

Banner of Truth

April 2004

Joshua, The Son Of Nun

When the apostle Paul wrote: “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope” (Romans 15:4), the writing in the book of Joshua was most certainly included. When the Old Testament writings are ignored, the lack of needed learning of and appreciation for God’s inspired word results in a dangerous, even deadly, lack of soul-saving faith.

Of the many individuals who played an important part in the bringing of God’s scheme of redemption into reality, in the coming of Christ and the establishment of His kingdom [church], **Joshua, the son of Nun**, is ranked as one of the truly great. The name “Joshua,” is the name “Jesus” when written in Greek (cf. Acts 7:45), and means “deliverance” or “salvation.” This well describes Joshua’s work in delivering the Israelites into the “promised land” of Canaan, with the help of God.

Joshua’s forty years as “Moses’ minister” served as an excellent training ground in fitting him for the God-given task of conquering the land of Canaan and settling of the twelve tribes. Though Moses served as the leader of the Israelites in their escape from Egyptian bondage, and in their forty years of wilderness wandering, he was not allowed to lead them into Canaan, due to his disobedience to God in striking the rock for water at Kadesh (Num. 20:1-2). But God saw in his servant, Joshua, the type of faith and courage which qualified him for leadership in accomplishing God’s purpose with regard to the salvation of mankind, as it related to the conquest of Canaan.

The book of Joshua covers the conquest of Canaan by Joshua, and its resettlement by the Israelites, as well as the outstanding admonitions to them to make the proper choice with reference to serving God. It also contains the account of Joshua’s death at one hundred and ten years of age. The first twelve chapters of the book cover the conquest of Canaan and the last twelve cover the settling of the tribes, and various admonitions. Some contend that Joshua could not have been the author of the book which carries his name, but other than a few verses at the very end, there is little reason to doubt that Joshua did write the book. As to the authenticity of the book as an inspired document we can be sure. This is true because there are a number of quotations from it in the New Testament, by inspired writers.

That Joshua was a man with a divine mission is clearly evident. Time after time God’s directions are followed in detail, as the fulfillment of God’s land promise to the Israelites becomes a reality. And, it should be noted that there is more involved in the conquest of Canaan than that of simply giving the Israelites a place to live. The unfolding of God’s plan of salvation, to which the first allusion is made in Genesis 3:15, was involved. The Savior would come through these chosen people, and the law under which they lived would serve as a “schoolmaster” to bring them to Christ.

Joshua has been heralded as a courageous and capable leader by many. And, this has not been without reason. It must be remembered that God’s hand was directly involved in Joshua’s work, but even so, at the same time he displayed the characteristics of a great leader, both in his military pursuits and the spiritual matters involved in leading the Israelites. No doubt he had learned much from

Moses about leadership, but his faith in God's promises was a great basis for great courage. He had seen God's promises kept before.

Faith in God is often lacking among His servants, and when the lack is substantial there is a failure to succeed. But Joshua demonstrated his faith in God and saw the resulting success against the occupants of Canaan. And, Joshua did not falter in following God's instructions when sin was found in the camp due to Achan's outright disobedience.

Joshua's public command to all the tribes of Israel, gathered at Shechem, to choose whom they would serve, is said by some to be the most remembered passage in the Old Testament. At least, there could be no doubt as to the timeliness of his exhortation at that time, or at any time, for that matter. Joshua had a solid basis upon which to issue this great challenge and command. God had been with him time and time again, having assured Israel of victory over the heathen of the land of Canaan, and brought them to a land for which they did not labor. Before Joshua became the leader of the Israelites God had brought them out of Egyptian bondage by a miraculous parting of the Red Sea. With such a demonstration of God's power and steadfastness in His promises, as shown to the Israelites, how could they fail to serve Him in the days ahead "in sincerity and in truth"? They might fail (and often did in the future) but Joshua would not fail! Neither would he fail in the exercise of his influence upon his house to do likewise.

The lessons from Joshua, a loyal and dedicated servant of the Lord, are many and valuable. That is, for those who would please God and reap the eternal benefits. From one who carried out a God-given commission, with God's help as evidenced by His unfaltering promises, we would do well to heed his advice and follow his example with respect to serving our Master.

JOSHUA'S BACKGROUND AND PERSONAL HISTORY

Joshua, the son of Nun, is first mentioned in Exodus 17:9, where he is commanded by Moses to choose men to fight with Amalek. "And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people . . ." (v. 13). He was of the tribe of Ephraim (Num. 13:9), and was originally called "Oshea the son of Nun," but later called Jehosua by Moses (Num. 13:7), suggesting "God's salvation."

The relationship between Moses and Joshua was a very close one from the first mention of Joshua. Joshua is referred to as Moses' minister in Exodus 24:13 and other places. This relationship with Moses, which would involve many things Joshua would need to know when he became the leader in the place of Moses. When Joshua began the conquest of Canaan, he was not someone without experience in the area of leading people, militarily and in other areas as well. From the beginning of the conquest of Canaan, thought to be about 1450 B.C., Joshua was a great servant of the Lord until his death.

Joshua was selected as one of the twelve "rulers" to search the land of Canaan (Num. 13:1). Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, was also selected. He and Joshua had something in common in that endeavor, in that they had the distinction of bringing back a good report whereas the other ten brought back evil reports. In their "good reports" they assured the children of Israel that the Lord was with them and that they could overcome the people of the land, but cautioned them not to rebel against the Lord. But the congregation wanted to stone these two faithful men, whereupon the Lord was provoked with the people. As a result of the people's rebellion, of those twenty years old and above only Joshua and Caleb were allowed to enter the land of promise (Num. 14:30, 38).

When Moses reached the age of one hundred twenty he announced to all Israel that the Lord had said to him that he would not go over Jordan (Deut. 31:2:1). But, "Joshua, he shall go over before thee, as the Lord hath said. . . (v. 3). In Numbers 29:15-23, we find the account of Joshua being set over the congregation as their leader, in accordance with God's instructions.

THE BOOK OF JOSHUA

The book clearly falls into two parts of twelve chapters each. While there has been a general belief among many that the Book of Joshua, for the most part, was written by the one whose name it bears, some contend that it could not have been written by Joshua. One reason for this position is that the death of Joshua is recorded at the end of the book. But these few verses could have been added by another writer after the main body was written. And, it must be remembered that the prophetic element of inspired writers allowed them to state things that would not be possible otherwise.

Some critics take issue with the book due to the fact that a number of miracles are recorded therein, but this is true with other books of the Bible which contain accounts of miracles. It does not make sense, however, to be swayed by the critic who bases his criticism upon his own disbelief in miracles, even denying valid evidence, though there may be mountains of it. If one has his mind made up not to believe in the miraculous element of the Bible, then that one could not consistently believe in any of the Scriptures. Concerning the miracles in the Book of Joshua, the *Bible Commentary* by F.C. Cook, Vol. 11, pp. 2,3, makes a very splendid observation in the following statement:)

“. . . it may be remarked as regards the Book of Joshua that the narrative of it must be taken as it stands or rejected in toto. If the Jordan was simply crossed by the Israelites at well known fords, or Jericho taken by a sudden escalade, after perhaps the collapse of some part of its wall in an earthquake, then the writer who could out of these facts manufacture such narratives as those in iv. and vi., narratives full of very positive statements and of deliberately written detail, is utterly untrustworthy.”

The Book of Joshua is not a book of law, but continues with the history of Israel, covering twenty-five or thirty years, during which the conquest of Canaan and the resettlement by the children of Israel are the main subjects dealt with. But in this connection God’s purpose relative to His plan of salvation is unfolding, and His intervention into matters is clearly seen.

A MAN WITH A DIVINE MISSION

Though Joshua played an important role as Moses’ minister (Ex. 24:31), having “discomfited Amalek and his people in the early part of that relationship (Ex. 17:13), and having been one of the two who brought back good reports from the spying out of the land of Canaan, he is best known for the fulfillment of the commission from God to conquer the land of Canaan. The conquest was in keeping with God’s promise to the Israelites, as set forth to Abraham in Genesis 12:7. “The Lord appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land . . .” Near the end of Moses’ reign as leader of the Israelites he was reminded by God that he would be “gathered unto his people.” “For ye rebelled against my commandment in the desert of Zin . . .” (Num. 27:14). Then Moses asked the Lord to set a man over the congregation to serve as their leader. “And the Lord said unto Moses, Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay thine hand upon him; And set him before Eleazer the priest, and before all the congregation, and give him charge in their sight” (vv. 18, 19). God, through Moses, confirmed Joshua’s appointment for the divine mission when he said, “Be strong and of good courage: for thou shalt bring the children of Israel into the land which I swear unto them: and I will be with thee” (Deut. 31:23). Needless to say, we have a divine mission individually to live by the gospel of Christ and do our utmost to take the message of salvation to “every creature” in “all the world.” We may be assured that God will be with us if we will demonstrate the courage and dedication that characterized Joshua.

A COURAGEOUS AND CAPABLE LEADER

There has always been and always will be, a great need for leaders among God’s people, who

like Joshua served with dedication and undaunted courage. Because he had complete trust and confidence in the true God whom he served he was able to face superior numbers in battle, to deal with sin amongst his own people, and continue the work God had given him to do. He was not willing to give up when difficult situations were faced, but continued to pursue his goal of the conquest of Canaan and the fulfillment of God's land promise to the children of Israel. That God's promise to Israel was fulfilled is clearly set forth in the following statement: "And the Lord gave unto Israel all the land which he swore to give unto their fathers: and they possessed it, and dwelt therein . . . There failed not ought to any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass" (Joshua 21:43, 45).

Joshua as a leader saw the need for relying upon God's law and encouraging the Israelites to do likewise. It is said that he read the law of Moses before Israel, even the women and children (8:35). He admonished the Reubenites, Gadites and the half tribe of Manasseh to heed the law (22:5,6). Faithful leaders will encourage God's people to do the same today.

Brethren may lack courage to be a good leader in our time, unlike Joshua. One of the great weaknesses within the body of Christ is the lack of leaders with the courage to stand up for truth when error arises, especially if influential people are on the side of error. But not only is a lack of courage a problem with regard to leadership, some who are in positions of leadership simply are not capable. They may not know enough truth to be able to discern error, or they may be lacking in ability to make decisions in matters of truth and matters of judgment. We see much evidence of this today.

What a blessing it would be if there were an abundance of capable, courageous men of faith and conviction to serve in positions of leadership. Many of the inroads of error which are being made within the church would not be made, but without such leadership departures from the distinctive faith of New Testament Christianity will continue.

AN EXAMPLE OF FAITH IN GOD

Joshua exhibited great faith in God when he and Caleb went to spy out the land of Canaan. Whereas the ten spies saw "strong people," "walled cities," and "the children of Anak" in the land, and had the "grasshopper complex," Joshua and Caleb said, "If the Lord delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it to us...only rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the Lord is with us: fear them not" (Nu. 14:8-9). The difference was faith in God or the lack of it.

Joshua's faith is again demonstrated in the taking of Jericho, an incident which gained a place of recognition in the great faith chapter of Hebrews 11, where it is said, "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days" (v. 30). There was no basis for Joshua to conclude by human reasoning that marching around Jericho for seven days would cause the walls to fall, but he believed God and showed no doubt that God's plan would work. He had abundant evidence that "taking God at his word" (a good definition of faith) would produce results. While Joshua's activities demonstrate that "faith is the victory that overcometh the world" (I Jno. 5:4), a great lesson can be learned from the fact that he realized that faith involved the following of God's instructions. Although "the Lord said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho..." (6:2), it remained that God's instructions had to be followed, and it was only after the carrying out of those commands that the walls of Jericho fell and they were able to take the city.

Yes, Joshua believed the Lord when he said, "I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee" (1:5). But he also realized that conditions were involved if success was to come. The Lord made this clear when he said:

Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or the left,

that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then shalt have good success” (1:7-8).

JOSHUA’S COMPELLING COMMAND TO CHOOSE

As Joshua comes near the end of his sojourn on earth he gathers all the tribes together at Shechem to give his last instruction, to command them to make the greatest of all choices. But before his exhortation relative to this great choice he recounts some of the things God had done for them. God had brought them out of Egypt by way of the Red Sea. He brought them across Jordan and then to the city of Jericho, and in time to come the land of Canaan for which they had not labored. They knew what God had done for them, and this was evidence that God would continue to bless them provided they made the right choices. It was under these circumstances that Joshua makes what is said to be the most remembered passage in the Old Testament. Joshua said:

Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye now dwell: for as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:14-15).

When Paul said, “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning...” (Rom. 15:4), he certainly included Joshua’s exhortation to choose. So we are faced with choices from day to day, some of which can affect our eternal well-being. No choices are more important than those which have to do with those things of a spiritual nature. And, we want to reflect upon some things relative to making choices, drawing in part from Joshua’s exhortation to the Israelites. Note the following:

1. As God had done so much for the Israelites, He has done so much for us!
2. There are many “idols” which we may serve if we so choose. But as we have seen from Joshua’s day, God is provoked to anger when people serve other gods.
3. Man will serve something — either God or sin. But man cannot serve two masters (Matt. 6:24), and only the true Master gives life.
4. Choice is man’s opportunity and responsibility. And Paul says to “Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good” (Rom. 12:9).
5. We cannot allow others to make our choices for us. We are responsible individually and will be judged accordingly (John 12:48).
6. There is only one reliable basis for making this all important choice – God’s true word.
7. The time for choosing is limited. Life is “even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away” (James 4:14).
8. This choice involves not only this life but eternity, and there is no recourse to a second chance.
9. Joshua was not ashamed to make his choice known before all the people. Are we? Do people know we have made a choice to serve the Lord? Do our actions show it?
10. Are we willing to make the right choices regardless of other’s choices? Or, are we swayed by the majority or that which is most popular?
11. Joshua, as the head of his house, makes a choice for himself, but he will influence other members to make the right choice as well. What about our choices as the head of our house?
 - a. We cannot allow our children the freedom to choose wrong in the absence of our influence upon them to choose right.

- b. We must not allow society, school, or friends to influence them to choose evil if we can prevent it.
- c. If we would be responsible and effective in influencing our children and others to choose righteousness over unrighteousness, we must exhibit a good example before them.

CONCLUSION

From our first contact with Joshua the son of Nun, he is a servant of God. His serving with Moses for forty years fits him for an even greater role in serving God, that of fulfilling his commission in the conquest of Canaan. A man of unfaltering faith in God, he stands ready to obey God's commands and persuades his followers to do likewise. He demonstrates his recognition that faith which results in success is not apart from God's commandments and conditions. Having seen God in action many times he fully trusts God's promises that they will not go unfulfilled. From his own experience and his relationship with God he is eminently qualified to exhort Israel to make the choice to serve the Lord in sincerity and in truth. These things written by Joshua and about him are indeed for our learning, and it behooves us to follow his example in many good things in serving God.

- - Walter W. Pigg

Editor's Note: From the above study of Joshua we have seen the emphasis upon making the correct choices. The following article is valid evidence of the need for correct choices today.

The Muskogee Church of Christ Hosts Interdenominational Prayer Service

It's official: the Muskogee Church of Christ is in fellowship with local denominations! The following news item from the May, 2004 edition of the *Muskogee Daily Phoenix* says it all:

The Muskogee National Day of Prayer service is scheduled for 7 p.m. today at the Muskogee Church of Christ, 3206 N. York St.

The event is sponsored by the Muskogee Ministerial Alliance.

Prayer topics include church unity, our schools, the city of Muskogee, our nation and world peace.

Mayor Hershel McBride, Capt. Reggie Cotton, Tommy Anderson from the Muskogee School Board, the Rev. Diana Cox-Crawford from First United Methodist and the Rev. Larry Smith from Macedonia Baptist will lead prayers. Music will be provided by the Macedonia Baptist Church Choir, Soul Focus from the First United Presbyterian Church and the Praise Team from the Muskogee Church of Christ.

Candlelighters will be provided by Anchor Baptist Church, Abiding Life Fellowship, Antioch Baptist Church, Bethany Presbyterian Church and Macedonia Baptist Church.

The public is invited.

In spite of the Scripture's clear command to "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness" (Eph. 5:11), the Muskogee congregation has open wide its ecumenical arms to embrace and bid God speed to those lavishing in and promoting denominational error.

Bear in mind that this action on the part of the Muskogee church of Christ did not come without warning. Under the heading "Expectations," the church's website (muskogeechurchofchrist.org) boasts

the following:

You can expect to be a part of a larger fellowship network without giving up your spiritual autonomy. MCC is part of a movement originally designed to acknowledge Christians in various denominations willing to be Christians rather than a particular “brand” of Christian (cf. I Corinthians 1:19ff). We are “non-denominational” in the sense that we claim the autonomy and full right to follow God in whatever way we believe He calls us – regardless of political pressures from outside groups. Our concern is to follow Christ through the cross to a resurrected life independent of any particular brotherhood. However, because we are part of the Churches of Christ we draw from a larger resource network than our local church. Basically, we believe we are Christians only but not the only Christians. This is what we mean by “non denominational.”

Our Lord prayed for his followers to be united (cf. Jn. 17:20-21). Such unity depends upon mutual adherence to God’s word, not a mingling of unauthorized practices for the creation of a doctrinally-generic church.

Concerning this matter, the Bible is clear and the faithful comply: “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them” (Rom. 16:17).

- - Preston Silcox via *The Eastside Edifier*

Fourth Annual Banner of Truth Lectures Murray, KY, June 14-17, 2004

Theme: *God’s Inspired Word*

—A Discussion of Fundamental Scripture Teaching—

Sponsored by: Dexter & Hickory Grove Churches of Christ

Venue: *Curriss Center, M.S.U. Campus, Third Floor Theater*

Monday, June 14

- 10:00 a.m. Alan Adams — *God’s Inspired Word* — 2 Tim. 3:16-17
- 11:00 a.m. Gilbert Gough — *He That Is Greatest* — Matt. 23:8-12
- 1:30 p.m. Lindon Ferguson — *Taking Up Our Cross* — Matt. 16:24-27
- 2:30 p.m. Michael Willey — *Sin, A Transgression Of God’s Law* — I John 3:4
- 3:30 p.m. Gilbert Gough — *Leave Father & Mother, Cleave To His Wife* – Matt. 19:4-6
- 7:00 p.m. Roger Campbell — *The Same Commit To Faithful Men* — 2 Tim. 2:2
- 8:00 p.m. Ken Bureson — *The Doctrine Of Christ* — 2 John 9-11

Tuesday, June 15

- 10:00 a.m. Harold Irvan— *Love, Devotion & Loyalty In The Newborn Church*—Acts 2:42-46
- 11:00 a.m. Jeff Bates — *Showing Ourselves Approved Unto God* — 2 Tim. 2:15
- 1:30 p.m. Roger Campbell — *Example Of Believers On Mission Field* — I Tim. 4:12-13
- 2:30 p.m. Leon Cole — *Fellowship and Works Of Darkness* — Eph. 5:11
- 3:30 p.m. Jimmy Bates — *Departing From The Faith* — I Tim. 4:1-3

- 7:00 p.m. Richard Guill — *God's Role For Women* — I Tim. 2:11-14; I Cor. 14:34
 8:00 p.m. Paul Curless — *Watching For Our Souls* — Heb. 13:17

Wednesday, June 16

- 10:00 a.m. Tim Hester — *Always Abounding In The Work Of The Lord* — I Cor. 15:58
 11:00 a.m. Richard Guill — *The Spirit Of Truth Is Come* — John 16:13
 1:30 p.m. Ken Burlison — *Work Out Your Own Salvation* — Philippians 2:12-16
 2:30 p.m. Richard Adams — *The Church, The Pilliar & Ground Of Truth* — I Tim. 3:15
 3:30 p.m. David Lemmons — *Go Into All The World* — Mark 16:15-16
 7:00 p.m. Alan Adams — *Laborers Together With God* — I Cor. 3:6-10
 8:00 p.m. Roger Scully — *Fields White Already To Harvest* — John 4:34-36

Thursday, June 17

- 10:00 a.m. Walter W. Pigg — *Enemies Of The Cross Of Christ* — Phil. 3:18
 11:00 a.m. Roger Scully — *Doing That Which Is Our Duty To Do* — Lk. 17:7-10
 1:30 p.m. Garland Robinson — *Christ, The Author Of Eternal Salvation* — Heb. 5:8-9
 2:30 p.m. Rick Knoll — *Loving God: Keeping His commandments* — I John 5:3
 3:30 p.m. Lenard Hogan — *When The Elements Melt With Fervent Heat* — 2 Pet. 3:10-14
 7:00 p.m. Joe Spangler — *Converting Erring Brethren* — James 5:19-20
 8:00 p.m. Garland Robinson — *A Crown Laid Up For Me* — 2 Tim. 4:6-8

A Cordial Invitation is Extended To Attend The
 Banner of Truth Lectures!

**Twenty-two speakers have been selected to present
 twenty-eight lessons on timely scripture passages**

**Below we have provided information on motels and other matters
 in order to help make the stay of our visitors a pleasant one, while
 enjoying a feast of spiritual food and Christian association.**

Murray Plaza Court – \$33.00, \$36.00, \$39.00 for one, two, or three persons. Each additional person is \$3.00. Phone: (270) 753-2682. Located on Hwy. 641, in Murray. Taxes are not included in this price.

Shoney's Inn – \$46.94 (This includes Resort Tax) flat rate per room. Those who pay the bill to the Hickory Grove church of Christ, do not pay sales tax, only Resort Tax. The speakers on the lectures, and a number of other people will be staying at Shoney's Inn. Those who have stayed there before were well pleased. Phone: (270) 753-5353; 800 552-4667. Located at 1503 N. 12th, near place of the lectures.

Day's Inn – \$53.90 per room, and this includes tax. This is a group discount rate. Phone: (270) 753-6706. Located at 517 S. 12th in Murray. Callers should mention that this is with the Hickory Grove church group. Cont. Breakfast, Microwave, Cof. maker.

Murray has a wide variety of eating places.

The Holly Green RV Park has places for \$10.00 per night. Phone: (270) 753-5652. The Park is located at 102 Parks Drive, Murray. It is near the place of the lectures.

Video and Audio tapes will be made of all the lectures by Jim Green. Tapes may be purchased from him. Phone: (931) 486-1364. E-mail: <igreencoc1986@yahoo.com>

Lodging in private homes: Some rooms may be available. Bro. Richard Guill is taking care of this for us. Phone: Home (270) 489-6219. Ofc. 489-2219. Those in our area who are willing to

keep someone, should contact bro.Guill and let him know.

Additional information about the lectures can be obtained by contacting: Tim Hester at (270) 767-0625. Walter W. Pigg: Phone (270) 753-3675. Richard Guill: Phone (270) 489-6219. Lecture Speakers and others who plan to be in Murray during the lectures may call me (WWP) and let me know if you want me to make a reservation at the motel.

Those who call Shoney's Inn directly to make reservations should make sure that they are with the Hickory Grove church group. Otherwise, you will not receive the discount rate which Shoney's Inn is giving us.

Come, and bring others with you to the *Banner of Truth* Lectures!

Questions About The Sabbath

The word "Sabbath" is from a Hebrew word which means "rest." The first mention of the word is found in Genesis 2:2, where it is said of God that he "rested on the Sabbath day from all his work which he had made." It is said further, "And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it; because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made" (Gen. 2:3).

In time to come the keeping of "the Sabbath" as a special day of rest would be a prominent part of the Jew's religion under the law of Moses. In past times and in the present "The Sabbath" has become a prominent part of denominational religion, and more especially with such cults as the Seventh Day Adventist and the Armstrong group, which has been called by various terms.

Most denominations of today think in terms of the first day of the week being the "Christian Sabbath." This erroneous has also found lodging in the minds of some members of the church. For example, if the question, "What day of the week is the Christian Sabbath?" is put forth to a group of church members, the response, "The first day of the week" or "Sunday." The truth is, of course, Christians don't have a Sabbath! But I can remember brethren who argued loud and strong that manual labor on Sunday was wrong, notwithstanding the fact that it wasn't wrong for their wives to sweat a lot in preparing a big "Sunday dinner" which the men enjoyed.

There is need for study on the subject of the Sabbath, and thanks to God's inspired word, a number of things are made clear. We'll note a few of them.

When Was The First Command To Observe The Sabbath?

There is no record of the Sabbath being commanded and kept by man before the book of Exodus, some 2500 years this side of Genesis Chapter 2. However, observance of the Sabbath was commanded before the giving of the Ten Commandments. In Exodus 16, when the Israelites were in the wilderness and before the Ten Commandments were given, Moses said to them, "Tomorrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord..." (v. 23). No manna was to be gathered on the Sabbath (v. 26). "So the people rested on the seventh day" (v. 30). From the above context it is clear that the Israelites were not accustomed to keeping the Sabbath as a day of rest before that time.

Why Were The Israelites Commanded To Observe The Sabbath On This Occasion?

From verse 4 of chapter 16 we learn that they were commanded to do so "that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no." Obviously the keeping of the Sabbath had not been commanded before this time. Had it been they would have been "prove[d]" already. This first command

served as a proving ground prior to the official institution of Sabbath keeping as a part of the Ten Commandments.

The Keeping Of The Sabbath Officially Set Forth As God's Law

From the record in Exodus 20, we see that the fourth of the Ten Commandments was "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy" (v. 8). It is said further of the Lord and his creation that he "rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it" (v. 11). It is also noted that no work was to be done on the Sabbath, neither by the people or cattle (v. 10). Note additional restrictions in Deuteronomy 5:14-15. From Nehemiah 9:12-14, we see the "Holy Sabbath made known on Sinai," That is, it was codified as law.

For What Reason Were The Israelites To Keep The Sabbath?

From Deuteronomy 5:15, we learn the answer to that question. "And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched arm: therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath day." The Israelites were to keep the Sabbath in commemoration of their being brought out of Egypt by the Lord. The keeping of it by man did not occur before that time.

To Whom Was The Sabbath Command Given?

Moses told the children of Israel, "The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb, the Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day" (Deut. 5:2-3). The "covenant" of which Moses speaks is none other than the law of Moses, which included the remembrance of the Sabbath as one of the Ten Commandments (Deut. 5:12). Therefore, unless one was under that "covenant" of which Moses spoke, or is under the same today, that person never was, and is not today, commanded to keep the Sabbath. Furthermore, only Jews were under that covenant and they are not under it now. It was abolished when the new covenant came into force.

Conclusion

As Christians we should remember that God never intended for us to observe the Sabbath. And, though the first day of the week is a very special day to us, "the Lord's day" (Rev. 1:10), it is not the Sabbath and was never intended to be. Those who observe the Sabbath today in a religious sense do so on the basis of the commandments of men (Matt. 15:9), not God. - -

Walter W. Pigg

What About Gospel Minutes?

From time to time, over several decades, I've read *Gospel Minutes*. Various people have asked me about this paper, as to its stand for the truth. While I've seen many good articles in it, I've seen some which to me show a disrespect for God's word, with which I could not agree. One of the writers for *Gospel Minutes*, David Thurman, sets forth some uncertain sounds. The following article, Parts 1 and 2, are from the Promise Keepers' website, which was linked directly to the University

church's website, where David Thurman preaches.

Part 1.

“What We Lost? A Relationship

“Adam the father of the human race made a terrible choice. We his sons live in the aftermath of this failure. It started with an act of disobedience. He willingly joined his wife in doubting their Father's word and ignoring his instructions. Their response was not according to the design of God and resulted in their being expelled from God's presence.

“The result? Man's relationship with God was broken. In the process he failed his wife. From then on there were times of contention in their relationship. And as if that wasn't bad enough the man lost his job and was kicked off the family farm. He found some temporary jobs until he could get back with his Father. But his work was cursed from the start and resulted in pain and difficulty. His family relationships went from bad to worse. One of his sons even killed another! (You can read about this in Genesis chapters 2-4). We have inherited a diseased spiritual DNA.

Part 2.

“Now we know why we can't just do a little better ourselves: ‘For it is by grace you have been saved through faith-and this is not from yourselves it is the gift of God-not by works so that no one can boast.!

“For it is by grace that you have been saved through faith-and this not from yourselves it is the gift of God...not by works so that no one can boast! (Ephesians 2:8-9)

“This is what a lot of men miss! A relationship with God is a gift. We don't earn it. We can't buy it. We can't boast or feel a sense of accomplishment about achieving it. It is given out of love.

“But a gift must be received: ‘To All who received him to those who believed in his name he gave the right to become children of God’ (John 1:12). Don't be too proud to admit you need God's new life within you. This is God's way – through Jesus the gift!

“ ‘Yet to all who received him to those who believed in his name he gave the right to become children of God...children born not of natural descent nor of human decision or a husband's will but born of God.’ John 1:12.

“If you would like to accept this gift (eternal life relationship with God), Jesus Christ has secured it for you. You can tell God that you want to be saved. You are saved by believing, and the words below might express your thoughts to God. It's not these exact words but the attitude of your heart that really matters.

“A prayer to accept or reaffirm you acceptance of Christ: ‘Father, I've come home. Please make me your son. I turn from my sin. I accept your forgiveness made possible through Jesus Christ by his death and resurrection. I place my faith and trust in Jesus Christ alone. I receive him as my Savior and Lord. I want to follow and serve you. Let today be the beginning of my new journey as your son and a member of your family. You have always kept your promises. Help me to keep my promises, too. In Jesus name I pray. Amen.’

“If you believed in your heart and mind in Jesus and His work for you, then welcome to the family of God!”

Editors Note: We thank Jerry C. Brewer for supplying us with the above information. It seems that many of our brethren are bent on going into the religion of men, denominationalism. More than a few have already gone that way.

Stagnant Christianity

Victor M. Eskew

What a joy to see Christians who are vibrant and active in their Christian living. John expressed his joy over hearing of Gaius' faithfulness and devotion. "For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth" (3 John 3-4). Zealous Christians seek ways to serve. They do not have to be prompted and encouraged to do basic Christian duties. They see the good in their brothers and sisters in Christ. They do not moan and groan and complain about things that really do not matter. Each day they are growing in grace, knowledge, faith, love, joy, and many other Christian graces. Their lives are lived in victory. They overcome the evil one. They rest each day in the precious promises of the heavenly Father.

Don't we all wish that we could be the Christian described above every day of our lives? Yet, all of us know that there are periods in our Christian walk wherein we seem to grow stagnant. Webster defines "stagnant" as, "1. Not flowing in a current or stream: motionless; also: stale. 2: Dull, inactive." In the seasons of stagnation, the fire of spirituality barely flickers. The duties of Christian living seem to be humdrum and routine. Our eyes grow critical. We are able to see the shortcomings of our brethren with laser accuracy. We develop a "don't care" attitude. We don't care if we go to worship services. We don't care about various works of the church. We don't care when members of our church family are suffering and hurting. We don't care whether we are needed or not. We don't care that we could die in our stagnant condition and be lost. Temptation to sin increases. We yield to Satan's enticements. Every sin can be rationalized and justified in some manner. Deep down we long for the faith we once possessed and practiced. Over time, though, our hearts harden, and we refuse to put forth the effort to be strong in the Lord.

Let's examine this concept of stagnant Christianity in a little more detail. There are many causes of this malady. One reason lies in the process of Christian growth. It is much like physical growth. From birth until thirteen, growing is fast. Physical changes seem to take place almost every day. Then, growth tapers off. The inches, pounds, the muscles, no longer grow with gigantic leaps. Outward growth is slow. Ultimately, internal growth is the key. The same is true of our spiritual man. We are like sponges as babes in Christ. The information we receive is new, fun, and exciting. Over the course of a few years, growth becomes more difficult. It is slow and painstaking. It requires a great deal of time and effort to see results. Paul understood this when he penned 2 Timothy 2:15. The King James Version says: "Study to show thyself approved unto God..." The American Standard Version states: "Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God..." An older Christian is going to have to "buckle down" to keep that upward progress going. Diligence, work, effort, sweat and toil will be the keys to success.

A second reason some grow stagnant is because they fail to challenge themselves. There are not many Christians who will challenge themselves beyond their comfort zone. Our Lord never expects us to be constantly at the same place in our spiritual lives. Many of the Hebrew Christians had grown stagnant. The inspired writer chastised them for this. "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God..." (Heb.5:12). The inspired penman states that a Christian must eventually proceed to the responsibility of teaching. One should never remain a student only. Yet, how many Christians obey the gospel, take a seat in the auditorium class, and remain there forever? Their spiritual life is dull and boring they wonder why. They would like to blame the preacher or the Bible class teacher, but

the fault is their own. They need to step out of their comfort zone and take on a challenge. They need to be willing to make some sacrifices and deal with personal issues and criticism from others. When they make this step, they will grow. Christianity will not be stagnant anymore. The adrenaline will pump through their bodies every time they enter the classroom. NOTE: Over time, they might grow accustomed to this routine. Again, they will have to step out of their comfort zone. They may make a goal to become the best teacher they can become. They might attend seminars, learn new techniques, or spend more time in preparation. Or, they might have to seek another work (i.e. mission work) in order to expand their abilities.

A third thing that stagnates Christianity is misplaced priorities. Jesus told us to order our spiritual lives. "But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33). If the kingdom is not the center of our lives, our Christianity will grow stale. Job and careers seems to be the biggest hindrance to most Christians. Men and women devote countless hours to their work life. They are so tired when they get off work that spiritual things are the least of their concerns. Even if they are rested, they want their down time for themselves. For many, attending worship services becomes their only spiritual activity. Oftentimes this has to be forsaken because "they have to work." Sadly, many have forgotten that work is really a means to a spiritual end. One is to work to prove for his own (I Tim. 5:8), and one is to work so he will have to give to those in need (Eph. 4:28). Most individuals work to have things. It is a selfish drive that overwhelms them. Then they wonder why their Christianity is not up to par.

A fourth factor that causes one to grow stagnant in his spiritual life is sin. God and the world do not mix. "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4). Sin holds one back from spiritual potential, Sin engulfs the mind of man and leads him down the road of deception. Sin humiliates, shames, and embarrasses. It zaps the spiritual energy from one's body. The one who holds on to sin must make a decision. He finds out that he cannot serve two masters (Matt. 6:24). If he chooses Satan as his lord, any service to Jesus will be superficial. It will never be rewarding or fruitful.

Stagnant Christianity is a problem that all will face at one time or another. It may be caused by a slow down in one's spiritual growth, a failure to challenge oneself, misplaced priorities, or sinful lifestyle. It can be very dangerous. It can lead to spiritual death. Therefore, it is imperative to diagnose it quickly and take steps to remedy the problem. "Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. For we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come. By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice or praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name. But to do good and communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Heb. 13:13-16).

- 9664 Highway 49B, Brookland, AR 72417

God Takes Great Delight In Those Who Are Truthful

Marvin L. Weir

Solomon experiences all that his world had to offer. The life he lived enabled him to be acutely aware of both the good and the bad. He knew what would be profitable to a person as well as what

would prove to be a detriment to one's peace of mind and true happiness. Thus, the wise man said, *"Lying lips are an abomination to Jehovah; But they that deal truly are his delight"* (Prov. 12:22).

Our society has long thought that lying is that which children should not do. It is true that young folks need to speak the truth, but so do adults. It is utter folly for adults to engage in lying while insisting that their children tell the truth. God does not permit double standards.

There is no sin more common today than the sin of lying. Lying has become a way of life in the oval office, the halls of Congress, the schoolrooms and the home. Even in the spiritual realm most prefer a lie instead of the truth. The prophet Isaiah notes that his people preferred a lie to the truth when they *"say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits"* (Isa. 30:10).

If people do not have a love for the truth, God will send *"a working of error, that they should believe a lie"* (2 Thess. 2:10-11). May we be encouraged to speak the truth as we study the subject of lying.

In the minds of many nothing comes so easy as lying. Without any thought or effort lies freely flow from some people's lips. Some children get lots of coaching and practice from an early age. A father goes golfing but leaves instructions with the children to tell his employer that he is sick and has gone to the doctor. When parents do not wish to speak to someone on the phone they tell their children to say they are not home. Children quickly learn that in certain situations it is preferable to lie rather than to tell the truth.

Even Christians are admonished to speak the truth! It is reasonable to expect that worldly people will lie when it is to their advantage. It is also reasonable to expect a child of God to always speak the truth. Such is not always the case, however, because psychology and worldly standards have influenced some folks more than the Holy Bible.

Paul tells Christians to *"lie not one to another; seeing that ye have put off the old man with his doings"* (Col. 3:9). But if the **situation** warrants it or the **circumstances** encourage it, many members of the body will not hesitate to lie. The great lesson to be learned is that the *situation ethics* mentality and the *"end justifies the means"* philosophy are false as night. God has never been pleased with those who do not speak the truth.

Lying is an abomination to God because His great enemy is the father of lies! Jesus told the Pharisees of His day, *"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and standeth not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father thereof"* (John 8:44). Satan has again and again distinguished himself by wearing the title of liar. Since the devil has been called the "father of lies," the willful liar is testimony of his parentage.

Lying is the exact opposite of God's nature. The Old Testament declares, *"God is not a man, that he should lie, Neither the son of man, that he should repent: Hath he said, and will he not do it? Or hath he spoken, and will he not make it good"* (Num. 23:19)? The New Testament is also quick to remind us that God cannot lie (Titus 1:2).

Truth comes from God (John 8:40) and Christ testified that His Word was truth (John 17:17). It is truth that will free one from the bondage of sin (John 8:32) and truth (Word of Christ) will judge all in that Day (John 12:48).

There will be no liars in heaven. The apostle John says that all liars' *"part shall be in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone..."* (Rev. 21:8). John also notes that without the gates of the Heavenly city *"are dogs, and the sorcerers, and the fornicators, and the murderers, and the idolaters, and every one that loveth and maketh a lie"* (Rev. 22:15). The caliber of people that will keep liars company in the eternal state of torment shows God's disdain for this sin.

More and more members of the Lord's church are finding it more convenient to tell a lie than to

tell the truth. When circumstances become unfavorable some find it convenient to forsake the truth. The more lies one tells the more difficult it is for him to cease lying and tell the truth. Many Christians today do not consider lying a damnable sin, and nothing could make the devil happier.

May it be said of those who call themselves children of God that they will not deal falsely with God nor their fellowman (cf. Isa. 63:8).

- P.O. Box 975, Rowlett, TX 75030

“Dear Sirs;

“I received a copy of your Banner of Truth from a friend. She in turn had 10 copies sent to our congregation in _____ _____. My husband and I enjoy your magazine so very much and gave out copies to other members of the church.

Suddenly we were not receiving them any more so we inquired of our minister. He had thrown them away. My husband and I would like to start receiving them at our home address. Others have inquired why we didn’t pass them out, and at the time we didn’t know the true reason. They too are very interested in your magazine. So, please, could you please add me to your mailing list. Keep up the good works.

(Name has been withheld by Editor. I met that preacher who was throwing BOT away. I think I can understand why he wouldn’t want the members to receive the paper. For everyone who dislikes BOT, we believe thousands appreciate it.)

Fellowhelpers

Jan., Feb., March, April 2004

| | |
|--|--------|
| Robert M. Price | 800.00 |
| Hornbeak church of Christ | 200.00 |
| William L. Trees | 20.00 |
| Berea church of Christ | 200.00 |
| Anonymous | 500.00 |
| Anonymous | 150.00 |
| Alton W. Fonville, In Memory of Charlene Cain | 75.00 |
| Bernice Key, In memory of Kelly Key’s mother | 50.00 |
| Nannie May Philpot | 5.00 |
| Leoni church of Christ | 100.00 |
| Crandull church of Christ | 100.00 |
| Church of Christ at Rockford | 20.00 |
| Mrs. John H. Brown | 75.00 |
| Anonymous | 25.00 |
| Saks church of Christ | 240.00 |
| Royce Adams | 500.00 |
| Anonymous | 100.00 |
| Daryl Tucker | 20.00 |
| Pine Ridge church of Christ | 150.00 |
| Holly Pond church of Christ | 250.00 |
| Maple Hill church of Christ | 300.00 |

| | |
|----------------------------------|--------------|
| Ronald Edmonson | 50.00 |
| Dorothy Strattis | 25.00 |
| V. Glenn McCoy | 50.00 |
| Elmer Scott | 150.00 |
| Midway church of Christ | 100.00 |
| South Middleton church of Christ | 150.00 |
| T. W. Meredith | 20.00 |
| Alhambra church of Christ | 50.00 |
| Doris H. Lowery | 20.00 |
| Frank M. Neal | 20.00 |
| Crossville church of Christ | 300.00 |
| William F. Kelly | 100.00 |
| Thomas Brannon | 12.00 |
| Cherokee church of Christ | 100.00 |
| Shirley Foshee | 20.00 |
| Anonymous | 500.00 |
| Ralph Hammett | <u>20.00</u> |
| Total Jan. – April Contribution | 5,567.00 |

*“That ye may be fellow-helpers
to the truth” (3 John 8)*

God be thanked for our fellow-helpers!

Banner of Truth Financial Report

Jan., Feb., March, April 2004

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Balance on Hand January 2004 | 13,693.68 |
| Jan., - April contribution | <u>5,567.00</u> |
| Total funds available | 19,260.68 |
| Jan., - April Expense: | |
| Mailing BOT and other postage | 3,242.29 |
| (Est. mailing of April BOT included) | |
| Phone calls | 11.95 |
| Plates for printing | 75.00 |
| Mailing labels | 108.74 |
| E-mail | 87.80 |
| Travel expense | 18.20 |
| Tape, envelopes and other materials | <u>96.12</u> |
| Total expenses | 3,638.10 |
| Total funds available | 19,260.68 |
| Less Jan., - April expense | <u>3,638.10</u> |
| Balance on hand April 30 | 15,622.58 |

We are sincerely thankful for the wonderful way in which our brethren are making our work possible. I wish I had the time to send every contributor a personal “Thank You” note.

We are trying our best to catch up in our work but we need a little more time! But I can’t buy that at WAL*MART. - - Editor

A Note of Personal Request

A great blessing to our work would be the moving of some retired couple to this area, that would be able to help us get Banner of Truth out on time each month. We think the Murray, Kentucky area is a good place to live. Many people move to our area.

*We are in great need for more help to get the paper out. The greater portion of the work done at present is by three couples. We spend several hours each day for several days each month. There is much more labor required to: print, fold, stack, stuff, staple, label, and get nearly 30 postal boxes in the mail, than most people realize. It takes me two or three days to print the paper, and much longer than that to get the material together, plus many other related things – **Editor***

READERS' RESPONSE

“I have just finished reading your article on “Work.” It is one of the best articles you have ever written, in my opinion. I have never seen anything much of this subject, and really do appreciate this article in BOT. Hope this things you still well and functioning as you desire – **Arlis Richardson.**” – **TN.** *(I guess one reason that we don't see more on the subject of Work is because it is something too many people don't like. There seems to be a continuing effort to cut out more work in the activities of congregations. We now see one-day VBS, even part of one-day. A gospel meeting of five or six days is way above the average. The objective of this trend must be to save work. Ed.)*

“We read and study the Banner of Truth – It helps us a lot in our study. So we can spread the word to others. You keep up the good work...Some people, some of our brethren, think preach only positive. We need the negative also. We need all of the Bible, not the parts that we think. Praying for all of you – **Jo Alice Bradford.**” – **LA.** *(We appreciate your prayers. We always stand in need of the same. What you say about ‘positive’ and ‘negative is so true. When we opt for only the positive, we become our own enemy and may influence others likewise. - Editor).*

“My husband and I enjoy your publication very much. We also liked the Children's Corner. A friend of our was receiving your publication. But with two moves very quickly, mail wasn't always delivered. And he asked could we write and send his name and address – **Tuila and David Dozier.**” – **TN.** *(Thank you! – Editor).*

“Several months ago I sent a small donation to help with the postage and requested to receive your paper. Apparently it was misplaced since I have not received any. I would appreciate it very much if you would add my name to your mailing list. Thanks so much – **Jerry Moon.**” **TN.** *(Mail does some times get lost or misplaced. We are happy to add your name to our mailing list. Let us know if the check was cashed and returned to you. We always try to keep accurate records, but it is possible for us to make a mistake – Editor).*

Readers' Response continued next issue.

Editor's E-mail < wpiggbot@earthlink.net >

Visit BOT at David Lemmons' website:

<http://www.hcis.net/users/dlemmons/BOTlist.htm>

Readers may get on David's *LemmonsAid* e-mail:

LemmonsAid-subscribe@YahooGroups.com

Please excuse our mistakes and being late. We are doing our best to catch up! We've put forth much effort to get this issue out.