

# Fulton County Gospel News

Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World

"...Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body." - Ephesians 5:23

Volume 30

Mammoth Spring, AR 72554

March, 1996

No. 3

## Can We Know And Preach The Truth?

by Ted J. Clarke

### Introduction

We demand to **know** the **truth** in most areas of our lives. If we are ill, we want proper testing and diagnosis to determine our **true** problem and correct treatment by our doctors. We might be told, "Well, so many well educated men differ on what truth is that we do not believe we can know what is true, so we will not do anything to treat you." We would not accept such conclusions! If one of our children put  $2+2=5$  on a math paper and the teacher graded it as correct, saying that there are different theories by equally brilliant men, we would not stand for such incompetence. We know the value of truth in most areas of life and demand it!

Yet, when it comes to religion, many are perfectly willing to accept the idea that one cannot really know the **truth** about important spiritual matters, because so many great, well educated men differ on the "truth" on those matters. Even though the Bible is the **standard** by which such truths are to be determined, we are often told that we really cannot be sure of what truth in religion really is. I can imagine unbelievers taking such a position, but I cannot, for the life of me, understand how supposed believers in God and His Word could take no stand on **truth**! If we are going to accept the Scriptures as God's Word, then let us accept what they say on our ability to **know the truth, and let us preach it!**

### Christ and Truth

Jesus said that He is "the truth" (John 14:6). Is He? If one accepts His claim to be the epitome of truth, then one should accept what Christ has to say about truth. The Lord said that *there are criteria for knowing truth*, but emphatically states that truth can be known. In John 7:17 He states, "If any man will to do his (God's) will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." This statement implies that when one truly

wants to perform God's will, that person can "know" the truth of God's doctrines (teaching), and also know that Christ was not speaking as a mere man, but as God's spokesman and Son (John 12:48-50). In view of this, how can anyone dare say that true students of God's Word cannot really know the truth, even if many so-called "well educated men" differ?! Jesus said we can "know" God's doctrines. If you disagree, you disagree with the One who called Himself "the truth." What does that make you? Really, we must question the sincerity of those who say they want to do God's will, but also say that we cannot truly know what that truth is in crucial areas. In view of what Jesus said in John 7:17, we would not be judging harshly or according to appearance, but we would be judging righteous judgment (Matthew 7:1-5; John 7:24).

The Lord also gave another guideline for knowing the truth, saying to the "Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32). Note that one has to stay (continue, KJV; abide, ASV) in Christ's Word in order to **know the truth** and to be set free. If you abide in the words of the Lord, you must admit that one can know the truth, for He expressly says we can. When you say we cannot know what God expects from us, you have left (abandoned) Christ's Word and are no longer fit to be called His disciple. A disciple is a learner from the one he follows, but if you refuse to learn from Christ's Word that we can know the truth you have quit following Him and are following your own words instead of His.

There is a strange contradiction in the words of those who say we cannot know the truth of God's Word. They claim that it is true that we cannot know the truth of God's Word, yet they claim that we can know that what they are saying is true. How high and mighty these men have

become. God, who created the universe and put man in it, does not have the intelligence nor the power to adequately communicate with man (according to them), but these men, although mere mortals of limited mind and power, can teach us the truth about not being able to know the truth? Such ideas are indeed the rantings and ravings of men who have abandoned God's Word and put themselves in His place. Brethren and friends, beware of such men. The apostle Paul warned, "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple (innocent, ASV)" (Romans 16:17-18). If we could not know the truth of God's Word, we would not know whether a doctrine was contrary to what we had "learned" or not. Paul implies we can know. If you believe that Paul is telling the truth on this, what does that make those who disagree with him? These are the very ones about whom he speaks in the verses above!

### Preaching God's Word

If we can know God's Word, and we can, then we can also preach those truths to all who need to know them. God promises to sanctify men through His Word of truth (John 17:17). When God sent Jonah to preach to Nineveh He said, "preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee" ((Jonah 3:2). God did not fear that Jonah could not know the truth, nor did He fear that the Ninevites couldn't understand it. In fact, Nineveh did understand it, repented, and were saved from God's wrath (Jonah 3:4-10). God told Jeremiah to preach to the cities of Judah "all the words that I command you to speak to them. Diminish not a word. Perhaps everyone will listen and turn from his evil way..." (Jeremiah 26:2-3). God knew that those who heard Jeremiah **could know** the truthfulness of his word and repent, whether they chose to do so or not.

The apostle Paul claimed that the Lord had commissioned him as an apostle of

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**FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS**

USPO Publication No. 211780

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**FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS**

P. O. Box 251

Mammoth Spring, AR 72554

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the truth (1 Timothy 2:7), and demanded that Timothy (and all men) "handle aright" the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15, ASV). He further claimed that he did not fail to preach "the whole counsel of God," implying that they could know the truthfulness of it and do it, because it was profitable for them (Acts 20:20, 27, ASV). In his final letter to Timothy, who was Paul's son in the faith and a young preacher, Paul reminded him that, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect (complete, ASV), thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Does that sound like a man who did not believe people could understand and obey God's Word? Of course not. Still some cowardly preachers would make the claim today that we really cannot know the truth.

Paul further told Timothy to "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (4:2). Paul believed that we could know the truth well enough to reprove, rebuke, and exhort people who were not holding to that truth. He further warned that the reason this was needed was because some would not "endure sound doctrine" (hold to the truth), but would "turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (verse 3-4). For Paul, we can know the difference between the truth and fables. It is too bad all preachers and elders do not un-

derstand that and act accordingly!

There are preachers and elders, as well as other Christians, who do not think that we can **know the truth** about what one must do to be saved, how to properly worship God, the proper role of women in the church, what constitutes adultery, the authority of elders, the essentiality of baptism for salvation, the organization of the Lord's church, and dozens of other crucial issues. These brethren have taken the same approach as denominationalists have taken for generations, saying that these are not core issues central to our faith in Christ, and therefore are not important or the Lord would have given us more specific revelations about them. Sadly, many key passages which teach these truths are ignored or belittled.

God's Hammer

God says, "Is not my word...like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" (Jeremiah 23:29). Indeed it is. And because it is so powerful, those who differ with its teachings usually refuse to discuss their ideas publicly by an appeal to the Scriptures (Hebrews 4:12). This is especially true when there are those who will openly oppose them with the truth of God's Word. Peter demanded that we "be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason concerning the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3:15). Paul said that he was "set for the defense of the gospel" (Philippians 1:17; 1:16 in ASV). Jude 3 urges all brethren to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once (for all, ASV) delivered to the saints." In spite of these Scriptures which contend that there is a body of truth which we can know and should preserve and defend, false teachers will either state that we cannot know the truth or refuse to defend what they claim is the truth. One cannot help but believe that these people know the power of God's Word; that His Hammer would smash their manmade doctrines to dust.

Other preachers, teachers, and elders **know and believe the truth, but will not preach, teach, or take a stand for the whole truth.** Do they fear being looked upon as radicals by others? Jesus warned of those who fear what men think of them rather than worry how God views them (John 5:44; 12:42-43; Galatians 1:10; Matthew 10:28). Brethren and friends, read the gospel accounts again and notice the stand that Jesus took against religious error. Consider

the strife against Him and the persecution He endured to be and to teach truth! Are we, the servants, better than our Master (John 15:18-23)? Revelation 21:8 mentions "the fearful" first and pronounces a terrible fate on all in that category. Do you suppose that those who fear men over God are included in that group? Those who fail to preach the Word on so-called sensitive issues of the day are like those to whom the Lord spoke in Luke 6:46, saying, "Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets." Love of the truth is more important than whether or not all men love you! The account of Noah in Genesis 6-9 reminds us that the popular ideas are not always the right ones. Matthew 7:13-21 teaches us the same principles.

Conclusion

Often it is not enough just to be a soldier. One must be willing to put one's life on the line and set comfort aside for the hardships of the real battle (2 Timothy 2:1-4). Some have forgotten that they are in the Lord's Army and are throwing flowers at the enemy instead of wielding the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God (Ephesians 6:17).

When Israel was rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, Nehemiah armed them and said of the enemy, "Be ye not afraid of them: remember the Lord which is great, and terrible, and fight... (Nehemiah 4:14). Knowing that attacks would come upon the walls, just like attacks will come against God's Word, Nehemiah said, "In what place therefore ye hear the sound of the trumpet, resort ye thither unto us: our God shall fight for us" (verse 20). We must be willing to fight where the truth of God's Word is being attacked, even though we think it is safer where no battle rages. Safer from what?

When Martin Luther was locked in battle with the apostates of the Roman church, he wisely wrote,

"If I profess with the loudest voice and the clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God, except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Christ. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved, and to be steady on the battlefield besides is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point."

While there are many things that we can agree upon religiously with many who profess Christ as Lord, there are many points on the walls of sound doctrine that are being attacked. Let us diligently study God's Word to learn His truth, listen for the trumpet sounding the attack and rally there to fight for that truth, and God will fight for us. Brethren and friends, give every effort to know and preach/teach the truth. Our eternal freedom depends on it. (John 8:31-32).

### "WHEN I SURVEY THE WONDROUS CROSS"

By Allen Webster

Young Isaac Watts had a mind of his own. Once he sat without singing in worship because he did not like the songs. His angry father sarcastically told him to write better songs if he thought he could. A brilliant child (he learned five languages before he was fourteen), he began writing. He got to the point that he even rhymed his everyday conversation which, again, angered his father. When a whipping was threatened, Isaac cried out, "O father do some pity take, and I will no more verses make!" (Bonner, *A Hymn is Born*, 8).

He sat down in 1707 and wrote words that have echoed now for nearly three centuries:

When I survey the wondrous cross,  
On which the Prince of glory died,  
My richest gain I count but loss,  
And pour contempt on all my pride.  
Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,  
Save in the death of Christ my God;  
All the vain things that charm me most,  
I sacrifice them to His blood.

Isaac's words were "inspired" by Paul's inspired words: "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal. 6:14).

This hymn sends our minds back to the brightest, and darkest, day of history (Lk. 23:32-56). Though the sun refused to shine, and God hid His face from Christ, none of history's two million days shines brighter. During those six dark hours Christ became the "light of the world." Our hearts sink to the stomach and rise to the throat at the same time when our minds drift to Calvary. There Jesus was crucified on Golgotha's crown that we might one day wear a crown. Murdered by His own people, He

became the Savior of all people. We find there contrasting portraits of man's sinfulness and God's holiness; telling displays of human weakness and divine strength.

The cross was Satan's greatest victory and Christ's most humiliating defeat; yet, it was Satan's most stunning defeat and Christ's most glorious victory (Gen. 3:15). He won by losing and conquered by surrendering.

### WHEN WE SURVEY THE WONDROUS CROSS, WHAT DO WE REALLY SEE?

*We see the ONE major theme of the Bible.* No matter where the Bible falls open, one reads of the cross. Across Genesis could be written: "Man needs the cross;" from Exodus to Malachi echo, "The cross is coming;" in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John we find "the story of the cross;" and from Acts to Revelation is found "what the cross means to the Christian."

Without understanding that Jesus came to die, one misses the primary thrust of the Bible. He was born in a manger to die on a cross. Without the shedding of blood there is no remission (Mt. 26:28; Heb. 10:4). Christ's death is mentioned more than 175 times in the New Testament. But why did He have to die? Could not God have found some other way? Jesus had to die for at least five reasons: [1] to fulfill prophecy (Jn. 19:36-37; Isa 53); [2] to obey God (Lk. 22:41-42); [3] to satisfy God's justice (Isa. 59:1-2; Rm. 3:26); [4] to provide salvation (Rm. 3:10; Mt. 20:28); and [5] to purchase the church (Acts 20:28; Mt. 16:18).

*We see the TWO sides of God's nature (Rom. 11:22).* The cross was the greatest exhibition of divine justice in condemning sin, yet the most wonderful demonstration of divine mercy in pardoning sin. It was God's greatest manifestation of hatred for sin, yet His supreme proof of love for the sinner. The cross was the means by which God's justice condemned sin and His mercy forgave it. God's basic nature is love (1 Jn. 4:8; cf. Lk 15). He is filled with compassion (Psa. 78:38; Lam. 3:22) and wants all men to be saved (1 Tim. 2:4). The cross is a billboard that advertises God's measureless love (Jn. 3:16; 1 Jn. 3:16).

At the same time, God's nature is characterized by justice (Nah. 1:3). Justice demanded that sin be punished; it could not overlook it (Gal. 6:7). Without atoning blood, all accountable beings face the wrath of a wronged God (2

Thess. 1:7-9; Mt. 25:41-46; Lk. 17:28-29). But by appropriating the benefits of Calvary, sinners become saints in the eyes of Jehovah.

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### REDEEM, REDEEMER, REDEMPTION

By Dennis Gullledge

One of the most wonderful words of sermon or song is the word *redeem*. We read it in Scripture: "But when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law..." (Galatians 4:5). We sing it in the beautiful sentiments written by Fred A. Fillmore: "I know that my Redeemer lives, and ever prays for me; I know eternal life he gives, from sin and sorrow free."

The very term *redeem* presupposes loss or forfeited and, applied to man in the Scriptures, implies his merited loss of the favor of God and the loss of his title to all the happiness of eternal life. Thus, through sin man has become the object of redemption. Now, the only hope of redemption from this misery and of restoration to favor is revealed to have sprung from God; who afforded it to the first human transgressors almost as soon as they had been seduced from their obedience to him (Genesis 3:15). This hope was repeatedly revealed both under the Patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations. But one ordinance in particular, under the latter economy, appears to have been instituted for the express purpose of pointing out how this gracious work of salvation was to be undertaken and effected. This ordinance was the right of *redemption* which belonged to the Jews under Mosaic law, and it finds expression in the Hebrew word *goel*, translated, *redeem, redeemer, redemption*.

The *goel* to the Hebrews meant, "next of kin." Boaz was a "near kinsman" (*goel*) to Ruth, but there was a kinsman nearer than he (Ruth 3:9, 12). In the Old Testament the *goel* (redeemer) had three rights:

(1) To restore the forfeited inheritance for an Israelite who, owing to poverty, had sold his land (Ruth 4:3-4).

(2) To ransom his kinsman from slavery to a foreigner (Leviticus 25:47-49).

(3) To avenge the death of a slain relative, as a point of honor (Numbers 35).

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In all three of these respects Jesus Christ qualifies as our Redeemer. First, by his coming in the flesh he saves us from eternal disinheritance (Hebrews 2:17). Second, we are ransomed from the damning power of sin by his redeeming blood (Ephesians 1:7; 1 Peter 1:18-19). Third, by avenging us in his death by overcoming the one who had the power of death (Hebrews 2:14).

Therefore, when we sing, "I know that my Redeemer lives..." we speak of he, who to the Christian, is the nearest kin of all. There is no kinsman so near as Christ. He is voluntarily so; not forced to be a brother, but by his own choice of our nature; therefore more than a brother (Proverbs 18:24). He is unashamedly so: "He is not ashamed to call them brethren" (Hebrews 2:11). He is eternally so. Who shall separate us? (Romans 8:35).

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**A WORD OF THANKS**

Please allow me to express a word of sincere thanks to all of you who wrote to my dear friend and Christian brother, Joe Crockett, in response to the article I wrote, "What I Owe to Jesus An Joe." Several of you who wrote to Joe also wrote to me, expressing your appreciation for the article. I am also deeply thankful for your encouragement to me, but most of all for the loving and wonderful words you wrote to Joe.

Joe's parents sent me a sample of the more than one hundred cards and letters you wrote. Tears of joy and thanksgiving flooded my eyes as I read them. The same reaction was felt by all of our family members who read what beautiful things so many of you said. Our God is so great and our fellowship in His Son Jesus Christ is so wonderful. What a privilege to be a part of His great family.

Joe and his family have been overwhelmed at your outpouring of love and they wish to express their deepest affection for all of you who took the time to write. I know that you have eased the burden of affliction which Joe will bear until he meets the Lord.

If you had intended to write to him but have put it off or lost his address, let me encourage you one last time to write to him. His address is Mr. Joe Crockett, c/o Songbird Lodge, 2500 Songbird Circle, Brownwood, TX 76801.

May God richly bless you all and keep you safe in His eternal love unto the coming of His Son and our Savior.

Ted J. Clarke

*If we write on marble it will perish,  
If on brass time will efface it.  
If we rear temples they will crumble in dust.*

*But if we work upon immortal minds  
And imbue them with the just fear of God*

*And love for their fellow-men,  
We write upon those tablets something that  
Will brighten for all eternity.*

Daniel Webster

*When a little bird tells you something,  
don't repeat it until you find out whether  
or not the little bird is a little cuckoo.*

*I wonder if the reason the devil tells  
people to miss church on a rainy day is be-  
cause he knows they will burn better dry.*

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Jeff Church of Christ, Thayer, Mo. ....	\$ 25.00
Church of Christ, Lamar, Mo. ....	100.00
Church of Christ, Bakersfield, Mo. ....	25.00
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**GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION**

1. Hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; 1 Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian Living (1 Peter 2:11, 12; Revelation 2:10).

**THE CHURCH OF CHRIST**

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; 1 Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical Name (Romans 16:16).
3. Established at the right place (Isaiah 2:2,3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God's commands including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; 1 Corinthians 12:13).

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Second Class Postage  
Paid At  
Mammoth Spring, AR  
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Publication # 211780