

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 35

Mammoth Spring, AR 72554

July 2001

No. 7

“Who Will Be Responsible For That?”

by Jimmie B. Hill

I recently received a **Truth for the World** Introduction Bible Course over the Internet from a student named Hasan in the nation of Turkey. If you are not familiar with this course, it asks certain questions of the student so that the teacher can have some background knowledge of the student and his religious beliefs. Please read below the questions and answers given by Hasan on this particular lesson.

What church are you a member?

Answer: Unfortunately I don't know any church around.

What did you do to become a member of it?

Answer: I don't know anything about Jesus. I just heard he is a saviour.

Have you been baptized? If so, how were you baptized?

Answer: I haven't been baptized. I don't even know - what does it mean?

Do you believe that you were saved before you were baptized?

Answer: I don't know! Who knows?

1.) Is man the same as animals?

Answer: No!

2.) How is man different from animals?

Answer: God gave us a brain to think.

3.) What happens when we die?

Answer: We will be judged.

4.) Who is our judge?

Answer: God.

5.) What part of man survives death?

Answer: (No answer.)

6.) Where will all the righteous be in eternity?

Answer: No idea!

7.) Where will the unrighteous be?

Answer: No idea!

8.) Does God force us to serve Him?

Answer: No!

9.) Who died as a sacrifice for our sins?

Answer: I don't know.

10.) Name four things we must do in order to come to Jesus.

Answer: Pray, pray, pray, pray.

Student Questions and Comments:

How can I get a Bible? I don't know any church around or even a Christian. Who will be responsible for that?

Note Hasan's last question; "Who will be responsible for that?" A great problem facing the Lord's people is an ignorance of God's Word. In Hosea 4:6, Jehovah states, **"My people are destroyed for a lack of knowledge."** Many brethren do not know the church is responsible for evangelizing the whole world (Ephesians 3:10). The Lord goes on to say in Hosea 4:6, **"... because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me."** Speaking of Christ and his church, Peter says, **"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light"** (1 Peter 2:9). And how are Christians to **"show forth the praises?"** We are to do this by bringing precious but lost souls to our God and Father through the Gospel. The Lord Himself stated just before leaving this earth for heaven, **"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature"** (Mark 16:15). Brethren, we are responsible for that. Will we accept that responsibility?

Truth for the World, a work under the oversight of the elders of the **Duluth Church of Christ**, is a program designed to accept and carry out the responsibility of evangelizing the world of over six billion lost souls. This is done by utilizing every aspect of the media possible - the printed page, radio, television, the Internet, and by extensive follow-up campaigns in targeted areas throughout the world. People are receiving answers to their religious questions solely from the Word of God and are being guided to the Lord and Christ by these evangelistic efforts. Souls are being saved!

Hasan has been sent a Bible and many gospel tracts. He has been assigned an Internet teacher to help him in his studies and encouraged to continue the **Truth for the World** Bible Correspondence Courses on the Internet. Several sound and faithful brethren have been contacted in Turkey who will contact Hasan to study further with him and point him to Jehovah God and His dear Son. Hasan has been given their names and addresses as well so that he, too, may make contact with them. This scenario is repeated many times over day by day at **Truth for the World**.

Please help us to accept the responsibility we all have to evangelize the world. We need your prayers and your financial support. **"Who will be responsible for that?"**

May the Lord bless you as you strive to do His good will.

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FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS

USPS Publication #211780

... is a Periodical publication issued monthly by the Church of Christ at Third and Bethel (P.O. Box 251), Mammoth Spring, AR 72554-0251. **POSTMASTER: Please mail all changes of address to the above address.**

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Mammoth Spring, AR 72554

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What Is "Sound Doctrine?"

by Chuck Pearson

In the church today (particularly among faithful brethren) we hear the phrase "sound doctrine" mentioned a lot. Faithful preachers strive to preach "sound doctrine." Faithful elders strive to promote "sound doctrine" in the local congregation. And faithful members certainly enjoy listening to and being edified by "sound doctrine" from the pulpit. When we go to gospel meetings and lectureships put on by faithful congregations, we often hear about the importance of "sound doctrine." In tracts and papers published by our faithful brethren, we read much about "sound doctrine" (or the lack of it!) in the church. Despite what many false brethren might say, "sound doctrine" is a Biblical phrase: **"For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine" (1 Timothy 1:10)**. But what exactly is "sound doctrine?"

The word *doctrine* simply means "teaching." When the Bible speaks of **"the doctrine of Christ" (2 John 9)**, it means the *teaching* of Christ (i.e. the things which Christ taught). The word *sound* means "fit, healthy, stable." A person who is "of sound mind and body" is someone who has good mental and physical health. The Bible uses it like this: **"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7)**. So when we say "sound doctrine," we mean "healthy teaching."

Doctrine is sound when it comes from Christ. The words of our Lord are "healthy teaching" because they are given with authority (**Matthew 7:28-29, 28:18**). The doctrine of Christ comes not from men, but from God. Jesus said **"My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (John 7:16-17)**. Sound doctrine is found in God's word. The word of God is certainly "healthy teaching" for many reasons. God's word sanctifies us, and is truth (**John 17:17**). God's word brings us to have faith (**Romans 10:17**). God's word is inspired of God, and makes us complete, thoroughly furnishing us unto all good works (**2 Timothy 3:16-17**). And God's word is sufficient unto all things which pertain to life and godliness (**2 Peter 1:3**). To rightly divide (handle correctly) the word of truth (**2 Timothy 2:15**) and to obey it is to receive and practice *sound doctrine*. This is that which leads us to salvation, and helps us to remain faithful so that we might one day have eternal life. Healthy teaching indeed!

Sound doctrine consists of a lot of principles. In fact, for one to *thoroughly* examine the elements of sound doctrine, one would have to survey the entire Bible! Most faithful brethren accept these principles as being sound, obey them, and teach them. These include understanding the true identity of the Lord's church (and that denominations are outside of the body of Christ), the plan of salvation (hear, believe, repent, confess, and be baptized), the work and organiza-

tion of the church, the authorized acts of New Testament worship (singing, praying, preaching, observing the Lord's supper, and contributing), the work of the Holy Spirit today (only leads and directs us through God's word, miraculous gifts have ceased, etc.), and so on.

If you go to sound lectureships and read sound brotherhood papers, chances are you will hear/read about these principles (and about those who teach contrary to them!). You will probably also hear about the dangers of Calvinism, Premillennialism, Pentecostalism, Emotionalism, and a whole lot of other "isms" which violate the Bible's teaching. You will hear about the importance of standing for the truth, fighting against error, and not having fellowship with those who teach and practice false doctrine. Brethren, all of this is **GOOD!** Christians need to understand the importance of and be edified with sound doctrine. One of the reasons why the church is facing the problems that it is today is because so many brethren have failed to teach and to ground others in these important principles of sound doctrine!

But is this all there is to "sound doctrine?" I have a hunch that many brethren believe so. While it is truly important to "stand for the truth" in these controversial areas, to remind our faithful brethren of these principles, and urge our erring brethren to repent, there is a lot more to "sound doctrine" than all this! I believe that sometimes we push these "meatier" aspects of the truth, thereby neglecting the "milk" portions of Bible doctrine. To **"earnestly contend for the faith" (Jude 3)** and preach the truth means a lot more than just confronting liberalism in the church!

What about things like treating your brethren fairly and justly? How about forgiveness? What happened to teaching about purity and keeping ourselves from being worldly? Are not these things the "doctrine of Christ" as well? I know brethren who can quote book, chapter, verse all day concerning the dangers of liberalism and false doctrine. But I look at their lives,

and I see them backbiting, slandering their fellow men, gossiping, lying, and living in all sorts of sin. Is this abiding in "sound doctrine?" I've seen brethren who spend all their time marking and exposing false teachers that they no longer have time to encourage and uplift the faithful. Is this right? Is this obeying "sound doctrine?" Healthy teaching, if it means anything at all, contains an aspect of *balance*. A healthy person eats a balanced diet, and balances time between rest, work, and play. A healthy Christian who desires to practice sound doctrine needs to do likewise! One aspect of Christ's teaching should not be sacrificed at the expense of another. *All* of Christ's doctrine is important, and *all* of it is needed to make us complete!

When the apostle Paul was preparing to depart from Miletus, he summoned the Ephesian elders and told them **"For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27)**. We also need to receive this admonition, and make certain that we not neglect important assets of sound doctrine. The apostle James also wrote: **"For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10)**. Let us be true doers of God's law by not forgetting to *completely* **"hold fast the form of sound words" (2 Timothy 1:13)**, and abide in *all* of Christ's doctrine!

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THE UNITY AND HARMONY OF GOD'S WORD

by Tracy Dugger

Imagine a book written over a period of 1500 years in differing locations; one which was originally written in three languages; a book consisting of sixty-six smaller books written by at least forty different authors with various educational and cultural backgrounds. Imagine such a book which deals with a single profound theme and

yet not a single contradiction between these forty writers. This book we have described is the Bible!

The sixty-six books of the Bible were written under the most adverse circumstances imaginable. Moses wrote while in the wilderness, Jeremiah wrote under persecution, Daniel and Ezekial wrote while in captivity, Paul while in prison, and John while banished on Patmos. With all these various writers and differing locations and dates why is there not one contradiction? Why is there a perfect unity, agreement, and harmony found throughout its pages? Why is there one doctrinal viewpoint, one moral standard, one plan of salvation, and one world view? If we were to write a book dealing with such profound themes, would we not differ tremendously?

No other "sacred books" even come close to the unity found in the Bible. "Speaking of the Mohammedan, Zoroastrian, and the Buddhist Scriptures, James Orr says they are "destitute of beginning, middle or end. They are, for the most part; collections of [diverse and dissimilar] materials, loosely placed together. How different everyone must acknowledge it to be with the Bible! From Genesis to Revelation we feel that this book is in a real sense a unity. It is not a collection of fragments, but has, as we say, an organic character . . . There is nothing exactly resembling it, or even approaching it, in all literature." [Henry Clarence Thiessen, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1971), p.87.]

The only answer to how such a book could be written is, GOD! Only God could be the author of the Bible. Mere men could not have written such a book with the absolute unity and perfect agreement found in it. Should we be surprised? No! Since God is perfect (Matt. 5:48) and since He is not the author of confusion and disarray (1 Cor. 14:30,40), we would thus expect His Book to be one of perfect harmony! The great author, **Rousseau** is quoted as saying, "Peruse the books of philosophers

with all their pomp of diction; how meager, how contemptible when compared with the Scriptures. The majesty of the Scriptures strikes me with admiration."

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SELF JUSTIFICATION

by Owen D. Olbricht

When the Pharisees scoffed and derided Jesus for His teaching concerning the use of money, He said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts" (Luke 16:15a). Most of us may not differ too much from these Pharisees for at times we all may seek to justify what we have done or want to do.

Saul, An Example

The Old Testament contains an example of self justification. Saul had been commanded by God to utterly destroy the Amalekites, including men, women, children, sheep, camels, and donkeys (1 Sam. 15:3). Instead of obeying God he spared king Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all that was good (1 Sam. 15:9). In order to clear himself of wrong before Samuel, he said concerning the things those who were with him had kept, "They have brought them from the Amalekites; for the people spared the best of the sheep and the oxen, to sacrifice to the Lord your God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed" (1 Sam. 15:13).

He had not obeyed God. For this reason his seemingly good intentions were considered rebellion to God and unacceptable to Him (1 Sam. 15:22, 23). He was not the last person to seek to justify himself after failing to do the will of God.

Salvation Through Feeling

A lady I studied with not long ago read what the Bible said we need to do to be forgiven of sins. After reading some passages relating to forgiveness (Acts 2:38; 22:16), she told how that in a revival a sensation came over her which left her

with a feeling of inner peace. This feeling was to her an indication that God had forgiven her sins. There is no scripture teaching that salvation comes through a feeling of peace, but she was confident that she was saved because of what she had felt. In this way she justified not obeying Jesus in order to be saved.

Salvation Through Prayer

Another lady said that she had felt a heavy burden because she was not a Christian and because of her sins. Her preacher came to visit her. Together they knelt and prayed together. After some time of praying and weeping, her preacher told her to repeat "the sinner's prayer." After saying this prayer, she concluded that God heard her and had forgiven her sins. Her preacher shook her hand and told her he would be happy to baptize her into his church. Based on her prayer she decided her sins were forgiven.

Faith Only

At another time a man stated that salvation was by faith only and without baptism. He then related how God had put faith into his heart. He knew he was saved even though he had not responded according to Jesus' teaching. "He who believes and is baptized will be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 6: 16).

Obedied God

After a long study with another man, he told me that he was saved and did not need to be baptized because he had been baptized. When I asked him if he had committed his life to Jesus in repentance and been baptized so that his sins could be forgiven, he said he had committed his life to Jesus in order to be forgiven and afterward was baptized to obey God. Even though he had done the right act, he had done it for the wrong purpose. The right act is important, but God not only looks at the act but also for the reason for the act (Matt. 6:1-5, 16).

Only God's Way Is Right

Self justification does not mean justification in God's sight. Instead of upholding what we have felt or

relying on what we have done that is not according to God's word, we should admit when we are wrong and then obey by doing it God's way.

To his credit, after Saul had been proven to be wrong, he no longer sought to defend his action but said to Samuel, "I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice" (1 Sam. 15:24). In this Saul showed a better attitude than those who continue to justify their actions and refuse to obey God. Even so, God took his kingdom away from him.

Conclusion

We should not read the Bible to justify our preconceived ideas, but should search the scriptures daily with an open mind in order to learn God's will for our lives. If we have not obeyed or are not obeying His word, we should not rely on our actions that are not according to the word, but should readily accept what God has said (Acts 17: 11) and obey in order to have the eternal life provided by Jesus (Heb. 5:9).

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CHURCHES**

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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; I Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian Living (I Peter 2:11, 12; Revelation 2:10).

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

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

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Publication #211780