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

PHILIPPIANS 4:8

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 christstheway.com.

A.W. Goff

My long time friend and fellow preacher A.W. Goff laid down his armor June 4th at the age of 91. He and I became friends in 1977 when I heard him debate a Baptist in Morrilton, Arkansas. He later moderated for me in a debate with a Baptist and later still with an institutional preacher in the church of Christ. He credited my dad Harold Sharp with being one of his two mentors. During A.W.'s long preaching career brethren divided over institutionalism, over the "grace/fellowship/unity" movement, and over the humanity/deity of Christ. At great sacrifice he stood for the truth through all these controversies. There are faithful congregations in Morrilton, Arkansas and Russellville, Arkansas because of A.W.. His two sons, Wayne and David, are both faithful gospel preachers.

DISCUSSION OF FIRST CORINTHIANS 11:2-16

A Custom, Not A Command

William J. Stewart | Odessa, Ontario, Canada

The apostle Paul's message in 1 Corinthians 11 concerning head coverings has been variably interpreted by our brethren. Folks differ on what the covering is, on when the covering is to be worn, and on whether it is binding today or not. Herein I affirm the wearing of an artificial head covering is a matter of custom, not a

command.

Custom

We need to begin our discussion with the apostle's conclusion – "...we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God" (v 16). This word rendered "custom" (Greek "*sunetheia*") appears just twice in the New Testament, here in our text and also in John 18:39. In John 18, Pilate spoke of the common practice (not a binding law) for a prisoner to be released to the Jewish people at Passover. This is very different from the word *ethos* used in Acts 6:14 and elsewhere, "...the customs which Moses delivered..." The former is a habit or routine, the latter is a statute or commandment. Paul plainly identifies the wearing of head coverings as a custom. It is a cultural practice, not a divine commandment.

The apostle encouraged the Corinthian women to wear the head covering, of that there is no doubt. However, his candid affirmation that "...we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God" sets the rationale for his instruction in the realm of social etiquette rather than obedience to a divine decree. There may be reasons for a woman to wear a head covering in certain places and at certain times, but it remains a matter of custom, and a custom which does not belong to the church as a whole.

Setting the Context

We stress the importance of context, and rightly so. A text void of its context is easily misunderstood and misapplied. We must consider the greater context to which this instruction belongs. There is a principle woven through the middle portion 1 Corinthians dealing with the use of one's liberty. Just because we have the right to do something doesn't mean it is the right thing to do (6:12; 8:9; 10:23-24). Equally, though we receive sound and timely advice (perhaps even from an apostle), it is not sinful to do otherwise (7:25-28, 35-38). To demonstrate this principle about our freedoms and their willful restraint, Paul looks at various examples in the context: marriage (ch. 7), meats offered to idols (ch. 8, 10), the rights of an evangelist (ch. 9), and the wearing of head coverings (ch. 11); all demonstrating the saying, "...I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some" (see 1 Corinthians 9:19-22).

Immediately preceding Paul's discourse about head coverings, we find this:

"Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God, just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved. Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ" (1 Corinthians 10:32-11:1).

This willingness to set the concerns of others above our own freedoms is Paul's lead into the discussion of the head covering. There is no liberty with divine mandates, but there is a choice regarding the head covering, for it was an apostolic recommendation.

Judge Among Yourselves

In verses 13-15, Paul wrote:

"Judge among yourselves. Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him? But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her; for her hair is given to her for a covering."

Paul asked the Corinthians to employ their own ability to make a rational, common sense observation. The Greek word rendered "judge" in our text appears in Romans 14:5, "One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike," and is elsewhere rendered determined, decided, etc.. Paul encouraged the Corinthians to decide among themselves what was proper, comely (**KJV**) or appropriate (**WEB**).

How were they to determine what was proper regarding head coverings and hair length? Paul counselled

them to let nature be their teacher. We must be careful how we understand this term “nature.” It does not refer to what is inherent or necessarily imposed by God. The same Greek word (physis) is used in Ephesians 2:3, which says we “...were by nature children of wrath...” Wickedness is not an innate attribute of humanity – God did not create vessels of wrath. Wickedness is an acquired trait, learned by exposure and experience, and then acted upon habitually, or as Thayer says “...by long habit has become nature.”

What does nature teach us about hair length? He writes, “...if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him ... but if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her...” (11:14-15). This was Paul’s observation of what “by long habit” was the accepted normal, not a universal law. The Nazirite vow required adherents to not cut their hair for a time, and then at the end of the vow, to shave the head (Numbers 6:5, 18-19). The vow could be taken by either a man or a woman (v 2), which resulted in men having long hair and women being shorn. If either of these were inherently sinful, every Nazirite sinned, and did so at the Lord’s command. Acceptable hair length is a societal issue, not a Scriptural issue. Men with long hair and women with short hair is a matter of decorum, not sin. Christians should understand that to have a good influence in our communities (to “be all things to all men”), we should abide by societal customs which do not violate God’s word.

A Symbol Of Authority

The woman’s covering is identified as “a symbol of authority” (v 10). A woman’s submission to her husband is a universal truth (v 3; cf. Genesis 3:16; Ephesians 5:23; 1 Peter 3:1, 5-6), but the covering is not a universal symbol of her submission. In other times and places the covering was a symbol of prostitution (Genesis 38:13-15, 19), of mourning and weeping (2 Samuel 15:30; 19:4; Esther 6:12) or of false prophecy and divination (Ezekiel 13:17-23). The covering may have served as a symbol of a woman’s submission to her husband in first century Greek or Roman culture, but the covering is not a universal sign synonymous with a woman’s subjection to her husband. No such command existed in the age of the patriarchs, nor under the Mosaic Law, neither was it a subject of orthodoxy among the churches in Paul’s day (v 16).

Covered Or Uncovered?

The instruction of 1 Corinthians 11:4-7 must be understood in light of these facts:

- The greater context deals with having consideration for others in our conduct.
- Hair length and coverings differ based on time and culture.
- Paul stated he is dealing with a custom, not a doctrine of the church.

Paul stated it is a dishonor for a man to pray or prophesy with his head covered (v 4, 7). This is a cultural observation, not a universal truth. Aaron and his sons wore turbans or hats when they served before the Lord (Exodus 28:3-4; 29:9), and it brought no dishonor to them or the Lord. In western culture, it is considered disrespectful for a man to wear a hat indoors (though such is changing). If a man wears a hat indoors, it may result in disapproval or rebuke. He brings dishonor to his head.

Paul continues, “...every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head...” (v 5). The application is the same. If cultural expectation is for a woman to be covered, then she should be covered (ie. Middle Eastern culture), lest she dishonor her head (herself and her husband’s authority). Ignoring such a custom would bring disdain rather than an opportunity to influence others for good (to be all things to all men).

The “if” of verse 6 is important, “...if a woman is not covered, let her also be shorn. But if it is shameful for a woman to be shorn or shaved, let her be covered.” Paul is not citing a divine law; the “if” appeals to cultural standards (v 13-15). This is not a universal statement of divine instruction, rather it calls upon brethren to fit in with local customs.

As much as we are able, we should minimize hindrances to our influence for the gospel's sake. That is Paul's focus in 1 Corinthians 11:1-16 and in the greater context. As we are able, we should abide by the customs of the culture we are in. Seeking to make this text a universal law requiring women in all places and in all ages to have long hair with artificial coverings and men to have short uncovered hair stretches the text beyond the apostle's intent.

Thayer, Joseph, "Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament".

DISCUSSION OF FIRST CORINTHIANS 11:2-16

Hats, Hair and Harridans

Brent Sharp | Shannon Hills, Arkansas, USA

Suppose you showed up for worship services one morning and discovered that your preacher was going to deliver his sermon while wearing a ball cap with the logo for his favorite football team, or automobile company, or some such on his head. Would you care? Suppose another of your members, who happens to be from West Texas, was waiting on the Lord's table with a ten-gallon Stetson perched atop his head. What difference would that make? Suppose that the preacher put forward a man to be an elder, who seemed to be perfectly qualified from scripture... had long, flowing locks to his waist which the ladies of the congregation assured you were "beautiful". Would that be a problem?

Now suppose you entered a congregation for worship on Sunday morning and every woman and girl in attendance was bare-headed, many of the women had haircuts indistinguishable from men, and a sizeable minority had buzz cuts that would be acceptable for enlisted men in the army. Would this be a problem? Well, the fact of the matter is that you are highly unlikely to encounter the former ... but the latter is a fact of life for the overwhelming majority of professed churches of Christ throughout the United States. Why is this?

In the book of I Corinthians Paul addressed a number of disorders plaguing the church in Corinth. While this book was written to correct the excesses and contentions of Corinth, the letter itself is universally applicable to all local congregations, including the various local churches today. Paul's instructions to Corinth are still applicable in Amarillo, Lagos, Florence, or anywhere else a congregation of Christians assembles to work and worship together (I Corinthians 1:2). Included in these instructions were some specific matters as to the conduct of each sex within worship, with a strong emphasis on maintaining the proper role of each, not only to preserve decorum, but to properly reflect our relationship with Christ and His Father.

In the first half of I Corinthians 11 Paul admonished the Corinthians, and instructs us, in four specific things. These are that women should pray with covered heads and have long hair, whereas men should pray with their heads uncovered and keep their hair short. For the first eighteen centuries after Paul penned this letter few, if any, who claimed to be Christians disputed this matter. It was universally accepted by Catholics, Orthodox and Protestants that this was the correct way to do things. Suddenly, however, in the 19th century we somehow discovered this was incorrect.

Today most brethren will tell you that Paul was simply addressing a local custom of Corinth.... Yet Paul nowhere calls his instructions to the Corinthian church a matter of custom, nor did anyone believe so until modern times, nor do serious lexicographers believe so today. Most who oppose the head covering for women will point out that the word custom appears in verse 16 this passage, after which they will assert that this refers to Paul's instructions in the previous section, and then proclaim half the matter moot... that is, they will excuse women from their responsibilities in this passage while still binding Paul's instructions to men. A few will at least excuse men along with women from adhering to this, although they are a small minority.

To properly apply the passage we must know to what Paul makes reference when he uses the word “custom.” The fact of the matter is Paul was referring to the abhorrent Corinthian practices of having women appear uncovered when he uses this term, and was explaining that no other church anywhere in the world allowed their women to behave in such a fashion. Every church in the first century other than Corinth was requiring their women to wear a covering. Even studious opponents of the veil, such as Mike Willis, acknowledge that the wearing of the veil was the universal practice of all the churches when Paul penned this letter (Commentary on I Corinthians, page 308). If we look at this seriously, from a lexicographer’s view, what does the passage actually say?

We have no such custom - We the apostles in the churches which we have elsewhere founded; or we have no such custom in Judea. The sense is, that it is contrary to custom there for women to appear in public unveiled. This custom, the apostle argues, ought to be allowed to have some influence on the church of Corinth, even though they should not be convinced by his reasoning. (Albert Barnes)

“But if any man seem to be contentious - Εἰ δε τις δοκει φιλονεικος ειναι· If any person sets himself up as a wrangler - puts himself forward as a defender of such points, that a woman may pray or teach with her head uncovered, and that a man may, without reproach, have long hair; let him know that we have no such custom as either, nor are they sanctioned by any of the Churches of God, whether among the Jews or the Gentiles. (Adam Clarke)

συνήθειαν. See note on 1 Corinthians 8:7. The word has been interpreted [1] as referring to contention, ‘it is not our custom to be contentious,’ or [2] to the practice of permitting women to appear unveiled at the services of the Church. The latter yields the best sense. This appeal to the Churches must not be understood to imply that all Churches ought in all respects to have the same customs. But in a matter such as this, involving the position of women in Christian society, and their reputation in the world at large—a matter of no small importance—it were far wiser for the Corinthian Church to follow the universal practice of Christendom.

Now if the false teacher resolves to be contentious, and maintains that it is allowable for women to pray and teach publicly in the church unveiled, we in Judea have no such custom, neither any of the churches of God.“ (James MacKnight on the Epistles)

See also Alford, Matthew Henry, Fausset (Pulpit Commentary), Lipscomb, McGarvey, etc. etc. etc.

At this point I should acknowledge that there has long been a minority opinion, championed by Chrysostom and Calvin, amongst others, that the custom of verse 16 is a practice of being contentious. While a minority of scholarly luminaries have taken this position, they likewise held that the veil was still universally binding and that the contentious person was still arguing about the head coverings and hair lengths despite Paul’s thorough teaching on the matter.

This is the crux of the problem for those who oppose the covering... Their position is contrary to plain reading of the text, contrary to the Greek grammar (as seen above), and its existence is well nigh impossible to document prior to the latter half of the 19th century. Nowhere does Paul refer to the covering as a custom... this is a modern invention to excuse ignoring a direct command.

What we need to understand, and admit, is that at the turn of the twentieth century many preachers affiliated with the restoration, or Stone-Campbell movement, saw themselves as progressives and advocated positions that would shock most members of the church of Christ today. The most adamant opponents of the head covering, who by and large were successful in winning the majority over to their position, were men who embraced and espoused what would later become known as first-wave feminism. These men advocated for deaconesses in the local church and women teaching Bible classes with men in

attendance; some of them also advocated for women leading in various acts of worship such as prayer and song leading, and in a few cases even advocated for women preachers in the local churches. The ensuing split between the church of Christ and the Christian church has usually been framed as a matter of organization and to a lesser degree music, but the role of women played a sizable part as well. Even so, some of the feminist progressives continued with the church of Christ, for example Nichol, while others continued to be influential through their written works, such as McGarvey. The point to all this is that prior to the rise of first wave feminism in England and the United States no one questioned that women should wear a head covering in worship and keep their hair long. It was only after the rise of this movement, and the change of women's role in society at large, that many brethren "discovered" a new meaning of I Corinthians 11:16 which allowed them to utterly annul the teaching of the preceding fourteen verses; a view without historical precedent, grammatical structure or logical consistency. The fact of the matter is that the term custom in verse 16 means the opposite of what the progressives have told us, and that the entire passage is still binding in all places today.

Question from Nigeria about Bible Colleges

Question

Is it scriptural for brothers (a group of men) to establish bible colleges (outside of the church) where preachers are trained? Here in Nigeria, we have a few of them. I want to know if this is right as the influence they are wielding on the church is unhealthy.

Answer

Thank you for this excellent question.

Brethren may operate any legal, moral business (Acts 18:1-3). They may operate such a business as a joint venture (Acts 18:1-3) or incorporate in harmony with civil law (1 Peter 2:13-14).

Any organization may provide for teaching the truth of God's word. The family is organized with oversight (Ephesians 5:23), pooled resources (1 Timothy 5:8), and a common work to be done (Malachi 2:15), and teaching the Bible is central to the function of the home (Ephesians 6:4; 2 Timothy 1:5; 3:14-15). Civil government, an organization, may provide for the teaching of divine truth (Acts 24:23-26; 25:13 - 26:29; 28:16-21). I have taught Bible classes in both a county jail and a state prison under the supervision of government appointed chaplains. The jail/prison provided the place, and regulated the studies (time, number of prisoners, etc.).

Individual Christian may contribute to a college since individual Christians may do things the local church is not authorized to do (1 Timothy 5:16). We may share in any thing that has the right to exist and do the work it is doing (Galatians 4:18).

But, may local churches of Christ build, maintain, support, promote or any in way contribute to a college, whether or not the college teaches the Bible? The only organization (body of people having oversight, pooled resources and work common to all) God has authorized for the church of Christ is the local congregation (1 Corinthians 1:2; Philippians 1:1).

Autonomy (self-rule) is the New Testament pattern for the local church in all its activities. Elders are to be appointed in every church (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5). The oversight of all the work of each local church is within that local church (1 Peter 5:1-2).

By this simple, divine plan of organization, the church is completely able to build itself up unto perfection, equipping each member for service (Ephesians 4:11-16). The church needs no organization other than the local church to train elders, deacons, preachers, song leaders, and Bible class teachers.

This plan is a demonstration of the wisdom of God (Ephesians 3:8-12), and is to the glory of God

(Ephesians 3:20-21; Romans 11:33-36).

Church support of colleges is a corruption of the divine pattern for the organization of the church (2 Timothy 1:13). When a local church makes a contribution, it establishes ties of fellowship (2 Corinthians 8:4). Fellowship is the only tie in Christ (1 John 1:3). When local churches contribute to a college, the college is attached to them in ties of fellowship as an organization attached to the church. This violates the New Testament pattern for the organization of the church (2 John 9).

It also violates the autonomy of local churches (1 Peter 5:1-2). Churches send money to colleges and a board of directors for the college, rather than elders of the church, decides what courses are taught, who teaches, etc. When these colleges try to wield influence over churches, the problem is compounded.

For many years faithful Nigerian brethren, beginning with E.J. Ebong, have led the way in the right way to train preachers without corrupting the Lord's way. The Uyo Town Church of Christ had a preacher training program when I visited there in January, 1992. Until his death Ezekiel Akinyemi taught in such an arrangement in the Challenge Road Church of Christ in Ibadan, and Sunday Ayandare and others still do the same thing. Don't allow brethren misguided by American influence and corrupted by American money to lead you astray.

Follow Up Questions

Based on your reply, I've some questions as I would like to have my doubts cleared on this issue:

1. Does it mean bible colleges have the scriptural right to exist if they are not supported financially or otherwise by local churches?
2. Will the founders of bible colleges make heaven (assuming all they teach their students is true and they live godly lives)?
3. Is it right if a local church announce a lectureship to be organized by a bible college, thereby encouraging members to attend? If yes, can the church bear the transportation cost of members who are willing to attend or use the church bus to convey members to the venue?
4. Would it be right for individual brethren to encourage a brother who wants to be a preacher to attend a bible college (again, assuming the bible college is preaching the truth as revealed in the new testament)?
5. Is the existence of bible college not tantamount to competing with the church in the work of training preachers and men taking the glory that is due to Christ and His church (Eph3:21)?

Answers

Your questions are excellent and very discerning. Here are my answers.

1. Yes
2. That is not my right to judge (James 4:12). My work is to preach the word (2 Timothy 4:1-5); the Lord is the judge.
3. I believe the church and the college should be kept completely separate, so none thinks the college and the church are tied together. Let the college handle its own announcements and transportation.
4. Anyone can attend college if he can afford the fees, and the college accepts him. But the college should not be used as a preacher training organization. In so doing it is usurping the function of the church (Ephesians 4:11-16). Use the preacher training programs that several faithful, Nigerian congregations have.
5. If brethren use the colleges for preacher training, then the college is indeed usurping the work of the divine organization, the church. The church, however, is not to receive glory. God is glorified in the church, for it is His arrangement (Ephesians 3:20-21). The men who found, finance, and run the colleges are glorified by the colleges.

Question from Tanzania

Jefferson David Tant | Roswell, Georgia, USA

Question from Moshi about protesting against the Government wrongful acts.

Question

Are Christians allowed to protest against the government action?

Answer

“Protest” in the Oxford Dictionary means “a statement or action expressing disapproval or objection to something.” Cambridge Dictionary meaning: “a strong complaint expressing disagreement, disapproval, or opposition.”

The right to protest is one of the civil rights that each citizen is entitled to in most countries. Protesting is a way of exercising freedom of speech and opinion in those rights.

When a person becomes a Christian, he does not lose or abandon the civil rights or other benefits that he is entitled to as a citizen. Becoming a Christian means you become a good law abiding citizen in your country (Romans 13), and a light to the world (Matthew 5:14.).

Paul enjoyed the benefits of his citizenship as a Roman citizen, which afforded him the right to a fair trial before the Roman Commander (Acts 22:22-29).

The idea of protesting against evils done by the government rulers is not new. St John rebuked Herod the tetrarch because of his marriage to Herodias, his brother’s wife, and all the other evil things he had done. Today Christians can protest against abortion, same sex marriage law etc. Protesting is inevitable in our sinful world.

Some people worry that any form of protest would undermine the work of people in charge and therefore violate the instruction given in Roman 13 to obey the government. The government is a divine institution, thus its establishment has biblical approval, but it is not an inspired institution.

While protesting, it is sinful for a Christian to engage in acts of violence, looting, stealing, killing, malice and all other kinds of evils which are deemed to be illegal (Ephesians 5:3, 1 Corinthians 6:10).

The History of the Institutional Controversy (Pt 4)

Jefferson David Tant | Roswell, Georgia, USA

World War II

The period of time around WWII marked a definite change in the church. For one thing, a generation of respected preachers whose stand for Biblical principles was passing from the earth. In one 18-month period of 1940-41, Daniel Sommer, J. D. Tant, Joe Warlick and F. B. Srygley died. They were replaced by younger men as editors of religious journals and in other spheres of influence.

Attitudes towards the war itself produced some controversy and change. There had been a strong minority position, mainly through the influence of David Lipscomb, that Christians could not participate in civil government, especially in warfare. In WWI, Cordell (OK) Christian College was closed by the local “Defense Counsel” and two young Christians were threatened with execution for their beliefs. But WWII produced a different mood and strong patriotism after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. B. C. Goodpasture closed the pages of the Gospel Advocate to any discussion of the matter, which was a portent of things to come. By the middle of the next decade, the pages of this influential journal were likewise closed to any discussion of the issues that were dividing brethren.

The Post World War II Era

With the return of GIs from the war, fervor for evangelism grew. Churches and brethren seemed to be willing to try whatever sounded good in spreading the gospel. Thousands of GIs were also going to college on the GI bill, and the “Christian Colleges” didn’t want to be left out, thus the growing appeal for funds from

churches to sustain their growth.

With good intentions, churches were inundated with appeals to support cooperative works in Germany, Italy and Japan. The work in these countries was “overseen” by churches in Tennessee and Texas, which assumed centralized control over the work done in these countries. This was the beginning of the “sponsoring church” concept, with scores or hundreds of churches sending funds to one eldership, which then had the oversight of whatever work was in their sight.

In time some brethren began to have second thoughts about such cooperative efforts that involved something larger than the local church. Roy Cogdill, Foy E. Wallace Jr., Luther Blackmon and Yater Tant were forced by conscience to withdraw their support of these schemes and voice their concerns. This was reminiscent of what happened 100 years before when men like Tolbert Fanning and Benjamin Franklin withdrew their support of the missionary societies and became vocal opponents of such works.

For some years Foy E. Wallace, Jr. had published the “Bible Banner,” but in 1949 he closed its pages and revived the “Gospel Guardian,” which he had published in the 1930s, and asked Yater Tant to become its editor. This paper became a leading influence in the controversies that developed and which came to full bloom in the 1950s. Tant served as editor for 22 years through some turbulent times, and thus a position of leadership was passed on from J. D. Tant to his son Yater. Other papers joined the battle — “Preceptor,” “Searching the Scriptures,” and “Truth Magazine.”

What Were the Issues?

The proliferation of human institutions and sponsoring church arrangements, all clamoring for church support, set the scene for conflict. Combining this with the postwar prosperity many Christians were experiencing after the struggles of the Depression, the stage was set for differences, disagreement and division.

Soon a national radio and TV program came on the scene. The “Herald of Truth” was looked upon as the “voice” of the churches of Christ, much as the “Lutheran Hour” and the “Catholic Hour” were for their respective church bodies. The 5th & Highland church in Abilene, Texas was the sponsor, and in time came to have over 1,000 churches sending money to it for the program.

The problem was that with no denominational hierarchy, how does the program speak with authority for all independent churches of Christ? Furthermore, many saw a problem with a large church with a large budget receiving funds from small churches, some of which could not afford to support a preacher. This is contrary to the principle of those with abundance sending to the aid of those who were lacking, as laid out in 2 Corinthians 8:13-15.

At first, this program had a different composition. The originators of the program, James Walter Nichols and James D. Williford, came to Yater Tant, who was then living in Abilene and editing the “Gospel Guardian,” with the idea of producing professional quality tapes to be sold to churches and aired on local radio stations, paid for by the local church. Tant thought it sounded like a good idea, but the final version was a far cry from what was proposed. It became a “brotherhood” project, overseen by the 5th and Highland elders in Abilene, with money sent to them by hundreds and hundreds of churches around the nation. As stated earlier, many reasoned that since the Catholic Church had a national program, and the Lutheran Church had “The Lutheran Hour,” why couldn’t the churches of Christ have what amounted to a “Church of Christ” program that spoke for the Church of Christ? Of course, we have no denominational head as the denominations do, so how could one church be the voice of all churches of Christ?

Added to the list of organizations clamoring for church support were homes for unwed mothers, homes for the aged, orphan asylums, publishing ventures, “Cows for Korea,” Gospel Press, and a host of other ventures arising out of the imaginative minds of brethren who wanted to do good. The “Cows for Korea” project arose out of a shortage of cows in Korea, so the plot was hatched for churches to buy cows and

send them to Korea.

Opposition began to appear in some of the religious journals. One of the first articles raising doubts was written by Foy E. Wallace, Jr. in the "Gospel Guardian" in May, 1949. Glenn L. Wallace questioned the Herald of Truth in the "Guardian" in December, 1953. He was preaching for the large College Church in Abilene, Texas. Other papers began to publish articles questioning these practices, but it was the "Guardian" that was the main voice of the opposition as a growing number of brethren began to question the increasing number of centralized projects under the control of a few large, prosperous churches.

The two main organs supporting these ventures were the "Gospel Advocate" under the editorship of B. C. Goodpasture and the "Firm Foundation" under the editorship of Reuel Lemmons. Once again the pages of the "Advocate" were closed to opposing views, thus preventing thousands from having a clear understanding of the issues involved.

Eventually there were a number of debates on the issues beginning in 1954. Some of these debates were the Holt-Totty debate in Indianapolis, October, 1954; Harper-Tant debates in Lufkin and Abilene, Texas in 1955; Woods-Porter in Indianapolis, January 1956; Cogdill-Woods in Birmingham, November 1957; (G.K.) Wallace-Holt in Florence, Alabama, December, 1959. These debates reflected scores of debates, hundreds of articles and untold numbers of discussions brethren have had through the years. Brethren who once stood together for the common faith were now on opposite sides of these issues.

"In a debate between Dale Smelser and... Buster Dobbs...Dobbs affirmed over and over again that 'all local congregations could scripturally send all their money to the elders of one church, and that church could then oversee all the money in evangelism throughout the world.' This was the heart of my discussion with Earnest Harper over the Herald of Truth...the idea that one eldership can become a 'board of directors' for expending the funds of ten thousand congregations" (Letter from Yater Tant to Jimmy Lovell, 10/15/83).

(to be continued)

A Life God Commended

Jim Mickells | Lewisburg, Tennessee, USA

In the book of Job God has a conversation with Satan on two different occasions about this great man. It is extremely interesting what Jehovah says about Job. Obviously, what the Lord saw in the life of this man was highly prized by Him. We certainly would do well to imitate Job in our lives so the same thing could be said of us by our God.

"Then the LORD said to Satan, 'Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?'" (Job 1:8)

The first thing the Lord says about this man is that he is My "servant." Job was not just a believer in God, he served Him as well. In verse 5 of chapter 1, the writer tells us this man of God would rise early in the morning to offer burnt offerings to Jehovah for each of his children as they celebrated feast days in their homes, possibly birthdays (verse 4). He was concerned that one of his sons or daughters may have sinned against the Lord, cursing Him in his heart. Keil and Delitzsch Commentary says, "Job is afraid lest his children may have become somewhat unmindful of God during their mirthful gatherings." He wanted them to be pure from any defilement caused by sin. This he did "regularly" (verse 5), serving God and serving to help intercede for his offspring.

Not only was he a servant of the Most High, the Lord says, "there is none like him on the earth." Far too many are content to simply be stronger than the weakest, more knowledgeable than the babe in Christ, attend more than the one who is very irregular, or just do a little more in service to God than the one who does little or nothing. One will usually select the weaker, etc. to compare themselves with to feel better

about themselves. The apostle Paul warned that it is a dangerous thing to compare ourselves with others (2 Corinthians 10:12). We, like Job, should be striving to be the best we can possibly be. Mediocrity should never be good enough for servants of the Lord.

He was also described as a “blameless” man. The word is defined as, “complete, morally innocent, having integrity” (**Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon**). This does not mean he was sinless, but that he was a man of integrity trying to avoid sin in his life. As already noted in verse 5, he would offer burnt offerings for his children, and no doubt such sacrifices would be made for himself as well. God made provision for forgiveness and reconciliation, of which Job took advantage. The blameless man is the one who is striving to avoid sin (Psalm 18:23), yet if he is overtaken, he seeks forgiveness through the means authorized by the Lord.

The writer also describes him as an “upright man.” **The Complete Word Study Dictionary – Old Testament**, defines the word “upright” as, “An adjective meaning straight, just, right.” R. Green in **Pulpit Commentary** says, “Conformed to that which is right; holding a right relation to God and man; correct and honourable in his dealings; a man of probity, truth, and honour.” Not only did he work at having a right relationship with the Father, he was an honorable and just man in dealing with others with whom he was in contact. Could others see God living in him? Was he the salt of the earth and light which would illuminate the world filled with the darkness of sin? Absolutely!

This verse, along with 2:3, says he “fears God.” **Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon** defines the word “fear” as, “fear, reverence, honour.” It is easy to see the great reverence and honor which Job had for Jehovah. When he had lost all his material possessions and seven sons and three daughters, notice how he responds. “And he said: “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, And naked shall I return there. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; Blessed be the name of the LORD” (Job 1:21). Satan afflicts him with painful boils, his wife tells him to curse God and die, and yet he still fears God. “But he said to her, ‘You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?’ In all this Job did not sin with his lips” (Job 2:10).

He was a man who would “shun evil” as well. The word “evil” is defined in the **New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible** as “bad, evil.” Strong says Vine’s word is “sin.” T. Whitelaw in **Pulpit Commentary** makes this observation

“Sin-hating. Completing the portrait of the patriarch’s religious character by depicting the attitude in which it stood to moral evil, whether in himself or in the world around, which was not a position of indifference or neutrality, but of active and determined hostility - a necessary feature in the character of the good man as portrayed in Scripture.”

This speaks of the effort which this man put forth to avoid evil or sin. This implies he knew what displeased God and was determined to stay away from such.

May the Lord help each of us to follow the example of this great man so we can meet with His approval.

One Thing I Know (John 9:25b)

Emmanuel (Manny) Ebong | Lagos, Nigeria

Introduction

John 9:1-41 presents us with a variety of actions militating against the work of God by the “power that be,” the Pharisees. Here, we have the story of a blind man who had been healed by Jesus. The man had been blind from birth. Jesus spotted the blind man and went to his aid. Indeed, God knows us all and may He meet us all at our various points of need. The healed blind man neither had the luxury of beholding nature nor seeing his parents right from birth. But God gave him the joy of this singular life changing experience. How exciting it must have been for him to see and appreciate God and nature. Yet, the people who had eyes and were witnesses to the event could not see what the blind man was seeing. The blind man was probably wondering in his mind why anyone with eyes could not see and appreciate God for such a great

work as this. How sad and unfortunate it becomes when we deny God the glory and honor due Him. In the heat of their disbelief, confusion and argument, the Pharisees sacrificed and politicized the truth just so they could win a point. They ended up in fighting and suppressing the truth. With all the disbelief and interrogations and counter interrogations from the Pharisees, the former blind man, (out of self-conviction) made a very profound statement in verse 25b, saying "...one thing I know, I was blind, but now I see." In other words, whether they all believed it or not, the fact remains that he was blind, but now he could see through the healing hands of Jesus.

Discussion

The Healing (John 9:1-7): The Jews required to know whose fault (sin) it was for him to be born blind. Jesus' answer was that it so happened that the glory of God might be made manifest. And indeed, God was glorified when the blind man was healed by Christ. Jesus is the light of the world. He came that we might see. Jesus mixed His spit (saliva) and soil to heal the blind man. This is a reminder of how God used earth to form man at creation. Thereafter, He asked the blind man to go to the pool of Siloam to wash. Here, we see active faith and obedience at work as a demonstration of belief in Jesus.

The Witnesses (John 9:8-12): While the neighbors were all confused, his parents afraid, the Pharisees disoriented and disorganized, the blind man was ecstatic with joy immeasurable due to the new experience through Jesus (The Christ). He made a very bold statement that he was the one that was healed despite the threats from the Pharisees by telling them "I am he."

Jesus The Prophet (John 9:13-23): The man who had been blind from birth and could now see responded out of pure conviction that Jesus is a Prophet from God. But in their quest to cover up the truth, they resorted to some base tactics of threat and intimidation. Anyone who consented that the miracle performed by Jesus would be thrown out of the Synagogue. In a bid to cover their shame, the parents are summoned. But then, why should the parents fight the "power that be" in a case that has been concluded already and risk being cast out of the synagogue? Here we find the "religious and theological experts" of the day being challenged by a mere illiterate and a "JJC" (Johnny Just Come) who just regained his sight. I am pretty sure they underrated the power of his conviction that Jesus was the Prophet from above, so they attacked him by saying that he was born blind and in sin. Yet these "holy and self-righteous men" were thrown into a state of "theological quagmire," confusion and shame; hence, they must not be seen as failing. Something must be done, and done fast too; otherwise, their image would be tarnished. So, they must do anything and everything to win the argument just to be seen as the superior among men. Does this sound familiar? Despite all of the above antics, yet, one man was neither impressed nor convinced. And the burden was still on the Pharisees to prove otherwise. This became a clear case of the hunter being hunted.

So, they launched an investigation as per the veracity, authenticity and the genuineness of the claim. All the results came back positive, pointing to one direction – **Jesus**, the Prophet from God. Question: Why would the Pharisees even want to rope in the parents of the former blind man? What concerns the parents of an adult beggar in this case? The Pharisees devised yet another tactic, just to implicate the parents. But the response was a smart one. They responded according to what they knew and directed them to the source of the problem, who also happened to be the solution to the problem - their son. He was the main and substantial evidence, ask the son.

The parents, despite the fear of being thrown out of the Synagogue, gave a very logical response. Their son whom Jesus healed was of age. Let them ask him! The evidence was right there before them. Yet, they wanted to bypass such a substantial piece of evidence that was starkly naked and staring them right in the face at a time when it was needed most. Who does that? The parents should not be the ones on trial here. The court was stuck. There was no denial of the fact that they had failed. There was no room for any cover-up. And there was no opportunity to do otherwise. What a shame. But they wouldn't stop there. I am more convinced that everyone knew for a fact that it wasn't the blind man who was standing trial. It was the unbelieving Jews, the Pharisees who were standing trial. They were trying to disprove the work of

Jesus with a closed mind of unbelief. But the whole exercise misfired and backfired in every direction to their shame. The real person the Pharisees were seeking out was Jesus; yet, they could not proceed beyond the evidence of his work (the man whose sight was restored). Isn't it wonderful how our belief and faith in Christ can lead us to God? And failing to believe can also limit and inhibit us?

How sad that the Pharisees who were seen as the "spiritual guides" of the people were already blind to the truth. How ironic also, that the Pharisees who were the "religious icons," "religious experts," of the day were spiritually blind to the truth. In fact, Jesus was a threat to their religious system of belief and set up. As far as they were concerned, Jesus was a lawbreaker for healing on the Sabbath. But it so happened and must be proven that Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath.

The confession - Jesus from God (John 8:24-34) This confrontation is getting too serious. The Pharisees are neck deep in denial. If they should give up now, they would probably not be seen as winning the argument. So, they strategized yet again and redefined their attack under the guise and color of religion, thus charging the healed man to "give God the glory." This is a very serious and solemn charge. Yet, they themselves were not ready to give God the glory by acknowledging His work as of God. They had failed woefully since they were not ready to yield. At this point, the blind man was probably fed up with the whole unfruitful exercise and made the profound statement in verse 25b "...one thing I know."

In other words, whatever the Pharisees are trying to do, he does not want to be a part of it. All he knows is the clear fact that he was blind from birth, and now he could see. Whether they saw Jesus as a sinner or not, he does not care and does not want to be dragged into their legalistic argument. One thing he knows is that whosoever healed him must have been a Prophet of God. No one could convince him otherwise, since his conviction was too strong. Are you convinced or convicted!

A rekindled belief in God (John 9:35-38) Jesus, understanding the stress of the man whose sight he had restored, sought him out thereafter. This was a great encouragement to the healed man. Our God does not forget about us and leave us out to hang and dry in our struggles. Upon his stubborn, faith-based emancipative declaration and proclamation that Jesus was the Prophet from God who restored his sight, the healed man was thrown out of the Synagogue (verse 34). The blind man was a ticking time-bomb in the hands of the Pharisees. He was simply too hot for them to handle.

The Application: In making this application to our various life situations today, what would be the one thing that would provoke us to utter this bold statement of faith as the healed blind man? Would we be bold enough to say out of true conviction?

- That God can open my spiritual eyes of understanding
- That no council of the Pharisees or men can affect our faith and belief in God
- That God rules in the kingdom of men and gives it to whomsoever He wills (even the basest of men)
- That Jesus died, was buried, and was resurrected to set us free from bondage
- That God is real, God saves, and God loves us dearly
- That no weapon fashioned against me can ever prosper
- That our God is more than able and can turn any situation around in my life
- That this present Covid19 pandemonium is for a reason that only God understands
- That this too shall pass away by the grace of God.
- That it is well with our souls and would even be better in eternity if and only if we maintain our faith in Christ
- That, He that is in us, is greater than He that is in the world
- When disappointed by men, He will not fail us.

Furthermore, one thing we should all know is that:

- Whenever in doubt, He is more than able to restore faith in us.
- When life is hard, He gives us every assurance.
- When health fails, God restores our hope and confidence in Him.

- When friends become foes, He is ever ready to stand by us.
- When hope fails, He inspires us.
- He is the friend of the friendless.
- The hope of the hopeless.
- The joy of the joyless.
- The love of the unloved.
- The earnest guarantee of our salvation.

Brethren, we are all configured and empowered to be overcomers in Christ Jesus. But we must be willing to work out our salvation with fear and trembling.

May God continue to remind us of the spiritual blessings we all have in Christ Jesus. That one thing is an embodiment of blessings in Christ. Let us neither forget nor take for granted God's love for us all.

When a Christian Dies

Mike Thomas | Bowling Green, Kentucky, USA

The Bible says it is a good thing when a faithful Christian departs from this life. John wrote:

"Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, 'Write: "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." 'Yes,' says the Spirit, 'that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them'" (Revelation 14:13).

Notice, the verse does not say it is a blessing for everyone who dies, since most people are in a worse condition after death (cf. Luke 16:22-23). Unfortunately, that reality is ignored at the majority of funerals nowadays as the deceased are "preached into heaven" without any regard for their blatant wickedness and selfishness. The Bible I read says that is deceptive thinking (see 1 Corinthians 6:9-10), which is not what John is doing in Revelation 14:13. He is describing a unique person who is in a special category for having ended their time on earth while in obedience and allegiance to Jesus Christ. Their departure is a blessing because they:

Had Faith in Jesus

John the Immerser, who was sent by God to announce the arrival of the Messiah, said, "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:36). That message applies just as much today as it did then. "He who does not believe in" Jesus "is condemned already." Why? Because sin separates us from God, "but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23). There is no way of receiving that gift without acknowledging Jesus as the Son of God. We will either make that confession now and find eternal life in the next life, or we will make that confession then as we are sentenced to an eternal separation from God (cf. Romans 14:11-12). There is no other alternative. Fortunately, a person who dies in the Lord figured that out and had enough humility, sincerity, and courage to make that great confession before they left this world. How beautiful!

Obedied the Gospel

As profound as it is to reach the conclusion that Jesus is God's Son, just acknowledging that fact alone will not change us. We must be willing to yield to what that faith implies: a life of allegiance and surrender to Jesus. He said, "But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46) He then went on to say that a wise person is the one who "hears My sayings and does them" (verse 47), as opposed to the foolish person who "heard and did nothing" (verse 49). That makes sense. How can we say we are a disciple of anything if we do not adhere to its disciplines and teachings? Thus, a person who dies in the Lord is blessed because they applied the teachings of Jesus that placed them in Him. Specifically, they obeyed the gospel of Christ, "for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16). In dying to sin and being buried with Him in baptism, they raised to walk in newness of life as members of the Lord's body (cf. Romans 6:3-4; Galatians 3:26-27). Consequently, their time on earth is

a precious memory for those who knew them because they left an example of building one's life on the teachings of Jesus Christ. Their death is a blessing because they made the choices necessary to be set free from sin. How comforting!

Found the Most Fulfilling Life

There is no greater way to live than as a genuine disciple of Christ. He extracts the best in our character, effort, and intentions, while giving us the greatest reasons to deny ourselves, forgive those who injure us, and to hold out for the future. He blesses our family, helps us develop in character, gives us peace of mind, and (most of all) gives us hope from our past mistakes. Peter said it this way, in quoting Psalm 34, "He who would love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips from speaking deceit. Let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it" (1 Peter 3:10-11). Everything God requires of His people is good and right, and most often leads to our benefit, protection, and prosperity. This was true even with the Law of Moses, which is why Moses asked, "And what great nation is there that has such statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day?" (Deuteronomy 4:8). Indeed, "The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart" (Psalm 19:8). And because of that, we find true happiness and fulfillment when we surrender our will to His, which everyone who dies in the Lord understands.

Have Promise of Eternal Life

The greatest reason to die in the Lord will not be discovered in this life because it is not possible for humans to see God (cf. Exodus 33:20; John 1:18). Consequently, we are incapable of comprehending the magnitude and honor of dwelling in eternity with Him. In this life, we know only an environment of decay, disease, disappointment, and death. In the next life, when redeemed sinners are permitted to dwell in heaven with God, the cares and struggles of life will never surface again. Not only will God remove every concern we had in this life, He will never permit anything to threaten us again. Heaven will be an environment of absolute perfection because "there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life" (Revelation 21:27). Since those who die in the Lord have their names recorded in the pages of that book, they will know only joy and relief throughout eternity. Hence, blessed are the dead who die in the Lord!

Our death will either be the greatest moment of our existence or the beginning of our worst nightmare. The choice is ours. With all there is to gain in being a faithful Christian, why would we not want to end our time on earth "in" the Lord?

God Talks To Me (1 of 3)

William J. Stewart | Odessa, Ontario, Canada

Occasionally I've studied with folks who claim God speaks to them. Typically, their claim to divine revelation is made when something comes up in a Bible discussion they disagree with. The claim is essentially, "God said this to me, so I don't have to obey that."

Does God speak directly to people today? Does He reveal His will to individuals now using dreams, visions or even an audible voice? The claim itself is not proof that such has occurred. Many people in a wide variety of religious affiliations claim God has spoken to them, and often, said something contrary to the Bible.

Divine Communication Is Rare

The way some folks talk about God, you would think He is chatting it up with people every day all over the earth. Looking at the Bible, we see plenty of times when God gave a dream or a vision, or even spoke directly to someone. It is worth noting, the Bible is essentially a record of divine interaction and discourse with mankind. However, the hundreds of occasions in Scripture where God spoke to people in one way or another took place over thousands of years. It was not a daily experience in the life of God's people. There are several people in the Bible whom God spoke to or gave dreams or visions to, but with a few

exceptions, these are leaders among God's people at certain times in their history. And for every person the Bible says God spoke to, there are myriads of people who had no such experience happen to them. There are specific times when God spoke or gave signs - before the flood, establish the nation, freeing Israel from Egypt, giving the Law, etc.. There is no indication through any of this that God was speaking with anyone but Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Moses and other leaders. We can add Joseph to that number, since he received dreams and the ability to interpret. After this, God spoke to and through the judges and the prophets. Again, specific times, circumstances and individuals.

The writer of Hebrews (1:1-2) summarized God's communication with mankind in this way:

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son...

God wasn't speaking with everyone and anyone, but "to the fathers by the prophets." Neither did the Hebrew writer say God is speaking to everyone and anyone today, but now, He speaks by His Son. Nowhere does the Bible say God will speak with us directly today.

God Is Not The Author Of Confusion

There are several religious groups which owe their origin to men or women who claimed God spoke to them in some way. The Mormons, the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Christian Scientists, the Seventh Day Adventists - these all share the same type of beginning. The people responsible for the formation of these groups claimed God spoke to them, gave them a dream, gave them a vision. They all made the same claim, and yet none of them agree doctrinally. Paul wrote, "*God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches*" (1 Corinthians 14:33).

God didn't speak to these people. If He had, they'd all be doing the same thing. Their division is evidence God is not responsible for what they are doing, but they themselves. The Old Testament warns about prophets who speak presumptuously, whom God did not speak to (Deuteronomy 18:20-21). There are many who presumptuously claim God is the source of their message today.

Unverifiable & Subjective

When someone claims God revealed this or that, He gave a dream, a vision, a word of wisdom, etc., how can we know it is so?

When God sent Moses to Egypt, this was a concern the prophet raised. "*What if they won't believe me?*" And so God gave him signs - his rod would become a serpent; his hand would go from normal to leprous to normal again. And then, on top of this, the plagues! There was ample evidence that Moses was speaking on behalf of God. We find the same through the prophets in the Old Testament.

We come to the New Testament and find the same with the apostles. Hebrews 2:3-4 speaks of the message of salvation,

...which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will.

Where are the miracles of confirmation today? Many claim God is speaking with them, and that what they are saying is from Him, but without God's witness to such, they should not be believed. Now, that said, I've heard some who make such claims talk about miraculous events that have happened in their lives. It's one thing to claim miracles have happened, it's quite another to show them as evidence God has indeed spoken to an individual.

Not only are the claims of divine communication by people today unverifiable, but they are also completely subjective. Why did Charles T. Russell, Joseph Smith, Mary Baker Eddy, Ellen White and others claim God spoke to or gave some form of revelation to them? Again, with the extreme differences between their

respective groups being evidence God did not speak to them, it would seem that each wanted to do religiously what they wanted to do. They found in the claim that God spoke to them the freedom to make things how they wanted it. And they did.

Folks I've encountered who claim God speaks to them used it as a way to free themselves from a Bible teaching. They had a preconceived idea, whether their own or planed there by a false teacher, and when confronted with truth, they did not love the truth enough to turn from the lie (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12). Instead, they convinced themselves God had given them a new revelation or a better understanding of His will. The only thing that distinguishes these folks from the religious leaders listed above is they haven't started their own religion - yet.

Next time, we will consider some examples in the New Testament where God spoke or gave visions or dreams to people. We'll look at some texts about the Holy Spirit which are often misused, and note the emphasis on the written word throughout the Bible.

Twelve Thrones: A Brief Study of Matthew 19:28

Trevor Campbell | Pyatt, Arkansas, USA

In Matthew 19:28 Jesus said to Peter and the eleven apostles:

"Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel..."

The word "regeneration" in the text refers to a new birth, it can also refer to something restored, or a restoration. Jesus gives the apostles a clue as to when this "regeneration" will take place - "when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory." This is not something still to come, for when we read the words of the apostles and prophets of the New Testament we find that Jesus is seated on that throne! For example, in Acts chapter two Peter preaches about Jesus of Nazareth (2:22), whom God raised from the dead (2:24), whom God raised to sit upon the throne of David (2:30), whom God exalted to His right hand (2:33), and whom God has made both Lord and Christ (2:36). The words I underlined from those passages; "throne," "right hand," and "Lord," are all related. They all point toward Jesus being on the "throne of His glory." He was to sit on the throne of David, which is figurative language. It's a reference to the fact that Jesus would be a king and of the lineage of king David. The "right hand" refers to the highest place of honor. In oriental culture, when one was invited to a feast the highest place of honor was the seat on the right hand side of the host. The word "Lord" refers to having authority and power. It's a reference to Jesus' kingship. So Peter speaks of Jesus as already being the king, seated on that throne of David.

Since Jesus was seated on the throne during the lifetime of the apostles, this would also be the time of that regeneration, a restoration of righteousness. It would also be the time in which the apostles would sit on twelve thrones. Remember Jesus said, "when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." Just as the throne Jesus sits on is figurative, the twelve thrones are figurative. They represent authority. This passage is a reference to the apostles being the authority on the law of Christ. They were "judges" in the sense that God's people would be judged by their words. "The twelve tribes" in the text represent God's people, or Christians (See James 1:1). The household of God would be built on and guided by the apostles - "having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone" (Ephesians 2:20), the apostles therefore were law givers - "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine" (Acts 2:42).

Similar to Matthew 19:28 and also applicable to this study of the twelve thrones is a passage in Matthew 16:19. Here Jesus says to Peter, "And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." Peter does not hold any special office or position over the other apostles, for they all sat on twelve thrones

equally. All twelve were law givers, and like Peter, all twelve were given the keys to the kingdom, for they unlocked the mystery of the gospel - "the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25). The idea of them "binding" and "loosing" becomes clear when we look at what the apostles taught in the first century. When we look at the book of Acts do we see the apostles binding and loosing anything? Absolutely! We see them binding faith in Jesus Christ, and we see them loosing the bonds of the old law (for examples of both see Acts 2:36-38 and Acts 15:7-11).

So we see from this brief study that during the apostles' lifetime there was a time of restoration. A time when the apostles were the authority on the doctrine of Jesus Christ. Figuratively sitting on twelve thrones, and giving the law by which we all will be judged.



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