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- unless otherwise noted, answers to questions by Keith Sharp -

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Finally, brethren

**WHATEVER
THINGS**

are true
are noble
are just
are pure
are lovely

**PHILIPPIANS
4:8**

are of good report
IF THERE IS ANY VIRTURE AND IF THERE
IS ANYTHING PRAISEWORTHY –
meditate on these things.

You can download this month's Meditate On These Things as a PDF file by clicking [here](#). Also, an archive of past MOTT issues is available at christistheway.com.

"Nothing but faith, persevering, faith, can enable the Christian to pass safely through all the trials and dangers of the wilderness, uphold him amid the waves of the Red Sea of affliction and the swelling of the Jordan of death, and give him a sure and everlasting resting-place in the Canaan above"
(John Brown, **Hebrews**. 569, as quoted by Daniel H. King, **The Book of Hebrews**. 397)

Question from Nigeria on Forgiveness

Question

A brother supported going to idol in order to prove truth, he did this out of ignorance, he was issued disfellowship for playing such roll. He realized that he was wrong and come to the local church and ask for forgiveness, brethren in the church ask him to go back until after one year, to prove their innocence from the idol. The preacher is not in support of their action. The brothers have gone to them three times begging, they refused.

Please what will you suggest towards this behavior, teach on this, are they right? For how long will a sinner stay before he or she repent. I need immediate answer on this.

Answer

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive our sins" (1 John 1:9). We are to forgive each other as God forgives us (Ephesians 4:32). God forgives us when we confess our sins, and we should forgive each other when we confess our sins. If we do not do so, God will not forgive us (Matthew 6:14-15).

"And it All Just Happened"

The Story of the Honeybee

Jefferson David Tant | Roswell, Georgia, USA

Once upon a time, gazillions of years ago, so we're told, an infinitesimal speck decided it wanted to become a honeybee. It wanted to bless humankind some distant light years in the future with sweet honey, and help flowers beautify the landscape. Or so the evolutionists tell us.

What we have today is truly amazing and so complex that it is hard to imagine how it all came together. Let's look at the construction of the honeybee just to see how it's put together and how all the intricate parts of its anatomy cooperate. Time Magazine had an article on the honeybee a while back, and that is the source of much of the information in this article.

The eyes – Bees have five eyes. There are two large compound eyes and three ocelli which are used to detect light intensity. There are nearly 7,000 lenses in the bee worker's eyes.

Electrostatic charge – How do bees attract pollen? There is an electric charge on the hair on the bee's body that attracts the pollen.

The proboscis – The bee's "nose" is an airtight tube like a straw. It sucks up the nectar, and also has a reverse mechanism that allows the bee to feed baby bees from a stomach that is full of nectar.

Mandible – The bee's jaws help to bite and pack the pollen, and also shape wax that is used in building the honeycomb.

Wings – Each bee has two sets of wings. By rapidly flapping the wings, warmth is generated, which then evaporates the water from the nectar in order to make honey.

Wing hooks – There are hooks on the bee that allow it to attach one of each set of wings together when in flight to allow greater efficiency.

Legs – The bee's legs have brushes that scrape pollen from front to back, where the pollen is collected in a pollen basket. That basket is a sac attached to each rear leg.

Wax plates – These little creatures secrete wax beneath plates on their abdomen, which wax is then used to build honeycombs.

Honey stomach – The bee has a second reservoir where nectar is stored temporarily until it is needed, at which time it is regurgitated.

Production – The expression "busy as a bee" is an apt description. A hive of workers together fly about 55,000 miles to produce one pound of honey.

The hive – Typically consists of 20,000 to 30,000 bees, and in winter they create an ecosystem inside the hive while living off the honey. They stay warm by working their wings. Middle-aged workers build in the hive by attaching each comb to the walls of the hive. This process may require more than two pounds of

wax.

The hive's inhabitants – Workers do the construction, store the honey, keep the nursery, do guarding and caretaking, as well as scouting and foraging for flowers. Drones mate with the virgin queen in midair. They are adept at flying, so can fly backwards, and can rotate and flip. The Queen lays up to 1,500 eggs a day. She secretes pheromones in order to control the workers.

The dance – No, they don't have a ballroom dance party, but when a scout locates food, he alerts the others about the location with a series of dance moves. By the number of turns, the length of the dance and various moves, the scout indicates the distance to the food, and the angle of the food to the sun. A figure-eight dance routine tells the others to fly towards the sun. The number of these patterns in the procedure indicates the distance to the food. The angle of the dance indicates the angle of the food source relative to the hive and the sun. If the food is nearby, the bee does a round dance.

It's all so amazing that someone might exclaim, "It's a miracle that it all came together." Oh, wait a minute. It IS a miracle! An ancient document written thousands of years ago said, "In the beginning, God created..." (Genesis 1:1).

Truthfully, how can anyone suppose that this took place over millions of years by accidents of nature? Consider the proboscis, the bee's nose. I have been told that in addition to sucking up nectar and then reversing the process to feed the babies, the bee also breathes through the proboscis. Remember, the evolutionist theory is that it may take millions of years for the bee to adapt as it improves. So...it sucks up the nectar, but it has not developed the mechanism to clear the passages so it can feed the babies, as well as breathe. So the bee has to figure out a way to do this, but that may take eons of time. And in the process, guess what happens. All the bees die! Why? Because they cannot feed the babies, and they cannot breathe.

So, which is more rational? To believe that the bee is an accident of nature that took eons of time to evolve, or that a master planner designed and created the bee? I believe the answer is evident.

A Manner Worthy : Ephesians 4:1-3

Patrick Farish | Lancaster, Texas, USA

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling in which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

It is important that followers of Christ act that way. He Himself said, "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35). When brethren do not behave like brethren, their ungodliness becomes common, shameful knowledge among the people of the world.

This is not to decry contending for the faith; if error is being introduced or practiced, it must be exposed, regardless of opposition. What is in view here is that which is the result of immaturity, carnality, among those who by reason of time "ought to be teachers" (Hebrews 5:12). Conduct which causes merited reproach to be directed toward the church needs repentance. It is not walking "in a manner worthy" of the salvation purchased by the blood of Jesus.

The worthy manner which Paul urges on Christians involves, first, humility. Jesus said "Blessed are the poor in spirit" (Matthew 5:3). The publican in Luke 18:9-14 was poor in spirit: he saw himself, as God saw him, bereft of anything of which he might boast: poverty-stricken, because of sin. And his plea was, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" The publican's prayer should be my constant prayer. Grateful for salvation by grace through faith, I should nevertheless remember my failings and, seeing what only God and I can see, plead "God be merciful."

Another quality of the worthy manner is gentleness. Other translations (**ASV**, **KJV**) use the word “meekness” here. A problem with the word “meekness” is the general misunderstanding of it as equivalent to weakness. As it is used with reference to both Moses (Numbers 12:3) and the Lord (2 Corinthians 10:1), it is apparent that “weakness” is inappropriate in defining the word.

W.E. Vine says meekness is the fruit of power; “strength under control” gets close to the meaning. It is famously used to describe the horse and its bridle (James 3:3) – strong beast, yet controlled by a small appliance of leather and metal. This is in view when James says we should “receive with meekness the implanted word” (1:21): we might think we know better, about this that or the other – but nonetheless in meekness we are controlled by, and yield to, that which God has spoken.

Gentleness is of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5). Part of the garb of “God’s chosen ones” (Colossians 3:12), it is also part of the worthy manner in which we should walk.

Then, our humility and gentleness are companied with “patience.” At least two words are used in the New Testament and translated “patience.” One means “remaining under,” and it is used of men, never of God. The other, used in this passage, means “longsuffering” and is used of God’s “putting up” with man and his folly.

Knowing we are poor in spirit due to sin, and grieving because of it, by “gentleness” (meekness, **ASV**) we submit ourselves fully to His will, not just momentarily, but continually, patiently. Patience does not mean indifference; but rather a conscious determination to yield to the will of God all the time.

Being patient requires “bearing with one another.” In the face of irritations, we abstain from demanding our “rights.” “I do not have any foibles in my life, but you set my teeth on edge.” This is the situation in which rather we are bearing (“forbearing”, **ASV**) with one another from insisting on our rights.

This “bearing,” however, is not a mere political or social response, it is to be “in love.” It could refer to our love for God (1 John 5:3). It more likely refers to our love for man. “Love” means, not just affection, but, as illustrated by the heavenly Father in Matthew 5:43-45 and John 3:16, doing whatever is good for our fellowman. Let “all that you do be done in love” (1 Corinthians 16:14).

And, in all the things that are prescribed for us here, the motivation is maintaining the unity of the Spirit in “the bond of peace.” A bond is something that holds things together. If we are “eager” to maintain unity, Paul says we should “let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts...” (Colossians 3:15).

Why I Believe the Church Is Essential (Part 2)

Tommy G. Thornhill | Etna, Arkansas, USA

The church is essential, a definite part of God’s plan of salvation, but in seeking to convert someone the emphasis must first be in the one who built the house, rather than the house itself.

“Inasmuch as He who built the house has more honor than the house. For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God. And Moses indeed was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which would be spoken afterward. But Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end” Hebrews 3:3b-6.

These verses clearly show that the one who built the house is to receive the honor. One may admire the building, but the architect that designed it is of greater importance. So it is with the plan of salvation. In teaching people, emphasize the Savior. Let Him place the saved in the building (the spiritual house), after they have been saved Acts 2:41, 47.

Please don't misunderstand; this is not a denial of the essentiality of the church. Every person that is saved is added to the church (Acts 2:41, 47). The church is precious, because it is blood bought, paid for with the blood of Christ. Jesus not only promised to build His church, He also paid for building it with His precious blood on the cross (Matthew 16:18; Acts 20:28). Certainly, He would not have done this if it was not essential. The church was built for the glory of God and His Son, not for the glory of man (Ephesians 3:21; 5:27). The church is the body of Christ, (Ephesians 1:22-23), and this body is the one that He will save (Ephesians 5:23). No one who remains outside the Lord's church has been promised salvation. This shows the essentiality of the church.

So there is no way that I am trying to degrade or belittle the essentiality or necessity of being a member of the church to be saved. But we must be careful not to leave the impression that the church is more important than Christ, especially from the human side. For this, the human side, is what people generally see when one talks about the church. People see a group of imperfect human beings.

With this said, let's consider where the emphasis was placed in the first century as people were being taught and converted. What was the message preached in Mark 16:15-16? It was the gospel, not the church of Christ, that was first preached Acts 4:10-12, 33; 5:32. What did Paul preach (1 Corinthians 2:2; 15:1-4; Romans 1:15; Philippians 1:12, 17)? Philip (Acts 8:5, 35), Peter (Acts 10:34ff)? I am very certain the church was in the background of all their preaching, but the primary emphasis was on the owner Jesus Christ, the builder of the church, not the building.

What is the point in writing the above if the church is essential to salvation? The point is to place the church in its proper place in God's scheme of redemption, because Jesus Christ is the Savior, not the church. The church's place is not to save, but to spread the gospel to the whole world. First Timothy 3:15 teaches us that the church is the pillar and ground of the truth. As such it is not authorized to write the plan of salvation. Rather the church is to teach the revealed truth to a lost, sinful, and unbelieving world. Jude 3 teaches us that the faith (the gospel, the doctrine) has been delivered to the saints. The saints are the church, so they must not only proclaim the faith delivered, they must also uphold and defend it.

I believe that the things written so far are sufficient proof that the church of Christ as revealed in the New Testament is an essential and necessary part of God's scheme of redemption. As we have seen, the church was established to fulfill the purpose of God, but that purpose was not to save people. It was planted to proclaim to a lost and dying world God's plan for saving mankind.

But, let me give another proof that the church is essential, based on the premise of when God first formulated His plan for the church? Return to Ephesians 3:8-11. When one examines these verses carefully, one can definitely see that the church was in the mind of God from eternity, as a part of His plan for saving man. Eternity is a long time ago, before time began (2 Timothy 1:9). In reality eternity cannot be measured by time. While it is difficult to understand the essence of eternity, a never-beginning and never-ending existence, this view is necessary to understand the purpose of God as He unfolded His plan of salvation, for these verses show that it included the church.

Paul states he has been given the privilege of preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ, the dispensation of the mystery which had been hidden in the mind of God from the beginning of the world. This mystery he had noted earlier, Ephesians 3:1-7, was that God was including both Gentile and Jew together in His plan of salvation. This plan had been revealed to those in the "heavenly places" (the spiritual realm Ephesians 3:10; 1:3). This is the realm in which Christ is seated at God's right hand (Ephesians 1:20; 2:6). The realm in which all rulers in the spiritual realm exist, both good and bad (Ephesians 6:12). It is from heaven itself that man's salvation was planned. It was from heaven that Christ came to save man. It is to heaven penitent sinners are destined after death. It is through the church that God purposed for all people to learn of His purposes for saving sinful man. The church is how He brings all people together in the one body, the church (Ephesians 2:13-18).

"I Don't Want To Grow Up"

Jim Mickells | Lewisburg, Tennessee, USA

Sylvia and I were watching America's Funniest Videos one night a few years ago, when a teacher asked some of their students a question. There were two young boys, about five or six years old, who were asked what they wanted to be when they grew up. One of the little boys thought for a few seconds and then said, "I don't want to grow up." This was a very cute and funny video that made us laugh. Yet the more I thought about it the more it made me realize this is an attitude displayed by many Christians. They would not articulate such with words. Yet their actions or lack thereof is a clear indication it is their desire whether they admit it or not. They do not want to grow up spiritually.

Do you study your Bible? How much time each week do you spend reading and meditating upon what the Lord has said to you in this great book? Paul's instruction to Timothy was, "Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine...Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all" (1 Timothy 4:13,15). His growth and development as a preacher was to be evident to all the saints with whom he was associated. A. T. Robertson said this about the word "progress": "It is inspiring to see a young preacher grow for then the church will grow with him" (Word Pictures in the New Testament).

The Psalmist used several expressions in describing the word of God in Psalms 19:7-9. He called it "the law of the Lord" (verse 7); "the testimony of the Lord" (verse 7); "the statutes of the Lord" (verse 8); "the commandment of the Lord" (verse 8); "the fear of the Lord" (verse 9); "the judgments of the Lord" (verse 9). After his description, he says, "More to be desired are they than gold, Yea, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb" (Psalm 19:10). How great is our desire for the word of the Lord? Is it more important to us than material possessions? Is it sweet to the taste? As I love and desire desserts, I should have the same craving for the Scriptures. If I have no such desire, if it is not sweet to me, then am I spending time in trying to know God's will? Do I really want to grow up?

Do you attend Bible class? If not, is your absence an indication you do not want to grow anymore? Surely you would not contend you already know everything about your Bible, therefore have no need to attend. It would be wonderful if every local church was filled with people like Cornelius, of whom Luke speaks of in Acts 10. The inspired writer says, "So I sent to you immediately, and you have done well to come. Now therefore, we are all present before God, to hear all the things commanded you by God" (verse 33; emphasis mine). Sad to say but even some who are present have not prepared themselves for the study which is to be engaged in. Paul said, "not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord" (Romans 12:11). Do you think if all followed the instructions given by the apostle more would attend Bible classes and more would be prepared when they attended? I think so! Want to grow up to be a mature Christian? Why not come to class prepared to study?

Do you attend gospel meetings? Such meetings provide opportunities for members to sit at the feet of men who have studied and prepared lessons which will instruct, encourage, and even rebuke those who will come and listen. When Paul and Barnabas had completed their first preaching trip into Asia Minor (Turkey), they returned to Antioch of Syria. The church was gathered and these men of God reported what has happened while they were away preaching. "Now when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles" (Acts 14:27). Do you think the church at Antioch was eager to gather and hear what these two men had to say about the Lord's work (read also Acts 15:30-31)? They were told of the great things God was doing among the Gentiles. Exciting times! Yet there seems to be a lack of excitement and enthusiasm among the people of God to come together and hear good sound gospel preaching and teaching. Is the problem I do not want to grow up?

Do you want to grow up? Peter said, "as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby" (1 Peter 2:2). There is a difference between the young boy in the funny video and the

Christian who does not want to grow. If that child continued to eat and exercise he will grow up, regardless of his desire. The Christians by their actions or lack thereof, indicating they do not want to grow, will not grow. They may well die lost, not for lack of food, but because of a lack of appetite (Matthew 5:6).

The Meaning of Life

Mike Thomas | Beaver Dam, Kentucky, USA

The Bible tells of a multi-billionaire (or its equivalent) who had a lot to say about life. His name was Solomon, the son of David, who eventually became king of Israel. God gave this man great wisdom and insight into life, as well as vast wealth and success as a king. He had 40,000 stalls for his horses (1 Kings 4:26), gold shields (10:16), a gold throne (10:18), gold drinking vessels (verse 21), and much more. Silver was counted as nothing in his time (verse 21). "So King Solomon surpassed all the kings of the earth in riches and wealth" (verse 23). There has never been another earthly king like him.

In the book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon shares his insight into the futility of worshipping this world and its things. Over and over, he makes the case that all is "vanity" (accomplishes nothing) in life under the sun (1:2-3). An example of this is man's accumulation of things, only to lose them in death. He said of his own wealth, "I must leave it to the man who will come after me. And who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will rule over all my labor in which I toiled and in which I have shown myself wise under the sun. This also is vanity" (Ecclesiastes 2:18-19).

What a profound way of looking at life. We may show great wisdom and discipline in acquiring our things, but when we die they will go to people who did not show the same care in obtaining and using them. Yet they will rule over all our labor. This should convince us to not love the world and its things. "As he came from his mother's womb, naked shall he return, to go as he came; and he shall take nothing from his labor which he may carry away in his hand" (5:15). Eventually, someone else will own "our" land, home and possessions. This can help us keep things in perspective and maintain a proper relationship with this world's items. Let us enjoy our earthly blessings, which are our "portion in life" (9:9) and "the gift of God" (3:13; 5:19), but let us not love them more than God or make them the center of life. Every day, we are one day closer to being separated from them forever. "So teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom" (Psalm 90:12).

Instead of living for this world, Solomon says we should "fear God and keep His commandments" (Ecclesiastes 12:13). We can search the world over a thousand times to find a better solution to our struggles, but in the end we will reach the same conclusion. The only life worth living is in obeying God and in being prepared for eternity (Acts 16:30-33). Everything else is vanity.

Instrumental Music in the Old Testament

William J. Stewart | Kingston, Ontario, Canada

In the search for instrumental music in the Old Testament, one need not go very far. In Genesis 4:21, among the offspring of Cain, we read of Jubal, who is identified as "...the father of all those who play the harp and flute." Thus, we have the beginning of instrumental music described for us. From this point onward, we find references to instruments of music in numerous Old Testament passages. These instruments were used for a variety of reasons: calling an assembly together (Numbers 10:1ff), commands in battle (Joshua 6:4), worship of false gods (Daniel 3:5), entertainment or celebration (Genesis 31:27), to give honour to the king (1 Kings 1:34), as a calming agent (1 Samuel 16:23), and in the worship of the God of heaven (Psalm 150).

The association of instruments with worship begins early in the history of God's people in the Old Testament. Being released from captivity in Egypt, Miriam and the women of Israel with her sang praise to God with timbrels (Exodus 15:20-21). Centuries later, when the ark of God was being moved from the

house of Abinadab, "...David and all the house of Israel played music before the LORD on all kinds of instruments of fir wood, on harps, on stringed instruments, on tambourines, on sistrums, and on cymbals" (2 Samuel 6:5). However, the anger of the LORD was kindled, for they transported the ark on a cart drawn by oxen, rather than on the shoulders of the Levites, as instructed in the Law. Some time later, the ark was moved, this time correctly, and the event included "...singers accompanied by instruments of music, stringed instruments, harps, and cymbals..." (1 Chronicles 15:16).

Throughout the Psalms, David made mention of praising God with instrumental music. Notice a few examples:

- *"Praise the LORD with the harp; make melody to Him with an instrument of ten strings."* (33:2)
- *"...on the harp I will praise You, O God, my God."* (43:4)
- *"The singers went before, the players on instruments followed after; among them were the maidens playing timbrels."* (68:25)
- *"Sing to the LORD with the harp, with the harp and the sound of a psalm, with trumpets and the sound of a horn; shout joyfully before the LORD, the King."* (98:5-6)

That the worship of God with instrumental music was a big part of David's life, and indeed the culture of Jewish worship is evident. There are still more and more examples of such in the Old Testament Scriptures. But it is important to note that they engaged in worship with instruments, not simply because they enjoyed instrumental music, and were talented players, but because God approved of their use. Note:

"And he stationed the Levites in the house of the LORD with cymbals, with stringed instruments, and with harps, according to the commandment (1) of David, (2) of Gad the king's seer, and (3) of Nathan the prophet; for thus was the commandment of the LORD by His prophets. The Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets. Then Hezekiah commanded them to offer the burnt offering on the altar. And when the burnt offering began, the song of the LORD also began, with the trumpets and with the instruments of David king of Israel. So all the assembly worshiped, the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded; all this continued until the burnt offering was finished." (2 Chronicles 29:25-28)

In the days of Hezekiah, Israel was led in a return to the ways of the LORD. As they prepared to make an offering to the LORD, we find these details given of the musical worship which accompanied the sacrifice. Notice, we are specifically told why they did what they did. The Levites were stationed as they were with instruments "...according to the command of..." David, Gad and Nathan, who had lived generations before. But notice further, the people of Hezekiah's day were not simply following the directions of men in this, "...for thus was the commandment of the LORD by His prophets." The use of instrumental music in worship was in fact commanded by God in the Old Testament.

Though instrumental music was used in worship in the Old Testament, one ought not immediately conclude that such is the case in New Testament worship also. The countless examples and the commandment to use harps, trumpets, stringed instruments, timbrels and the like for the people of Israel is not authoritative for those who are subject to the law of Christ. Even as we have herein searched the Old Testament, and sought to know what pleased the Lord so far as worship in song in times past, we must now search the New Testament, that we might know what pleases the Lord so far as worship in song today. This task, we will undertake in our next article.

The Inheritance of Your Fathers

Sean P. Cavender | Bald Knob, Arkansas, USA

To the Israelites lineage, genealogy and a family inheritance were of utmost importance. It was not only a reminder of their ancestry but a reminder of God's blessings within their family and as a nation. As an example of this, when Naboth was approached about selling his vineyard to Ahab, Naboth said, "The LORD

forbid me that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers" (1 Kings 21:3).

While you might be inclined to think Naboth was turning away a good deal, being sentimental, or that he was a foolish businessman, you had better think again! Naboth was a Jezreelite and owned his family vineyard in Jezreel. Jezreel was one of the main cities given to the tribe of Issachar during the conquest of Canaan (Joshua 19:18). Prior to Israel taking the Promised Land, Moses instructed, "You shall not move your neighbor's boundary mark, which the ancestors have set, in your inheritance which you will inherit in the land that the LORD your God gives you to possess" (Deuteronomy 19:14). King Solomon reminded Israel of this same command of God in his proverbs: "Do not move the ancient boundary or go into the fields of the fatherless," (Proverbs 23:10).

Israel was being ruled by wicked King Ahab and his idolatrous, wicked wife, Jezebel. He offered Naboth plenty of money, more than the vineyard was probably worth. However, Naboth was not persuaded by covetousness. He refused the offer and stood by faith. Since faith comes by hearing and instruction from God's word, Naboth is an example of faith during a time of faithlessness in Israel.

Sadly, his life was taken in a horrible act of injustice. He remembered, however, the words of the Lord, and he said, "The LORD forbid me that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers." Naboth was not simply being sentimental over a family treasure. He was obeying the voice of the Lord Jehovah!

As Christians, we are told "Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father" (Colossians 3:17). We must do everything with God's approval and by His authority. If we cannot find authority for something, then we must stay away from participating in it. The Lord has given us instruction in His word about what we must believe and practice. Yet, many people may not have the faith and courage of Naboth and they compromise to the "Ahabs" of the day.

Many Ahabs exist and would like to see fewer people take a noble stand for the commands and authority of God like Naboth. We are asked and feel pressure to compromise on a host of issues.

Do we hear sermons about the one church and the sinfulness of denominationalism? It is incredibly easy in this pluralistic society to think everyone is okay and can find God on their own terms, apart from the church which Christ died for and now reigns over. The apostle Paul said there is one body (Ephesians 4:4) and we learn that one body is the church (Ephesians 1:22-23). If we quit preaching and teaching on the importance of the one church, then we have sold the inheritance which God has given us.

Do we preach the divinely approved method of singing without the use of instruments? Or have we moved those "ancient borders?" The Bible is clear in what it reveals in how we are to worship God. The Scriptures teach, "speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:19). God has set in order the way we should worship Him. What He has approved and authorized is singing in the church. If we begin to introduce instrumental music into our worship assemblies then we are moving past the landmarks God has given. The nature of Bible authority is that it approves and reveals what God wants. God has authorized singing — let us not remove God's authority out of our lives and out of the Lord's church.

Many churches of Christ are failing to follow the pattern of the New Testament and ignore the ancient landmarks. The rise in feminism and women preachers have increased dramatically in recent years. Paul said that "A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet" (1 Timothy 2:11-12). The responsibility of leadership and teaching within the church has been given to men. Women are to learn with a quiet spirit and submissiveness. They are not to usurp the authority of the men. Women are prohibited from teaching and exercising authority over men.

We cannot compromise, nor give up the ancient landmarks. When we turn away from God's instructions

then we are turning away from God. Naboth was resolved to never sell his vineyard to Ahab. Are we willing to compromise the borders and boundaries of the church? Those borders are reminders to us of God's blessings that are found in the Lord's church. We must remember the word of the Lord, just as faithful Naboth!

Christ on David's Throne

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The central tenet of the popular doctrine of premillennialism is that Christ, though King by right, is not now King in fact. This teaching holds that when He returns He will set up a thousand year earthly kingdom and sit on the literal throne of David as King of kings.

*But the Bible teaches that everlasting peace will come to the world only after Christ returns and sits upon the throne of David in Jerusalem and establishes His historic kingdom on earth for a thousand years (Revelation 20:4-6) (Hal Lindsey, **The Late Great Planet Earth**. 159).*

Thus, we inquire, When and where is Christ to sit on the throne of David?

What It Is

What is the throne of David, a literal chair or a figure (metonymy) for rule? When Solomon was anointed king of Israel, David his father exulted, "Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, who has given one to sit on my throne this day, while my eyes see it!" (1 Kings 1:48) Thus, "Then Solomon sat on the throne of his father David; and his kingdom was firmly established" (1 Kings 2:12). Obviously, the throne of Solomon and the throne of David are the same.

But the writer of First Chronicles reports of this same occasion, "Then Solomon sat on the throne of the LORD as king instead of David his father, and prospered; and all Israel obeyed him" (1 Chronicles 29:23). Did Solomon sit on two different chairs as king? He "sat on the throne of his father David," and he "sat on the throne of the LORD." Obviously, the throne of David and the throne of the Lord are the same, and, rather than literally designating a physical chair, "throne" is used to mean rule.

This is parallel to Matthew 23:1-2. The Master declared, "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat." Did they sit in a literal chair Moses had sat on 1500 years earlier? Of course not! They occupied the role Moses occupied, teacher of Israel. So the throne of David simply refers to rule given by and in behalf of the Lord, a rule David exercised in Old Testament Israel.

When?

The Old Testament prophesied that a descendant of David would sit on David's throne and rule forever. This was first stated as a promise to David by Nathan the prophet (2 Samuel 7:12-16; 1 Chronicles 17:11-15). The Lord specifically promised:

When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.... And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever (2 Samuel 7:12-13,16).

Solomon, David's son, did indeed build a house for the Lord, the temple, and ruled on his father's throne all his life. But because he allowed his wives to introduce idolatry into Israel, God gave all but the tribe of Judah to Solomon's servant Jeroboam after Solomon's son Rehoboam ascended the throne. Solomon's rule was not established forever.

Thus, sometime later, when the rule of the lineage of David was cast down, Ethan the Ezrahite lamented that the Lord had not fulfilled His promise to establish the throne of David forever (Psalm 89:3-4,28-39, 49).

The promise that a descendant of David would rule on his throne forever was not fulfilled in Solomon.

So, Isaiah magnificently prophesied:

*For unto us a Child is born,
Unto us a Son is given;
And the government will be upon His shoulder.
And His name will be called
Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Of the increase of His government and peace
There will be no end,
Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom,
To order it and establish it with judgment and justice
From that time forward, even forever.
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this (Isaiah 9:6-7).*

Indeed there would be a descendant of David to sit on David's throne forever, and this One would be "Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

When the angel Gabriel announced to Mary that she would bear a Son, he revealed to the wondering virgin concerning this Child, who was indeed of the lineage of David:

He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end (Luke 1:32-33).

Therefore, on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, the apostle Peter proclaimed of David to a stunned audience of devout Jews:

Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses (Acts 2:30-32).

The conclusion is inescapable. When Christ was raised from the dead, He sat on David's throne. Either He now sits on David's throne, or He has not been raised from the dead. To deny that Jesus Christ now sits on the throne of David is to deny His resurrection from the dead.

When God "raised Him from the dead," He

seated Him at His 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 age but also in that which is to come (Ephesians 1:20-21).

Christ now sits with His Father on His throne (Revelation 3:21), the throne of David. If Jesus Christ is to have a different future rule on this earth, He will be demoted, for His present position is "far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come."

Where?

Christ cannot rule on David's throne in literal Jerusalem. Jeremiah the prophet thus condemned Coniah (Jeconiah) King of Judah for his disobedience to the Lord:

*Thus says the LORD:
Write this man down as childless,
A man who shall not prosper in his days;
For none of his descendants shall prosper,*

Sitting on the throne of David,

And ruling anymore in Judah (Jeremiah 22:30).

Jeconiah was not literally childless, for Jesus' descent from David is traced through him (Matthew 1:12-15). But he was childless in the way the prophet specified. No descendant of Jeconiah can ever prosper sitting on the throne of David ruling in Judah. Jerusalem was the capital of Judah and obviously within its territory.

The rule of Christ is completely unique in several ways. One of these is that He is both king and high priest. This could not be in ancient Israel. Kings were of the tribe of Judah; priests were from Levi. But Zechariah prophesied that Christ would "be a priest on His throne" (Zechariah 6:12-13).

The priesthood of Christ, as well as His descent from Jeconiah, eliminates the possibility of His ruling on earth. "For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood" (Hebrews 7:14). "For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law" (Hebrews 8:4). Rather, He is a priest in heaven, where His throne, the throne of the Lord, is (Acts 7:49).

Conclusion

The Lord Jesus Christ presently reigns in heaven on the throne of David, the throne of the Lord, and is by right and in fact "King of kings and Lord of Lords" (1 Timothy 6:15). Let all the earth bow before Him in faith and obedience in recognition of His divine majesty.

Introduction to Colossians

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The apostle Paul, accompanied by Timothy, wrote Colossians (Colossians 1:1,23; 4:18).

From Where Written

The apostle penned Colossians from prison in Rome (Colossians 1:7-8; 4:3,7-14; cf. Philemon verses 1,10-13,22-24; Ephesians 6:21; Philippians 1:13; 4:22; Acts 28:16,30-31).

When Written

Paul wrote the letter during his first imprisonment in Rome, about A.D. 60-62.

To Whom Written

He directed his letter in language almost identical to his epistle to the Ephesians by addressing "the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colosse" (Colossians 1:2).

The City of Colosse

Colosse was about 100 miles east of Ephesus, in the Lycus River valley, in the Roman province of Asia. It was approximately 12 miles upriver from Hierapolis and Laodicea (cf. Colossians 4:13). It had once been a large and important city, but had diminished to little more than a country village and had been surpassed by its neighboring cities in New Testament times. The city was located in a wealthy region dominated by two kindred trades: wool production from the sheep that grew nearby for garment production in Laodicea and the dyeing of cloth. The chalky waters of the Lycus river were especially suitable for dyeing. The inhabitants were primarily native Phrygians and Greek colonists. A colony of ca. 2,000 Jewish families had

been brought into the region by Antiochus the Great (223 -187 B.C.), and they had prospered. Thus, more Jews had joined them, and their influence was great.

The Church in Colosse

There is no proof Paul ever preached in Colosse. He learned of their faith by report (Colossians 1:4). Apparently they had not seen him (Colossians 2:1). The gospel probably came here while Paul was preaching in Ephesus (Acts 19:10).

They heard the gospel from Epaphras, Paul's fellow servant and a faithful minister of Christ (Colossians 1:7). At the time Paul wrote, Epaphras was with him, but he was a Colossian, prayed in their behalf, and was very concerned about them (Colossians 4:12-13).

Apparently the church at Colosse was made up predominantly of Gentiles (Colossians 1:21,27; 2:13; 3:5-7). Archippus labored with them at the time Paul wrote (Colossians 4:17).

Apparently the Colossians were being bothered by pagan philosophy (Colossians 2:4,8), which denied the preeminence of Christ (Colossians 2:9-10), denied his bodily incarnation (Colossians 1:22; 2:9) and taught the Colossians that fleshly sins were insignificant (Colossians 3:1-6). They were also troubled by Judaism (Colossians 2:11-17). These elements were combined in the second and third century to form the gnostic heresies.

Paul and the Colossians were very interested in each other (Colossians 4:7-9).

Purpose of Book

Paul's purpose in Colossians is to show the preeminence of Christ in all things (Colossians 1:14-22; 2:8-10; 3:4,11,17). Whereas Colossians shows the preeminence of Christ contrasted with both Jewish tradition and pagan philosophy, Hebrews portrays the preeminence of Christ compared to the law. Together they show that in Christ there is no room to borrow from either Judaism or human philosophy in order to serve Christ. Christ is complete, and we are complete in him.

Theme

The theme of Colossians is Christ, the fullness of God (Colossians 1:19; 2:8-10). As Christ is "the fullness of the Godhead bodily"(Colossians 2:9), all God has for us spiritually is in Him.

Outline

(adapted from an outline by Homer Hailey)

I. Salutation - 1:1-2

II. Introduction - 1:3-13

A. Thanksgiving for the Church at Colosse - 1:3-8

B. Prayer on Their Behalf - 1:9-11

C. Thanksgiving to God for His Part in Redemption - 1:12-13

III. Christ, the Fullness of God - 1:14 - 2:23

A. Christ, Preeminent in All Things- 1:14-23

1. Relationship to Sin: Redeemer - Verse 14

2. Relationship to God: Image - Verse 3. Relationship to Creation: Creator - Verses 16-17

4. Relationship to Church: Head - Verse 18

5. Relationship to Godhood: Fullness - Verse 19

6. Relationship to Mankind: Reconciler - Verses 20-23

B. Paul's Ministry of Christ - 1:24-29

C. Christ, the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge - 2:1-3

- D. Christ, the Fullness of the Christian - 2:4-23
 - 1. Beware of Philosophy. - Verses 4-8
 - 2. We Are Complete in the Complete Christ. - Verses 9-12
 - 3. Do Not Be Judged by the Law. - Verses 13-17
 - 4. Do Not Be Beguiled from Christ by the Rudiments of the World.- Verses 18-23
 - IV. Do All in the Name of Christ (The New Life in Christ). - 3:1 - 4:6
 - A. Seek Things Above - 3:1-4
 - B. Put to Death the Old Man and Put on the New Man - 3:5-11
 - C. New Character in Christ - 3:12-17
 - D. New Relationships in Christ- 3:18 - 4:1
 - 1. Wives to Husbands - Verse 18
 - 2. Husbands to Wives - Verse 19
 - 3. Children to Parents - Verse 20
 - 4. Fathers to Children - Verse 21
 - 5. Servants to Masters - Verses 22-25
 - 6. Masters to Servants - Verse 1
 - E. New Life of Prayer - 4:2-4
 - F. New Relationship to People of the World - 4:5
 - G. New Speech - 4:6
 - V. Conclusion - 4:7-18
 - A. Information by Tychicus and Onesimus - 4:7-9
 - B. Various Salutations - 4:10-15
 - C. Directions - 4:16-17
 - D. Paul's Salutation - 4:18
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Parables of the Master
Ministering to Needy Brethren
(The Sheep and the Goats)

Matthew 25:31-46

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In Matthew 25:1-30 the Master taught two parables, the Ten Virgins (verses 1-13) and the Talents (verses 14-30), to teach His disciples to be ready for His return. Now, two days before His ultimate humiliation (Matthew 26:1-2), He teaches a lesson, also primarily for the benefit of His disciples, about the time when He returns in glory (Philippians 2:9-11) and sits upon His glorious throne, the throne of judgment (Matthew 25:31).

This is not strictly a parable, but, as virtually all of the Lord's teaching, it does contain figurative language. "It is more a poetic description of the prophecy Jesus had spoken earlier that year at Caesarea Philippi (Matt. 16:27)" (Earnhart. 191).

In this dramatic story Jesus reaches the climax and end, not only of all He had been teaching the disciples since they left the Temple that day (Matthew 24:1 -25:46), but of all He had taught while He walked upon earth. This is the description of the Final Judgment. All He had said, all He had done and would do upon earth, was to prepare men for this great day, and His final, real, personal return will be to execute that judgment.

Jesus walked upon earth as a man and endured the humiliation of the cross as a man (Philippians 2:5-8), but He shall return gloriously as the Lord of glory. "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory" (Matthew 25:31). A "throne" is the symbol of rule (Psalm 47:8), but a function of that rule is judgment (Psalm 9:4,7). Christ now sits on His throne (Acts 2:30-31), "the throne of grace," from which obedient believers "obtain mercy and grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:14-16). When Christ returns He will sit on the throne of judgment.

Then He shall be the judge of all nations (Matthew 25:32; John 5:22-23; Acts 17:30-31). This doesn't mean judging them as nations. Just as the gospel message is to individuals of all nations (Matthew 28:19), so Christ will judge as individuals all of every nation (Romans 14:10-12; 2 Corinthians 5:10). Christ Jesus came once to save the world (John 3:17; 5:24-26), but when He returns it will be to judge all mankind (John 5:27-30). None shall be exempt; both the righteous and the wicked will be raised and appear before Him (John 5:28-29).

He shall then separate people "one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats" (Matthew 25:32). The Master's disciples are compared to sheep (Mark 14:27; John 21:15-17) because sheep in Palestine recognized their shepherd's voice and followed where he led (John 10:3-4, 27). They are placed on the right, the place of honor (1 Kings 2:19; Acts 2:33-34).

Those who are blessed by the Father will "inherit the kingdom prepared for" them "from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34). To "inherit" the kingdom is to "*come into possession of*" (Arndt & Gingrich. 435) it (cf. Romans 8:16-17). Obedient believers enter the kingdom now in baptism (John 3:5; Colossians 1:13), but we will inherit the kingdom at the end of time when we enter heaven and gain eternal life (Matthew 25:46; 19:29; Revelation 21:7; 22:1-5).

In this story, the sole basis of judgment seems to be whether or not we have given benevolent help to needy disciples (Matthew 25:34-45). But passages may be multiplied indicating additional criteria of judgment (cf. Matthew 7:21-27; 15:13-14; John 3:18,36; 8:24; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19-21; 2 Peter 2:1-3; Jude verses 14-15; Revelation 21:8). This is a figure of speech called "synecdoche," specifically synecdoche of the part for the whole (Dungan. 300). For example "confess" is put for all the conditions of pardon for an erring child of God (1 John 1:9; cf. Acts 8:22). Parallel to this, James teaches, "Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27). There is much more to "pure religion" than the items mentioned in this verse, but James wants us to understand that the religion of Christ is manifested by action (James 2:14-16; cf. Galatians 5:6). And the Master wants us to understand that, if we are to inherit a home in heaven, we must be merciful even as our Master is. Thus, the passage, while not limiting the standard of judgment to acts of benevolence, certainly teaches we must demonstrate love and mercy in acts of kindness to receive eternal life. "... selfishness and lack of compassion ... will cost its owner eternal life with a merciful and selfless Christ and put him in an eternal hell with a merciless and prideful devil" (Earnhart. 192).

Christ is so identified with His disciples that to help them is to help Him (Matthew 25:40), and to neglect them is to neglect Him (Matthew 25:45).

Incidentally, the passage teaches us what true benevolent needs are - the necessities of life: food, drink, clothing, shelter, medical care, and comfort in affliction (Matthew 25:35-39,42-44). Once a member of a congregation where I preached wanted the church to pay her cable TV bill. We declined.

Finally, the Master emphatically, tersely makes a point that few people believe. Yes, there is heaven, and the blessed will enjoy it eternally. But just as truly there is hell, a place of eternal torment (Mark 9:43-48) that is equal in duration to the eternal life in heaven of the blessed. The terms "everlasting" and "eternal" in Matthew 25:46 are both translations of the same Greek word, which means "without end" (Arndt & Gingrich. 28).

Christ Jesus invites you to come to Him for salvation now (Matthew 11:28-30), but one day He will come in judgment. If we have been merciful as He is merciful, we will inherit a home with Him in heaven for eternity. If not, we will be eternally punished in an awful place prepared for the devil and his angels. Which will it be?

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