

# Fulton County Gospel News

"The Churches of Christ Salute You"

Publication No. 211780

Second Class Postage Paid at Mammoth Spring, AR

Volume 24

Mammoth Spring, AR 72554

October, 1990

No. 10

## NOT EVEN THE SMELL OF SMOKE!

by Eddy Gilpin

In Daniel 3 the Bible records the account of the three Hebrew youths being compelled to worship the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up in Dura of the Babylonian province (vs. 1). This image of gold (measuring 90' in height and 9' in breadth) was to be bowed down to in obeisance, as directed by Chaldean law. Yet, in obedience to an even higher power, Hannaniah, Mishael and Azariah refused to obey the king's decree. As a consequence of their actions, they were to be cast into the midst of a fiery furnace (vs. 6).

So highly favored were they, however, in the eyes of Nebuchadnezzar, that he was willing to give them a second chance (vss. 13-15). The three youths with one accord said, "...we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up" (vs. 18). In his fury, Nebuchadnezzar commanded that the furnace be heated "seven times more than it was wont to be heated" (vs. 19). So great was the heat from this furnace that the men who cast the three Jews into its bowels were consumed (vs. 22).

In utter amazement, Nebuchadnezzar watched as four men, free from any fetters, walked amidst the devastating flames. He asked of his wise men, "Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?" (vs. 24) Certainly they had. Yet, here were the three, loose and walking with a fourth, whom Nebuchadnezzar himself identified (vs. 25). What a miracle this was! Seeing his punishment was useless, Nebuchadnezzar bade them come forth from the furnace (vs. 26). When they did so it was found that they were completely unharmed by the fire, not one strand of hair was singed, their

clothing did not have a different appearance (vs. 27). They did not even have the smell of smoke on them!

While there are no such miracles being performed today, there are lessons that can be learned from the circumstances of such miracles as this. Take, as an example, the decision made by these three young men. They had been brought into a foreign land by constraint. In this foreign land they were faced with many new experiences, temptations and decisions. When faced with the temptation to save their lives and forsake their God, they chose to "obey God rather than men." Because of their choice, they forfeited their rights to physical life. Yet, they would not be soiled by the society in which they lived. They entered that fire free from the stain of the sin of idolatry, and came forth free from the stain of punishment - not even the smell of smoke!

Like the Jewish youths, one has no choice in and of himself whether he is born into this world with its corrupt society. However, he does have a choice as to what he will make of himself in this society. In other words, he lives in the world, but does not necessarily have to live of the world. The choice is his own, just as it was with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. They refused to be stained by the sins of the society in which they lived. Even in the furnace, God saw to it that they did not bear the marks of their surroundings. While God does not keep "the smell of smoke", as it were, off of one's person miraculously today, He has given him the means of keeping himself "unspotted from the world" (Jas. 1:27).

In writing to the Ephesians, the apostle Paul stated, "That ye put off concerning

the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Col. 4:22-24). He presented the Romans with the fact that if they had been baptized into Christ's death (where His blood is contacted - Rom. 6:3, 4), that the "old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed" (Rom. 6:6). Again, to the Ephesians he made this statement: "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Eph. 5:11).

In this last verse (Eph. 5:11), there are two commands. The first is, "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness." The second is, "but rather reprove them." While most people who have any desire to do what is right have little problem with the former command, most simply neglect the latter. This was not the case with the three aforementioned captives. They emphatically said, "...we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." They, in essence, were stating their refusal to be stained by the corrupt society in which they lived. Consequently, they did not even smell like smoke!

What about you, dear friend? Do you smell like the smoke of society's sinfulness? In order to keep from it as the three Hebrew youths did you must "abstain from all appearance of evil" (I Thes. 5:22). That is, you must "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness." But, not only that, you must also "reprove them." Is your life one that says to society, "I will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up?" Or, is it a life that demonstrates that you have one foot in the world and the other in the kingdom? If so, you are only fooling yourself. Jesus said, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Mt. 6:24). One who attempts

Continued on page 2

**FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS**

. . . is a monthly publication distributed free of charge to any who care to receive it. We will be happy to add any names to the regular mailing list. If you send in a name be SURE to include the ZIP CODE. It must be with each address according to the Postal regulations. This paper is supported by unsolicited contributions for which we are grateful. If you care to know the financial status and expenses, that information will be furnished upon request. Mail all address corrections to:

**FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS**  
P. O. Box 251  
Mammoth Spring, AR 72554  
Eddy Gilpin . . . . . EDITOR  
Publication No. 211780

such just might have the "smell of smoke" on him at the Judgment.

**PARADOX**

by Bennie Forister

Jesus Taught That The Greatest Would Be Servant

Jesus said: "For he that is least among you all, the same shall be great" (Lk. 9:48). Again, He said, "For he that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Lk. 14:11). He also stated, "He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it" (Mt. 10:39). Paul set forth a paradox concerning his life in Christ when he said, "For when I am weak, then am I strong" (II Cor. 12:10). Jesus had earlier told him, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (II Cor. 12:9). Jesus further taught that the greatest should be the servant of all (Mk. 10:44), and the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom (I Cor. 1:25).

Jesus Came To The World That We May Go To Heaven

It is difficult for many to believe that the Son of God voluntarily left heaven and came into the world in order that man might have the opportunity to go to heaven. But, this is the sweet story of redemption. Paul said, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (I Tim. 1:15). Because of the difficulty the finite mind has in comprehending such love, Paul referred to this as "the mystery of godliness" (I Tim. 3:16). This is the role that Jesus accepted. He said, "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mt. 20:28). Even before His birth it was promised that He would "save His people from their sins" (Mt. 1:21). His coming to the earth opened the way for man to go to heaven (Jn. 14:1-3). Paul rested in the assurance of his heavenly home. He wrote, "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (II Cor. 5:1). Although it may sound contrary to fact, Jesus came to earth that man may go to heaven.

Jesus Was Born In The Flesh That We May Be Born Spiritually

"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through His death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb. 2:14). To accomplish this feat, Christ had to be born of the flesh. After revealing that the Word was with God and was God (Jn. 1:1), John revealed that "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (Jn. 1:14). That Jesus Christ lived in the flesh is a fundamental point of Christianity (I Jn. 4:2, 3). This incarnation of the Son of God made it possible for Jesus to teach that man must be born again spiritually (Jn. 3:1-5). Peter commented concerning the new birth thus: "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (I Pet. 1:23). This new birth puts one into Christ as a new creature and makes him a member of the family of God, His church (Gal. 3:26, 27; II Cor. 5:17; Acts 2:47; I Tim. 3:15).

404 Utah  
West Plains, MO 65775

(Editor's Note: Brother Forister is an active, 87-year old member of the Curry St. Church of Christ who has spent the

vast majority of his life in service to his King. As we spoke, he said with all confidence, "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor His seed begging bread." (Ps. 37:25)

**BEATITUDES FOR FRIENDS OF THE AGED**

Blessed are they who understand  
My faltering step and palsied hand.

Blessed are they who know my ears today  
Must strain to catch the things they say.

Blessed are they who seem to know  
That my eyes are dim and my wits are slow.

Blessed are they who looked away  
When coffee was spilled at the table today.

Blessed are they with a cheery smile  
Who stop to chat for a little while.

Blessed are they who never say  
"You've told that story twice today."

Blessed are they who make it known  
I'm loved, respected and not alone.

Blessed are they who know I'm at loss  
To find the strength to carry the cross.

Blessed are they who ease the days  
On my journey home in loving ways.

- Author Unknown

**Thanks To Aged Christians**

by Allen Webster

No person or group of people hears the sweet words "THANK YOU" as often as they desire or deserve. Perhaps this is more true with those who are older and out of the "lime light" of a "hurry up" world. The Bible places a high premium on gratitude (II Thess. 2:13) and has much to say about the value of aging and older people.

"The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness" (Proverbs 16:31). "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man..." (Leviticus 19:32). "The righteous...shall bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing" (Psalm 92:12-14).

We, as the younger generation, thank you for setting the proper example for us. It is always easier to follow an example

than it is a precept, and we appreciate you for leading us in following God. You make a declaration with your life similar to the one Joshua made with his lips in his farewell speech, "...but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (24:15). You may underestimate this or not even recognize it, but younger members are looking to you to lead the way.

We, as the younger generation, thank you for remaining faithful through the years. The faith of every saint is tested throughout the course of the Christian race (Hebrews 12:6; II Timothy 3:12), but you have managed to weather these storms and not look back (Luke 9:62). Now when the seas of our lives become rough, we know that we can make it because you have remained constant under similar circumstances.

We, as the younger generation, thank you for continuing to do all you can for the Lord. We know that you attend services when you really do not physically feel like it, and it inspires us to greater service. It may be that you cannot do all that you used to but you do what you can! "She hath done what she could" (Mark 14:8) pleased the Lord then and it will today! We look to your wisdom (Job 12:12) and good judgment (I Kings 12:6-8) while valuing your abilities to serve Jehovah.

Some of the mighty servants of God did their greatest work after they were increased in years. Noah had lived six hundred years before God called him, Abraham and Sarah were almost a century old when Isaac was born, Caleb cried "give me this mountain" when he was old and Moses did not even start to lead the Israelites until he was eighty!

By watching your life, we can see that the "winter of life" can be one of the most productive periods of the child of God. Consider the words of the poet:

You may be growing older, and your step a mite bit slow;

You may not move as fast as once, but, Oh, God loves you so.

You may think that you're not needed, that your work here is through;

But, my beloved oldster, God has a plan for you.

Your white hair shows the wisdom you've gathered through the years;

Your patience stands for victories, proves you've conquered fears.

Your sweetness shows that Christ indwells, His love in you abides;

As these virtues flow out of you, you are blessing our lives.

Senior saints, we love you and owe you a great deal. May the Lord richly bless you is the prayer of the younger generation.

Rt. 1 Box 38  
Tiptersville, MS 38674

## JESUS and JONAH

by T. Pierce Brown

For the past 60 years I have had conversations with skeptics of various kinds who would raise questions about the various difficulties and apparent contradictions in the Bible. In almost every case, when I would find a way to reconcile the difficulty, the person would drop that issue and raise another, for there was no interest in finding the truth, but simply in finding reasons to reject truth.

However, there are many honest, sincere persons who find these difficulties and want to find a logical way to reconcile them. Such a problem continues

to arise concerning the statement of Jesus in Matthew 12:40, "As Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." The basic problem is, how could he have done that if he were buried on Friday afternoon and raised on Sunday morning? We do not need to "explain away" anything, but simply to look at all the facts, and discover that there is really no problem.

We are writing with the assumption that those who are reading this believe in the veracity of God and have faith that His Word is true. If you do not believe that the New Testament writers are to be trusted, then we need to start at a different place. So, let us look at the facts as they are presented.

First, it is said that He would rise again "on the third day" (Matthew 16:31, 17:23, 20:19, Mark 9:31, Luke 18:33, 24:7). Mark 8:31 says "after three days" and Matthew 12:40 says that He would be "three days and three nights" in the heart of the earth. Without any knowledge of language, customs or logic, we can immediately see that either the expressions mean the same period of time, or there is a plain contradiction in the scriptures. It is impossible for a person to arise "on the third day" and to stay buried until "after three days", according to our present language and mode of expression. So, without making effort to either explain, or explain away, one can be sure that the expression "three days and three nights" means the same as "on the third day".

However, it would help us to be aware that the Hebrew method of expression from the earliest days showed that they meant the same thing by "after three days" as they did by "on the third day". In Genesis 42:17, 18 we find that Moses says that Joseph put his brethren into prison "three days", yet released them "on the third day". Other similar references are in I Kings 12:5-12. In verse 5, we find that Rehoboam said, "Depart for yet three days, then come again to me." Then in verse 12 it says, "And all the people came to Rehoboam the third day as the king had appointed." Esther 4:16 says, "Go, gather all the Jews that are present

## CONTRIBUTIONS

### CHURCHES

Church of Christ, Garfield, Ar. ....	\$25.00
Pilot Church of Christ	
Mammoth Spring, Ar. ....	20.00
Viola Church of Christ, Viola, Ar. ....	10.00
Dellhalf Church of Christ, Myrtle, Mo. ....	20.00
Church of Christ, Elizabeth, Ar. ....	15.00
Church of Christ, Agnos, Ar. ....	15.00
Church of Christ, Marionville, Mo. ....	10.00
Jeff Church of Christ, Thayer, Mo. ....	25.00
Clarkridge Church of Christ	
Clarkridge, Ar. ....	25.00
Hatfield Church of Christ	
Koshkonong, Mo. ....	25.00

### INDIVIDUALS

Elsie Rowden, Oxford, Ar. ....	\$20.00
Mr. & Mrs. Marion Marshall,	
Mishawaka, IN ....	5.00
Mr. & Mrs. Buford Flinn, Williford, Ar. ....	25.00
Jeff Montgomery, Morriston, Ar. ....	30.00
Mr. & Mrs. Winston Kerley,	
Raytown, Mo. ....	20.00

in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day." Then in Esther 5:1 it says, "Now it came to pass on the third day, that Esther put on her royal apparel." We could multiply the examples of such language, but one cannot read them thoughtfully without being aware that in the Jewish language "three days and nights", "on the third day" and "after three days" all mean the same thing.

That the same kind of language was used and understood in the days of Jesus is evident in the statement of the Pharisees in Matthew 27:63, 64. "Sir, we remember that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, 'After three days I will rise again.' Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure **until the third day.**" If we were speaking about it, we would have requested that it be made sure until the fourth day.

Let us be aware that there is a great deal of difference in an honest faithful heart trying to find out how to reconcile two apparently contradictory statements and a doubting, skeptical heart trying to prove a contradiction exists. It is sad that we have many persons connected with the Lord's church now who teach that there are contradictory statements, but say that it makes no difference. They think that the Bible is not a book setting forth absolute truths and commands for us to follow, but a book of general ideas and suggestions for us to follow if the situation seems appropriate.

Rt. 2 Box 144x  
Wartrace, TN 37183

*In the long run, digging for truth has always proved not only more interesting, but more profitable than digging for gold.*

Happiness comes when we stop wailing about the troubles we have, and offer thanks for all the troubles we don't have.

*Having the right aim in life doesn't mean a thing if you are loaded with blanks, or don't know when to pull the trigger.*

The only way to get ahead is to begin using the one you have.

## 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; Revelations 2:10).

YOU CAN HELP WITH POSTAGE?  
**MOVING?**  
 Be sure to send us  
 your change of address



Mail all address changes to:  
**CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
 P.O. BOX 251  
 MAMMOTH SPRING, AR 72554