we endeavored to show the attitude that one must have in order to become a citizen of the kingdom, however in this last beatitude Christ is describing the character of one who has already become a citizen of the kingdom, and being in it finds opposition and persecution for the cause of righteousness.

The last beatitude pictures the disciple of Christ at a higher level of spiritual maturity, he is able to stand against the temptations and trials of affliction by the power of God.

To be persecuted for righteousness' sake is to be persecuted, not merely because you are righteous, but because of righteous acts which are offensive to the persecutors. Paul, writing to Timothy, told him to, "be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." (1 Tim. 4:12). Persecutors are not and cannot be any of these things, and because of this they are offended or jealous of the one who has found and is living a better life.

Christ, during his life time, was persecuted because the people could find no fault with him, and because he revealed and tried to help them correct their wrongs. He was killed because his persecutors thought with him gone they would again be considered righteous in the eyes of the people.

Perhaps the reason so few Christians meet any real opposition in their lives is that they are not living a Christ-like

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*"Success or failure in any undertaking is caused more by the mental attitude even than by mental capacities."*

**PERSECUTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS' SAKE**

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example before the world. We see in the life of Paul much persecution because he was a zealous man of God. He was not blown in any direction by the winds around him but stood firm in the truth of Christ, and became an example of what every Christian must be to the world.

When we are persecuted for righteousness' sake we become closer to the kingdom for which we suffer. Also by withstanding these persecutions to remain faithful to God we can say when we come to the end of life's journey, as did Paul, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." (2 Tim. 4:7-8.)

This was more than just hope for Paul because his Lord had told him, "... I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." (John 14:3.)

As we live the life of a Christian, enduring all persecutions, and are faithful to Christ, won't it be grand to hear him say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." (Matt. 25:34.)

*"He is no fool who gives up that which he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose."*

# WISDOM

BY W. L. TOTTY

In the long ago, the God of heaven said, through Job, "Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding." (Job 28:28). Proverbs 4:7-8 says, "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding. Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her."

The Lord gave Solomon wisdom. We are told to "get wisdom." But how is it to be had? Merely for the asking? No. We are told through Solomon, "For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding." (Prov. 2:6.) Solomon, at the time he was anointed to be king of Israel, asked wisdom of the Lord that he might be able to judge the children of God righteously. (1 Kings 3:9). Solomon was given wisdom through direct inspiration of God, but we obtain wisdom by a study of every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. We are to seek her as silver and search for her as for hidden treasures.

There are occasions when the words "wisdom" and "knowledge" might be used interchangeably. Webster, in defining both terms, lists each word as a synonym of the other. However, there is a sense in which one might have all familiarity with or information pertaining to a particular field, yet in each case, in a sense, not have wisdom. We have all perhaps come in contact with brilliant folk insofar as education is concerned who just didn't have what is sometimes called "common sense"; that is, they did not possess the ability to apply the knowledge or information that they possessed to good advantage. Webster defines wisdom as "ability to judge soundly and deal sagaciously with facts; knowledge, with the capacity to make due use of it; discernment and judgment; discretion; sagacity." Note particularly the phrase "with the capacity to make due use of it."

While we usually would be referring to worldly wisdom in case of the above, it might, nevertheless, also be true in true wisdom; that is, the wisdom of God.

What is true wisdom? Job says it is "the fear of the Lord." (Job 28:28) In Solomon's writings wisdom is personified. She says, "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the forward mouth, do I hate." (Prov. 8:13.) She says her fruit is "better than gold, yea, than fine gold; and my revenue than choice silver. I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment: That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance: and I will fill their treasures." (Prov. 8:19-21.)

The wisdom of this world is not that

after which we are admonished to seek. The apostle Paul told the Corinthians: "Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain." (1 Cor. 3:18-20.) The prophecy of God by Isaiah is quoted by the apostle Paul: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of the world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom know not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." (1 Cor. 1:19-21.)

Our faith shall not stand in the wisdom of men but in the wisdom of God. The apostle Paul said, "And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." (1 Cor. 2:4-8.)

These Jews of whom Paul spoke had knowledge of the law and prophecies concerning Christ, but they lacked wisdom to apply their knowledge correctly; therefore, they rejected Christ.

Solomon said, "The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame. (Prov. 29:15.) The Holy Scriptures administer the "rod and reproof" to the Christian. They are "able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." (2 Tim. 3:5.) Yet, it is highly probable that many people today who can quote the Scriptures will not allow the Scriptures to chasten them because they are wise in their own conceits (Rom. 11:25; 12:16), as those Jews were who rejected Christ.

If we would be wise in God's sight, we must build our house on the solid foundation of God's word in order to withstand the laving onslaughts of the evil one.

*"The greatest discovery of my generation is that human beings can alter their lives by altering their attitudes of mind."*

# Faith or Tradition?

BY TED MOUNTJOY

A popular teaching of man today is the doctrine of "Original Sin". The basic teaching of original sin, is that all are born alienated from God, and are without grace. As a result, the practice of sprinkling or immersion (baptism) is performed on babies. However, upon investigation, it is easily seen that the Bible does not even mention original sin; even the concept cannot be found in all of the Bible. In fact, Jesus and the apostle Paul taught exactly the opposite. Listen to what Paul had to say in Colossians 1:21 - "Once you were alienated from God, and were enemies in your minds BECAUSE of your evil behavior". Notice, they were not alienated because of Adam or their parents, but for what they had done. The apostle Paul said that the Colossians were alienated from God . . . because of THEIR evil behavior.

Jesus tells us in Matthew 18:3, "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven". Jesus didn't see any evil behavior in little children; neither did He see sin. He said we have to change and become like little children, or we'll never enter the kingdom of heaven. Jesus also says to such (speaking of little children) belongs the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 19:14).

Is it any wonder, then, that nowhere in all of God's Word is anything mentioned about baptizing babies? Baptism is for a sinner, the person who is alienated from God and shut out of the kingdom of heaven. (See Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38.)

The doctrine of infant baptism - is it practiced by faith, or is it simply a tradition handed down from man? Remember, faith comes by hearing God's Word (Romans 10:17.)

*"Kindness is the greatest unused capital in the world today."*

*"So often the worst is the corruption of the best."*

*"You cannot control the length of your life, but you can control the breadth, depth, and height of it."*

*"It is our attitude toward life that will determine life's attitude toward us."*

# Jesus, The Word

BY HAROLD TURNER

*"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made . . . And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."* (John 1:1-3, 14).

One of the things distinctive about the writings of the apostle John is his use of many descriptive terms in picturing Jesus to us. Each of these descriptive terms has been given to bring out some significant and distinctive characteristic of Jesus and his work. In the above passage, John pictures Jesus as "the Word." This expression, no doubt, was intended to convey to us something of importance about Jesus. While there may be several ideas suggested by this expression, let's consider two that are clearly set forth.

First, as the Word, Jesus embodied the will of God, which through his life was expressed to man. Jesus was God's spokesman, but more than this he was a living example of God's will for man. To know the true nature of the Father, and to know his will for us, we must look to Jesus. This idea is seen in John 14:7-11 where Jesus told the apostles, "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. Phillip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and hast thou not known me, Phillip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayeth thou then Shew us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." In these words Jesus shows us that his purpose was to so live that we could see in him the nature of his Father, and that through his life we could see and learn how to live. His every word and action was a living lesson for us.

Life is made up of hundreds of problems. How can we cope with them? How can we overcome them? Jesus is the answer. In him we learn how to deal with all situations of life. Our nature is so influenced by impatience, anger, hate, retaliation, resentment, selfishness, greed,

etc. We know there is no way to be happy when these control the heart and mind. But in Jesus we learn how to lay aside these burdens and how to rise above them. Jesus devoted his life to helping others. He freely gave of himself. He never expressed the selfish attitude, "What about me?" Even while hanging on the cross he prayed that his Father would forgive his enemies. All that he requires of us, he first lived himself. He is constantly held before us as the example reason for what we do. For example, Paul wrote, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." (Eph. 4:31-32.) He showed us that through kindness, tenderheartedness and forgiveness we could rise above the destructive forces of bitterness, anger, malice, etc. As the Word, Jesus embodied the will of God for man.

The second thing we should consider about Jesus as the Word, is that he is God's spokesman. In Heb. 1:2 the writer states that God "hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds." God's message for this last dispensation has been given through his Son. Just before ascending back into heaven, Jesus said, "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and in earth." (Matt. 28:18.) He is said to be the author and finisher of our faith (Heb. 12:2), and the author of salvation to all who obey him (Heb. 5:9). His doctrine is the sole rule for the Christian life. In 2 John 9 we are warned, "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God . . ." Whatever we do must be done by his authority (Col. 3:17).

But, sometimes the question is asked, "How does Christ speak to us today?" In Acts 1:2 the writer speaks of having written a previous treatise "of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen." The chosen apostles were the ambassadors for Christ. Jesus had assured them that when the Spirit came to them that he would "teach you all things" (John 14:26), and "guide you into all truth." (John 16:13.) The apostle

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# THE FEAR OF JEHOVAH

BY JOE SPONAUGLE

There was a time when one would hear much from the pulpit about fearing God but this is seldom the case any more. Anyway, who is afraid of God? The number who fear God today is very small. Man is more afraid of his fellow man than he is of God. There has been a great effort put forth by preachers in the past 25 years to persuade men not to fear God. As a consequence man has become more sinful and reprobate. One extreme often begets another and today we are experiencing the opposite extreme of years past. We have a generation who does not fear God. While the wrath of God may have been preached to the extreme in the past, today the love of God is preached to the extreme of neglecting the other side of the personality of God, his wrath. People today do not believe that God will punish the wicked. We need to have the proper balance in our preaching and teaching.

David wrote, "The fear of Jehovah is the beginning wisdom; a good understanding have all they that do his commandments." (Psa. 111:10.) Those who do not fear God are not wise. We need to be afraid of God when we sin because our God is a consuming fire (Heb. 12:29). A fire that is out of control causes man to be afraid. The wrath of God is beyond man's power to control, thus man should fear it and do all within his power to avoid it. Jesus came to save us from the wrath of God but those who refuse to accept Christ today will surely experience God's wrath in the judgment day. A person who fears God and keeps his commandments is wise, for the commandments of God will keep us out of trouble.

Solomon wrote, "The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of knowledge but the foolish despise wisdom and instruction." (Prov. 1:7.) Those who fear God are subject to being instructed by God, and to love God is to keep his commandments (1 John 5:3). Job said, "Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom and to depart from evil is understanding," (Job 28:28).

Again Solomon wrote, "This is the end of the matter; all hath been heard: Fear God and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every work into judgment, with every hidden thing, whether it be

good or whether it be evil," (Ecc. 12:13-14). This sums it up rather well. Our purpose for being is to fear God and keep his commandments. When the sinner fears God and his wrath he may be motivated to obey the gospel of Christ and be saved. When the unfaithful Christian once again begins to fear God and his wrath he will repent of his sins and ask God's forgiveness. No sinner is likely to turn to God without experiencing the fear of God. It is healthy to fear God.

I realize that in some cases the word fear carries the idea of reverence for God, rather than being afraid of God. But we need both. When we reverence and love God and do his will there is little cause to be afraid of God. But when we fall short of doing his will we need to be afraid of his wrath until we repent and do his will. We need more reverence for God in our daily lives and in our worship of God.

When the God of Israel met with them at mount Sinai, they had a good, healthy fear of God. The Hebrew writer tells us, "For ye are not come unto a mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, and unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that no word more should be spoken unto them; (for they could not endure that which was enjoined, If even a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, and so fearful was the appearance, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake," (Heb. 12:18-21.) We need some of this fear of God today. Man, and some Christians have brought God and Christ down to be like the guy next door, or the "old man up stairs". Many have humanized God. God is not human, he is divine. Some people have more awe for the president or the governor than they do the God of heaven and earth. What a shame. If we wait until we stand before God in judgment to fear him, it will be too late.

Yes, the fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge, It is the whole duty of man to fear God and keep his commandments. The Fear of Jehovah is healthy and it leads one to eternal life. Those who fear not Jehovah will be lost forever. What is your attitude towards God? Do you fear him? Do you keep his commandments?

## JESUS, THE WORD

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Paul said, "For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." (Acts 20:27) The apostles received "All truth", and declared "All the counsel of God." This in turn was written for all following generations, (1 Cor. 14:37; Eph. 5:1-5). God spoke through his Son (Heb. 1:2), the Son spoke through the Spirit (Acts 1:2), the Spirit spoke through the apostles (Acts 2:4), and the apostles wrote the things that were revealed to them (Eph. 5:1-5). Therefore, Christ speaks today through his written word, which contains "All truth", and the whole counsel of God. At the judgment these books will be opened (Rev. 20:12), and each will be judged by the words of Christ (John 12:48). God said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." (Matt. 17:5.)

*"The man who doubts himself is like the chap who rowed all night with his boat tied to a stake."*

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