

Our purpose is to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints,” and to “prove all things; hold fast that which is good.”

OLD PATHS ADVOCATE

“To continue speaking the truth in love,” “endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace,” “keeping the ordinance as delivered.”

“Thus saith the Lord, ‘stand ye in the ways, and see and ask for the Old Paths, where in the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest of your souls.’ (Jer. 6:16) “And they that be of Thee shall build the old waste, places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The Repairer of the Breach, The Restorer of Paths to Dwell in.” (Isa. 58:12).

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GOD MADE THE WORLDS

By *BENNIE CRYER*

It is very difficult if not impossible for human beings with finite minds to find adequate words that really describes the greatness of God. I have heard our most eloquent preachers attempt this. Their words thrill our souls as we sit and listen to their wonderful presentations. I think that even they, when they finish their most sublime discourse would say, “the half has not been told.” The comfort we have though is the creator and our Father in heaven wants us to magnify him the best we possibly can and honor him as the supreme being with all our little mind’s ability. When we have done this and contemplate how small and insignificant we are along with our puny efforts in this impossible task about all we can do is shout “And beside this “How Great Thou Art.”

One area we can consider about his greatness with amazement is in his creation of the heavens and the earth, Genesis 1:1. The writer of Hebrews declares in 1:1-2 that God has spoken to us through his Son and then adds the little but powerful phrase “by whom also he made the worlds.” Bear with me as I attempt to tell you just a mite about the creative ability God exercised through his Son in forming the heavens. The Psalmist wrote in 19:1-2, “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.” This gives us the right to call upon nature to help us in our attempt to describe God’s greatness and wisdom. In Genesis 1:14-15 these words are recorded: “And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years: And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so.”

The earth orbits the sun and maintains a distance of approximately 93 million miles from it. The earth travels around the sun at about 66,600 miles per hour (Each second it travels 18.5 miles.) and takes about 365 days to complete one orbit. At the same time it revolves around its axis at about 1000 miles per hour and takes just about 24 hours to complete a single spin. Not only that the sun is pulling the earth through space at some 43,000 miles per hour. How did something as big as the earth get into this orbit? Think about the intelligence, work, and money that are necessary to get comparatively small objects in orbit around the earth

or to hurl them into space. How could the heavens and the earth operate in such clockwise fashion if there were no intelligence involved? Now if we think the earth is large consider the size of its sun. According to the World Book Encyclopedia if we could paste the earth across the face of the sun in a straight line it would take 109 earths to reach from one side to the other. Furthermore, if we could fill the inside of the sun with earths it would take 1.3 million of them to fill the sun up. The sun is so large with its diameter of 865,000 miles that you could place the earth and the moon inside of it with their intervening distance and the moon could continue to orbit the earth though the walls of the sun might be thousands of miles thick. While camping in the Sierra Mountains in central California I have seen the flash a nuclear bomb made when it exploded. Though I was scores of miles from ground zero it lit up the sky and area around us so brightly that I could see the trees across the lake as plainly as if it had been midday instead of the middle of the night. It took money and intelligence to make a bomb that would do that. Yet God made the sun so that fusion similar to that takes place all of the time yet the sun is not destroyed nor does it run out of fuel. How great God is! What a building contractor he is. Compared to the greatest and largest things that have been built on earth they are nothing compared to what God has built. But that is not all I want you to consider.

Another star that God made and hurled into space completely dwarfs the earth’s sun. This star has been named by man Betelgeuse (Pronounced similarly to beetle juice). This star is in the Orion Constellation and its diameter varies between 300 and 400 million miles. It has been classified as a star of the first magnitude. This star is so large that if it were hollow you could place the sun at its center and the planets Mercury, Venus, Earth, and Mars could all revolve about the sun at their present distances and yet remain well within the surface of this huge star. I want to be on the side of the being that has this kind of power, wisdom, and ability. He is able to create the heavens with all the millions and millions of stars and to keep them going through space without their slowing down or going out of their orbit. But the amazing thing is though he has the kind of power he has the ability to dwell in our hearts, and lets us become his sons and daughters.

While God has communicated with us through his creation in nature in fantastic ways he has revealed himself to man through his words that are recorded in the Bible. This

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PUBLISHER

Don L. King
1147 Sherry Way, Livermore, CA 94550
Fax 925-454-8995

ASSISTANT PUBLISHER

Ronny F. Wade
2254 East Raynell St., Springfield, MO 65804

EDITORIAL STAFF

Clovis Cook	Greg Gay
Bennie Cryer	Carl Johnson
Billy Dickinson	Edwin S. Morris
Jerry Dickinson	Barney Owens
Johnny Elmore	Kevin Presley

OLD PATHS ADVOCATE WEBSITE:

www.oldpathsadvocate.org
Rick Martin, Website Publisher
Terry Studdard, Website Asst. Publisher
Brandon Steward, Webmaster

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Editorial

THE SEED GROWING SECRETLY

By DON L. KING

This is the title Trench (**Notes on the Parables**) gives to a parable of Jesus found in Mark 4:26-29. It is a brief parable consisting of only four verses and is recorded only by Mark. It apparently was one of a number of parables spoken by the Lord as He sat on a small ship near the shore of the Sea of Galilee.

Jesus said, "...So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come."

This parable seems to declare the secret and invisible energy of God's divine Word. His Word has life in itself and often unfolds or manifests that life according to the law of its own existence. How many times have we seen the gospel preached perhaps in some seemingly unlikely place only to see it later spring vibrantly forth? How many men are preaching the gospel today who when they were young, or first converted, seemed a very unlikely candidate for such a wonderful work? How does this happen? It happens because the Word of Almighty God contains life within itself and may bring about huge changes given a little time in the human heart. We have seen this principle demonstrated repeatedly both here and abroad.

We may inspect a common kernel of corn. Look it over carefully if you wish. Are we able to see any evidence of life there? Not at all, but when placed in the ground at a proper depth and with a little moisture, up it comes in a few days growing fast and later produces a delicious product. Not only that, but it will produce many times more than the single kernel of corn we planted. We are told that years ago some seed was found in an ancient tomb, which had been excavated in Egypt. On a whim, it was planted and soon came up to be identified as an ancient variety of wheat. Only the Lord knows how long it lay hidden and dormant, the life source unseen. However, the fact that it germinated proves it was there all along. Therefore, it is so concerning the gospel of Christ. A man may live most of his life before coming in contact with the ancient Word of God but the change in the man is apparent once the seed is implanted within his heart. The change in the man proves the life force of God's Word has been within itself, as a seed, all along. It needed only to fall into a good and honest heart to bring forth a great change for the better. Obedience to the gospel would never have occurred without the Word of God having been introduced to him. Nearly every preacher can tell stories of men or women who seemed unlikely to be interested in

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THE QUERIST COLUMN

By RONNY F. WADE

Question: When a person, who has been a member of another congregation, begins to attend a different congregation is it necessary for him to come forward and place his membership there, or could a leader of the church merely make his wishes known to the church?

Answer: When an individual obeys the gospel, he/she is added to the church Acts 2:47, by the Lord. As a Christian it becomes that person's responsibility to attend worship services and work within a local congregation of the Lord's people. Where one attends is a choice, if there are several different congregations available. After Paul's conversion he "came to Jerusalem and tried to join himself to the disciples; but they were all afraid of him" Acts 9:26. This would seem to indicate that he wanted to be numbered with them, that is become a part of their company. Every Christian needs to belong to some congregation. They need to be a part of a working group of disciples so that they can serve and obey the Lord. It is a mistake, in this writer's opinion, for people to drift from congregation to congregation. Every Christian has obligations that can only be fulfilled within the framework of a local body of disciples. In 1Peter 5:1-2 we read "the elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed; Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly;" The elders are here charged with the responsibility of guarding and feeding the flock. In order to fulfill this responsibility they must identify or know who is a part of "the flock," hence the need for people to identify themselves. I do not believe it is necessary for a person to come forward to place membership in a particular place. However, they should notify someone in the church of their desire so that the leadership of the church can take proper measures to "shepherd" that individual. I see nothing wrong or amiss if an elder or leader of the congregation conveys the wishes of the individual to the rest of the congregation.

Question: When people from several congregations of the Church assemble for a group singing, where some of those present have different views on various bible topics, is it scriptural to dismiss with a prayer or should the people be told they are dismissed and no prayer offered?

Answer: The answer to this question, in the view of this writer, is a matter of judgment. Since singing praise to God is a matter of worship, I hardly see how praying would not be appropriate, hence I know of no scriptural limitation that would prohibit prayer in such a situation. Nor do I know of a scripture that would make it mandatory that one pray every time people sing praise. The fact that several congregations are present and that

there are differing beliefs among them would have no bearing on whether a dismissal prayer was offered. (Send all questions to Ronny F. Wade, 2254 E. Raynell, Springfield, MO 65804 or clockronny@aol.com)

THE SEED GROWING SECRETLY

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the gospel at their first meeting. In fact, we often tend to discount someone who just does not seem to be interested when first they hear the gospel. Later, however, they may become interested, obey the gospel and become hugely valuable to the church in various ways.

While the seed is hidden from our view, changes take place that only God may explain. Scientists can recreate a seed as far as its appearance is concerned but it will never germinate. We are told that Scientists can create an egg, which appears the same as the real thing. It looks so real it will even fool the hen and she may sit on it until she is unable to stay longer but it will never hatch. It looks the same, will even taste the same, but the life force is not present. Only God could create life. Man is only able to work with what God has created.

In the parable before us, we learn that the seed is planted, and then the sower may rise night and day. That is, he goes his way and the seed is left in the ground to germinate and come forth. Scholars suppose that this may indicate the planting and growth of the church. Christ, at His first coming, sowed the seed of the kingdom in the world. He planted a kingdom and then withdrew Himself. The heavens received Him and will someday reveal Him again. Many have been the times brethren have wished for His return because it sometimes seems that the church cannot go on much longer. Men are so wicked and events can become so horrendous as to be unbelievable. However, He has not yet come back. He has left the church to overcome her obstacles. This is not to say, He has left the church without any help. His providence is always with us, but the interference is not visible. Just as we cannot see the changes which take place as the seed springs to life in the earth, neither are we able to understand and see His assistance today, but we know He ever cares for and blesses the church who wears His name.

Scholars theorize that this parable shows when the harvest is ripe, only then will the Lord appear the second time unto salvation, thrusting in His sickle, (verse 29) and reap the final harvest.

Admittedly, the parable has some difficulties, which we did not go into. However, it is refreshing to realize that through it all, we are always in His care. We must never be discouraged when things seem to be bad or when brethren let us down. Keep in mind what the early Christians had to suffer. In that comparison, we have no reason to complain or feel badly. At the final day, it will be worth every effort we have made many times over. Let us work together for peace and success of the gospel. We have no way of knowing how much longer the Lord will delay His coming. Think on these things. - DLK

WHEN BRETHREN LEAVE US

By GREG GAY

As I finish this article (March 7, 2007) I am surrounded by literally hundreds of envelopes and printed emails where brethren have responded to my request for changes and orders for the directory, "Where the Saints Assemble." The cooperation among us in gathering such information is superb and greatly appreciated. For the most part, publishing the directory is a labor of love and I am always encouraged by so many who express their appreciation both in writing and in person. However, there are a few parts of the job that are not always pleasant, as you might imagine. Let me share a few of those, if you don't mind.

Basically, the directory is a listing of congregations of the Church of Christ where people are saved according to the Bible pattern of faith, repentance, confession, and baptism with the understanding that salvation does not occur until baptism. In addition, all worship according to the Bible pattern of a cappella singing, contribution, praying, teaching, and observing the Lord's Supper with one loaf of unleavened bread and one cup containing grape juice. We commune only once per Lord's Day. We do not have Bible Classes or Sunday School and only men do the leading, teaching and praying.

Simple? Not really, because even with these guidelines, inclusion in the directory is not an exact science. It involves judgment, which will only be as valid as the decision of the publisher. The past publishers of the directory have typically ignored ongoing issues among us such as divorce and remarriage with its many variations, the Holy Spirit's method of indwelling, and the sequence of items in worship. I have continued that tradition and believe it is appropriate. Each publisher I am aware of has listed congregations who would not use him were he to appear there for worship because of his personal views on these or other subjects, as have I.

As far as I know, past publishers have intentionally not listed congregations who use brethren from the Digressive or Christian church in their worship. I believe those lines of fellowship must be drawn, lest we bid them God speed (2 John 11), and have continued that tradition. There are various congregations around the country who preach the plan of salvation correctly and worship correctly, so far as I know, but they will use brethren from the digressive church and their members circulate freely among and worship with digressive congregations. I am not talking about innocent mistakes that are made from time to time, but rather about leaders who have made the decision that there is no line of fellowship to draw between us and those who practice digression.

Obviously, we know that any directory is not inspired. It is the work of a man, me, in this case, and I assure you that I am as prone to mistakes in judgment as any man. More so, some would say, but my goal is always to create an appropriate listing of congregations where the plan of salvation will be taught and the worship will be conducted scripturally. What I want to do in publishing the directory is to include everyone possible. But, sometimes a decision has to be made about what to do in the directory when there are serious unresolved problems. In other words, what is to be done when brethren

leave us?

As you can well imagine it is an agonizing decision to take a congregation or a preacher out of the directory. One brother, offering a most eloquent criticism of what I do in publishing the directory, wrote that I was a "behavioral hypocrite" because of those I would or would not list. Well-meaning brethren do offer advice, encouragement, and sometimes discouragement, about what to do in the directory regarding various situations. While I could do without the personal insults, all of the discussion is actually very needful and helpful.

The tension that inclusion or exclusion in the directory can produce and the ensuing discussion is actually part of a very valid process. You see, we are a self-policing group. We police ourselves today, just as the early church did in Bible times. When there were problems, people cared enough to talk to others. Problems were made known. Problems were either resolved or they were not and fellowship was either confirmed or severed. All of that has to happen in the church whether or not there is a directory. Journals such as the "Old Paths Advocate" also serve this purpose, but we must all understand the issues among us that affect our fellowship still have to be discussed whether or not we have any publications.

How problems in the church come to the surface is very fascinating to me. Perhaps some dear brother or sister realizes that what has happened gradually in their home congregation has led them into error. Perhaps they have talked to the leaders only to be told everything is OK, so they take the brave step to ask someone outside the congregation about what is happening. Problems in a congregation can become known when someone just happens to visit a congregation on a day when the leaders decide to make the worship new and exciting with some antic, or the speaker goes to great pains to distort the plan of salvation, or someone notices that a brother used in the worship is known to be part and parcel with digressive brethren. Those things eventually come out, sometimes immediately in our day of instant communication. We do share who we are, what we see, and what we do in the church, as is appropriate.

Sadly, there are some congregations I will not be listing this year. The congregation in Shady Spring, West Virginia sent in their changes for the directory with a notation: "We use individual cups now." They won't be listed. I believe they are practicing error and are in sin. I would not want anyone to happen to stop by there for worship based on my book. I hope and pray for those who know these brethren to work with them to encourage and persuade them to repent.

The congregation in Irving, Texas is now having Bible Classes. The congregation's problems have been well publicized by a number of brethren, including a letter they themselves sent all over the country a few years back. They were not in the last directory although I was glad to add them with an update when things were made right. Unfortunately, they did not stay right. It would be hard to estimate the hundreds of hours that brethren have spent the last few years attempting to reason with the congregation's leaders. The congregation and the preacher who works with them will not

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II. THE SECOND COMING OF THE LORD AND WHAT WILL FOLLOW

By C.A. SMITH

In our first article concerning "The Second Coming Of The Lord," we discussed the facts that His coming would be "Visibly," and "Unexpected." The Bible also declares that when He comes, He will come "with his saints." "Them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." 1 Thess. 4:14, "At the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all the saints" - 1 Thess. 3:13. It is also declared that He will come "With a shout" "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: - 1 Thess. 4:16. Then as Jesus Himself declares, He will come quickly. "For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" - Matt. 24:27 Then He warns, "Watch ye therefore; ... lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping." Mark 13:35-36. Then, in the Revelation adds, "Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus" - Rev. 22:20.

There are four things clearly stated in the New Testament that will take place at Christ's coming. The general or universal resurrection of all the dead. There will be millions of people, good and bad, living upon the earth when Christ comes. These, Paul tells us will not taste of death; but "shall be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." 1 Cor. 15:51-52. No one will deny that the apostle here speaks of a resurrection which includes the church: and mark the fact that the trump which calls them forth is called "the last trump." By this we are to understand that all the dead, both righteous and wicked, will come forth at the same time; for how could another trump call for the wicked a thousand years after the "last trump" has sounded? Preposterous! The language is clear. "The trumpet [last trump] shall sound, and the dead [all the dead] shall be raised, . . . and we [the living] shall be changed. But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as other which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" 1 Thess. 4:13-17. We are plainly told in these passages that the resurrection of the dead will take place at the very time "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, and with the trump of God" - the last trump. The order of the resurrection is also clearly given, and also informed that the saints living on earth when Christ comes will not "precede" the righteous dead. They will first be raised, before we enter into the presence of the Lord. After this we "together

with them" shall be caught up and be forever with the Lord. The reason the wicked are not mentioned in this scripture is because the apostle was treating directly on the hope of the church. However, when the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, not only will the righteous dead hear his voice, but the wicked also will come forth at the same time. "For the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation." John 5:28, 29. This scripture forever demolishes the theory of an intervening thousand years between the resurrection of the righteous and that of the wicked.

Christ positively declared that all that are in the graves, both they that have done good and they that have done evil, shall hear his voice, and come forth in the same "hour". Daniel looking forward with prophetic eye to the very end of time, beholds this universal resurrection, and thus describes it: "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." (Dan. 12:2). In Paul's defense before Felix, he boldly declares "that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust" (Acts 24:15). Now then, in the name of Jesus we ask: Could language more clearly teach but one literal resurrection, and that resurrection made up "both of righteous and of unrighteous?" For lack of space, I urge you who read this article to also look at the following scriptures; (Rev. 1:7; Rev. 20:11-15; 1 Cor. 15:12-13, 21; and John 11:24). Surely, unless one is blinded by deception, one cannot fail to see that in these texts, but one resurrection, the "resurrection of the dead" all the dead - is spoken of, and that resurrection will take place "at the last day."

In 1 Cor. 15:22-28 we find these truths. (1) All of Adam's race will be raised from the dead. (2) This will take place at Christ's coming. (3) Then cometh the end. The Millennial advocates says that "immediately after the resurrection of them that are Christ's at his coming, the kingdom will be set up, and Christ will reign upon earth with his saints one thousand years, after which the wicked will be raised. Nothing of the kind is hinted at in the text. In fact it proves directly to the opposite. With the resurrection of "them that are Christ's" comes the end. "Then the end, when he shall have delivered up [mark you, not set up] the kingdom to God" Yes, "When he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power: For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet." You see, Christ reigns while his enemies are being conquered, and not after they are all conquered as Millenarians teach. "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (v. 26) Then, the day of probation will be over, it will also be the end of this world. Then, the world will be without an advocate, without a Savior, or further opportunity of salvation. The redemption plan will then be finished. The sacrifice for sins was offered; the Spirit came and strove with all flesh; the gospel was published to all nations; Christ comes in the clouds of heaven; the judgment is set, and eternal rewards and punishments are meted out to all men; Christ delivers up the kingdom to the Father. So, 1 Cor. 15:22-28 is utterly fatal to the Millennial

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DO YOU REALLY LOVE JESUS?

BY VIRGLIO O. DANA O. SR.

When Jesus appeared to the disciples the third time, after His resurrection, He asked the Apostle Peter, the question, ***“Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than this?”*** (John 21:15, 16, 17). In this occasion, Jesus was asking Peter if he loves fishing more than the work He entrusted him with, as an apostle. Peter was a fisherman before Jesus called him to follow Him. However Jesus knew that although Simon Peter answered Him, ***“Lord, thou knowest that I love thee”***, Peter’s attention was preoccupied with his desire to go back to fishing. It was only when Jesus asked him the same question the third time that Peter came to himself, and understood the import of what the Lord was asking him. Peter answered he loves the Master, but the Lord did not see from Peter any manifestation of this love!

Sometimes, many God fearing people say they love Jesus Christ, but there is no manifestation whatsoever shown by them to prove that they really love Him. How true and sincerely do we love Jesus? Let us study some, among others, answers to these very vital questions!

We really love Jesus if we keep His commandments. He said, ***“If you love me, keep my commandments”*** (John 14:15). He made clear in few words that if we love Him, we must have to keep, or do, His laws, commandments. For, simply stated, how can we say we love Him truly, if we do not obey His will?

Many God-fearing people say they love God, or Jesus Christ, with all their hearts and souls, but in reality they do not love Him, simply because they do not want to do or obey His commands. For instance: The New Testament clearly specifies the kind of music to be used in Christian worship. Of course, there are only two kinds of music: Vocal and instrumental music. Vocal music, or singing, is specified and therefore authorized in Christian worship. The Apostle Paul made this plain. In Hebrews 13:15, he writes, ***“By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.”*** What are we going to offer continually? The answer is: ***“the sacrifice of praise to God.”*** What is this sacrifice of praise to God? It is ***“the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.”*** I do believe that the principle of this particular verse may be applied to music we are to make in Christian worship. Now, what kind of music may we offer to God that comes from our lips? Well, the sound we hear when instrumental music is played does not come from the lips. Therefore, this is not the kind of music the Apostle authorizes. Since vocal music, or singing, comes from the lips, vocal or singing is authorized and specified. This is the reason why we only sing in the Church. However, sometimes, people are not contented with this kind of music, which the Apostle Paul, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, specifies. Therefore, they add instrumental music to accompany their singing, in contradiction to the plain teaching of the Bible. If this is the case, how can they say they truly love Jesus?

Another example is the use of one loaf and one cup in the observance of the Lord’s Supper. This teaching is clearly taught

by Jesus Christ Himself. When He instituted the importance of the Lord’s Supper, He taught the disciples to drink the fruit of the vine from the one cup containing it. This teaching was delivered to Apostle Paul by the Lord, and he also taught this to the disciples --that each one present in the local assembly of the Church much drink the fruit of the vine out from the cup (Matt. 26:27; Mark 14:23; Luke 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:23-25). Again, many people, in their local assembly, use individual communion cups, which are a direct contradiction of Christ’s commandment, concerning the use of one cup. How can they say, they love Christ, if they do not want to obey, keep, or do His commandments?

I remember the story of a brother who walked about 5 kilometers, rain or shine, to go to Church. The people who saw him were curious to ask him, why he was doing this every Sunday. He told them that he was doing such because he wanted to keep the commandments of God. To prove this, he quoted Hebrews 10:25, where Apostle Paul, says, ***“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another, and so much the more, as you see the day approaching”***. He further supported this verse with Acts 20:7. Now, did this brother love Christ? Of course, Yes!

Brethren, do we really love Jesus? Remember, He said, ***“If you love me, keep my commandments.”***

We really love Jesus if we love our neighbors, our brothers and sisters. The Apostle John writes, ***“And this commandment have we from him, ‘That he who loveth God love his brother also’*** (1 John 4:21). A similar passage is Luke 10:25-28. Now, how can we love our brothers, sisters, or neighbors, so we can say we love Jesus or God? Well, of course, by loving him as we love ourselves. I love my soul; so I have to love the soul of my brother, or sister, too. I want to be saved. If I love my brother, as I love myself, I want him to be saved also. Therefore, I have to exert every effort to win him to Christ, in order that he will be saved also.

Another way for me to show my love to my brother, neighbor, is to extend to him whatever physical, material, assistance possible, when he is in dire need. Perhaps, the parable of the Good Samaritan portrays an example we can emulate. This is found in Luke 10:30-37. It is all about a man who was robbed and left behind by the robber, half dead, on his way to Jericho. A priest came that way, but passed by on the other side, likewise, a Levite. They were both religious, but did not bother themselves to help him. However, a Samaritan, who was an outcast in the eyes of the Jews, extended his assistance, and ***“took care”*** of him. Now, who among these three --the priest, the Levite, or the Samaritan-- really loved God? Of course, the Samaritan because he showed love to the man who was robbed. Dear Reader, do you love your brother, sister, or neighbor, as yourself?

We really love Jesus, if we are now preparing ourselves to meet Him when He comes again. In John 14:1-4, we are told that Jesus will come again, and take us, so where He will be, there we will be also. If we love Him, we must prepare ourselves for His coming, to be sure that we will spend eternity with Him. If we do not prepare ourselves for His coming, we are not interested to be with Him in

Heaven. If we are not interested to spend eternity with him in Heaven, and prove it by our actions, then we do not really love Him. Why? Because of the simple reason, that we do not want to make preparations to be with Him forever in Heaven. Whether we like it or not, Jesus Christ is coming again. Have you been preparing for that day? Are you now ready to meet the Lord?

Dear Reader, do you really love Jesus Christ? Are you keeping His commandments? Do you love your brother, sister, or neighbor? Are you now prepared and ready for His second coming? If your answer is "Yes," then you truly love Jesus! Remember, just as faith without works is dead love without works is nothing also. - Honolulu, Hawaii

GOD MADE THE WORLDS

continued from page one

is a more important and fuller revelation since it contains his will for our lives. It speaks of his love and mercy toward us. These words point out the way to heaven for us to walk in so we can live with this wonderful and powerful being forever in eternity. They also tell us of the lake that burns with fire and brimstone and the way to avoid spending eternity there.

These words from God keep going on and on through time and remain fresh and relevant though Satan and his ministers keep trying to destroy it. This 21 Century needs it as much as the first century needed it. And isn't it an amazing thing that these words keep shining on just like the sun keeps on shining? And they will shine on though the heavens and the earth come to an end. Did not Jesus say, "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled," Matthew 5:18? 1 Peter 1:23 adds to this and gives us information about what God expects of each of us. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever.

This is bigger than Betelgeuse.

THE SECOND COMING OF THE LORD. . .

continued from page five

heresy. To sum up all the foregoing scriptures, the following facts are clearly taught: 1st. There will be a literal resurrection from literal graves. 2nd. This resurrection will take place the instant of Christ's coming. 3rd. It will be universal. 4th. Being universal, it includes the two great classes of the human family.

Having proved that the universal resurrection of all the dead will take place the instant of Christ's coming. We will in our next prove that the judgment scene immediately follows. to be continued. - C.A. Smith, 810 NW 6th St., Andrews, TX 79714, casmith810@cox.net

WHEN BRETHREN LEAVE US

continued from page four

be in the next printing.

In the last few months there has been another controversy noted in this journal where one Louisiana congregation has

been having teaching during the passing of the loaf and cup in communion, thus mixing items of worship. The preacher who works with them has promoted this and demonstrated it to at least one other congregation. When that became known, many wrote the preacher and/or the congregation protesting their error. I understand they have given up their practice, for which I am thankful since I believe it to be sinful. Quite a few have encouraged me not to list the preacher and the congregation. (March 12, 2007 Note: word came to me after completing my article that five faithful preachers have studied with the congregation and preacher involved. I understand a letter has been written acknowledging their sinful mistake and asking for forgiveness. Of course, I am glad to continue to list them in the directory. After all, we have proven for many years, when brethren make mistakes and make those sins right, we are eager to forgive and accept.)

There are other situations among us, but I believe I have shared enough for all to see some of the issues. What does all this mean? In the new directory there will be congregations missing that some would love to have listed. Sorry, not this time. And, there are congregations listed who some have said should not be listed. Sorry, I don't see that they have left us, yet.

What I have seen in the last few years is that when a congregation begins drifting away from the truth they attempt to distinguish themselves from the rest of the brotherhood, usually with an emphasis on emotion and feeling that eventually becomes more important than truth. They begin doing things that set them apart from every other congregation. They become elitist to the point they are greatly offended when anyone would dare to question their direction, and invoke congregational autonomy when anyone tries to reason with them. Then, they finally end up taking a stand in a place where they would not have considered going just a few years previously.

This is a process much like the pattern that results in sin that James talks about: "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (James 1:13-15).

Perhaps this is the sentiment the poet Alexander Pope was attempting to capture when he wrote: Vice is a monster of so frightful mien, As to be hated needs but to be seen; Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face, We first endure, then pity, then embrace.

When brethren embrace error their mistakes are eventually suspected, confirmed, made known, and condemned among us. Along the way erring brethren face the decision make it right or turn away. That is the New Testament pattern. Error committed is error to correct, not to justify, cover up, or obfuscate. But, correcting error is a process that takes time. How much time to allow for correction is a judgment call that is difficult for us all, I trust. Let us not forget that every soul is precious and that even when we are right, we can be wrong. Paul told the Galation brethren: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one

in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Galatians 6:1). - 1820 Casterbridge Dr., Roseville, CA 95747, papagreg@aol.com

BIG SHOTS

By ROBERT WAYNE KORNEGAY

It has come to my attention again that some of our most precious leaders of the church have been labeled as the "head men" or wanting to have preeminence over the church today. Having been labeled like this myself once, I feel compelled to write this article.

In Luke 16:8, the Bible tells us, "For the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light" This great biblical principle could not be any truer than in our local congregations' business meetings. Let me explain.

We all know that God's intended way for church leadership is to have elders in every congregation (Titus 1:5). When a congregation has qualified elders and deacons it should run like a well-oiled machine. This is God's intended way (James 5:14; 1 Peter 5:1). However, for various reasons (no qualified candidates, small or young congregations, etc.) many of our congregations have not yet ordained elders in God's chosen way for local leadership. Many want but at present are not able to have elders. They are forced to choose the only option left, which is for the brothers of the congregations to make decisions in a democratic way on issues concerning the church when they gather to discuss such matters periodically.

Now, of course these meetings often consist of all of the male members -- from young to old, from the spiritually mature to the spiritually young. And may I add that physical maturity does not always equal spiritual maturity. Yet many times the opinions of the spiritual young (whether young or old physically) are considered with just as much weight as the opinions of our learned brethren. When this happens, we are not using good judgment. Many times the learned brethren will speak up (because they have the experience and countless hours of bible study) and they are labeled as wanting to be the "big man" or the "big shot" or some other derogatory name. Dear friends, the reason they speak up is because they know the answers. They know the answers because of their years of experience in the field and countless hours of bible study on bible subjects; God is very liberal with giving us wisdom, however it does not come without a price (James 1:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:11; 2 Timothy 2:15).

It is in these situations outlined above that the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light (Luke 16:8). Let me give you an example from the medical field. Today, in most cases a board of directors governs each hospital. The board of directors consists of qualified individuals who are educated in the medical field. Without proper training, no individual would be considered to serve on the board -- much less be asked to give opinions in matters of great importance such as the

health and welfare of a patient. Because we are not doctors, our worldly wisdom and common sense tells us that we should keep our opinions to ourselves if we should ever find ourselves participating on such a board. We should not pretend to be something we are not. The results could be fatal if an unqualified individual was put on a medical board.

We can all see the principle involved in our example above -- brothers, why can't we see this principle in our business meetings? Isn't the business of the church just as important? Can we not see that the wrong decision or poor judgment could be just as fatal spiritually to someone or to the entire congregation? Why do we want to give our opinions on spiritual matters when we do not have the qualifications to give such opinions? There is a reason behind the fact that an elder cannot be a novice (1 Tim. 3:6).

Today, we are blessed with good brethren who have devoted their entire lives to the cause of Christ. Their spiritual knowledge would be equivalent to a master's degree in the secular world. Yet there are some who would not think twice about slandering them just because they speak up and stress their opinions. Are we that jealous of their spiritual wisdom that we revert to name calling? If the truth was known, most of the learned brethren would rather have the younger men lead once they are qualified. It would lift a heavy burden off their shoulders, which Paul described as "the care of all the churches" (2 Corinthians 11:28). It is my opinion that we should be thankful that we have these learned men who are willing to speak up. We should ask God to bless us with more qualified men who will continue to guide the church and teach the young (Titus 2:6) even if they are labeled as "Big Shots." - Tallahassee, Florida

Announcement

IF YOU HAVE RECEIVED REQUESTS FOR MONEY TO THE PHILIPPINES

In recent years, the Philippine work has grown very rapidly and spread into several new Islands. A number of new congregations have been established and others converted from digression and even from denominations. In addition, a number of preachers have been converted. While this is wonderful, and we thank God for the tremendous growth, it also brings some potential problems. In a few cases, letters have been written to American congregations requesting funds for preacher's support, help for church buildings or even medical bills. We are not saying these have not been legitimate. However, in order to guard against unsavory people who might try to take advantage of us, we suggest that you contact Virgilio O. Danao Sr. (808-680-0249) before sending money to anyone. He knows the work and the people involved and can advise you before you send. You are also welcome to contact Don L. King (925-454-0530) or Alan Bonifay (209-367-9504) and we will be glad to help, if possible. -DLK

Our Departed

LEA - Hallie Smith Lea, affectionately known as "Miss Hallie" passed from this life May 31, 2006 being five months short of 100 years old. She was the wife of S.W. Lea and the mother of Betty Johnston, Wallace Lea and Nan Oestmann, 6 grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren. Hallie was a lifelong member of New Salem Church of Christ, where she attended until shortly before her death when she was no longer able. In her young years she developed character and strength that served her well through many difficult times, including her husband's debilitating accident. This strength, courage and unwavering faith in God enabled her to live independently for many years after his death. Her greatest joys in life were attending the worship of the church and spending time with her family. As we laid her to rest in the New Salem Cemetery, we were comforted to know that her simple lifestyle and Christian example will live on in the hearts of all who knew and loved her. Lynwood Smith officiated at the service.

KRAMER - William H. Kramer 93 of Rote, PA departed this life February 15, 2007 at his residence. He was born May 17, 1913. He is survived by his wife Elda whom he married January 18, 1934, thus enjoying each others companionship for 73 years. His is also survived by one son and 3 daughters, 10 grandchildren, 23 great-grandchildren and 8 great-great-grandchildren. Brother Kramer was a wonderful Christian man who loved the church and serving the Lord. He was one of the main speakers at the Church of Christ at Rote, PA. He loved to talk about the Bible and attend Gospel meetings and meet the Gospel preachers. My wife and I have known this wonderful couple for 56 years and have visited with them in their home many, many times, thus becoming very close friends and have come to love them as though they were our own parents. Sister Elda is a very loving Christian woman and a wonderful hospitable person. The viewing for Brother Kramer was at the church building at Rote, PA. The large amount of people that came to the viewing, over 200, was proof that he was well thought of in the community. The funeral service was also at the church building and there were over 100 people in attendance at the service. Brother Kramer will be missed by all who knew him and especially by the congregation, because a bright and shining light has gone out in that congregation. Brother Lloyd Kramer who grew up with William, gave a eulogy of him in a beautiful poem which he has written captivating Brother William's entire life. It was very nice, he also made some good remarks about his Christian walk in life. I was honored about three years ago when Brother Kramer asked me if I would officiate his funeral service. I simply spoke words of comfort, peace, consolation and hope, for

those who have been OBEDIENT TO THE WORD OF GOD. Brother Eugene Lockard officiated assisted by Brother Lloyd Kramer.

HAMMONS - Lorean Idella Hammons was born in the Rody Community on June 24, 1920 to Ben Erskin and Addie Marjorie Cobb. She departed this life February 9, 2007 at the age of 86. She married Yual Hammons on October 24, 1946, and he preceded her in death on April 15, 1991. She is survived by daughter Linda Johnson and Randy of Elmore City, OK, and son Donald Hammons of Dallas; four grandchildren, Teri, Mandy, Amanda, and Rachel; four great-grandchildren; two sister-in-laws; and one brother-in-law; several nieces and nephews; and Donna Wisemer. Lorene was baptized in 1939, and attended worship most of her life at the Wynnewood congregation. In 2002 she became a resident of the Oklahoma Veterans Center in Sulphur, OK, and she attended worship at Sulphur as long as her health permitted. She was a devoted wife, mother, and grandmother who loved her family very much. She enjoyed gardening, cooking for others, canning, and raising flowers. I visited in Sister Hammons' home many times over the past 35 years and she and Yual always treated my family with wonderful hospitality. Johnny Elmore and I conducted the funeral service in Pauls Valley with interment at the Katie Cemetery. A small group from the Captiol Hill and Cimarron congregations provided beautiful singing led by Bobby Elmore.

WEEKS - Charles E. was a faithful member of the "C" and Tyler Streets Church of Christ in McAlester, OK. He was born in Canadian, OK on August 4, 1920 and departed this life February 23, 2007, in McAlester, OK. He was married to sister Inez Weeks January 23, 1946. Survivors include his wife, Inez Weeks, of McAlester; two daughters and sons-in-law Beth and Ken Kastl, of Bella Vista, AR and Marilyn and Rick Sprague of The Woodlands, TX; five brothers and one sister several grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and numerous nieces, nephews and cousins. Nathan Battey directed the beautiful congregational singing. Ron Alexander and I count it a privilege and an honor to have been asked to conduct the memorial service. Charles will be missed in the home and in the church. Please pray for the family. - Randy Tidmore

EDWARDS - Herma Edwards 81 of Springfield, MO passed away on Feb. 24, 2007, after a long illness. We buried Don her husband just two months earlier. They had lived for years in the Galena, MO area, where Don served as Postmaster, and attended the Mtn. Home congregation. In 1992 they moved to Springfield and became members of the Mission Hills church where they attended until illness forced them to become

homebound. Herma was a kind, congenial, out-going person. An excellent cook and homemaker. She was the mother of two daughters, one of whom preceded her in death. She is survived by one daughter and three grandchildren. She and Don shared sixty-three wonderful years together. They will both be greatly missed. The writer was privileged to conduct the memorial service from the Mission Hills church building with burial in the Clio cemetery near Jenkins, MO. - Ronny F. Wade

LOUGHMILLER - Hazel Margaret Loughmiller, age 83 of Brazil, Indiana passed away March 6, 2007 at Terre Haute Regional Hospital. She was born November 4, 1923 in Clay County, IN and married Joseph Loughmiller on May 8, 1943. Joe and Hazel lived together for almost sixty years. Their home was open to hundreds of church people who often passed their way. Two more hospitable individuals could not have been found. Hazel was always vibrant and cheerful, with a laugh that was contagious. You just couldn't be around her without feeling the joy and happiness she exuded. She was what some would call "old fashioned." She just could not condone the many changes our world has undergone. She grew up in a time when women were women. She always modestly dressed and wore long hair, possessing a dignity that she refused to sacrifice for modern fashions. Hazel is survived by three daughters, two sisters, and two sisters-in-law, and several grand and great grand children, as well as a host of friends and brothers and sisters in Christ. Joe and Hazel traveled hundreds of miles to attend gospel meetings all over the midwest. One never knew when they would walk through the doors of the meeting house, even though it was a long way from where they lived. The memorial service was conducted from the Moore Funeral Home in Brazil. The chapel was filled with people from several churches in Indiana as well as people from several distant states, among them several gospel preachers, who came to pay their respects to the memory of this good woman. The writer was honored to speak a few words of warning and comfort to those assembled for the service. - Ronny F. Wade

Field Reports

Remegio Bayaca, Ihoevs Norte, Philippines, I would like to inform you about the work here. Last Feb. 13, 2007, brother Elpidio Asuncion invited us to preach in the house of a member because of their child's death. Last Feb. 16, 2007, they invited me in Cadongdongan, Sta. Praxedes, Cagayan to preach concerning "THE LIFE OF MAN", a lot of people attended so I explained to them our stand through the word of GOD. We were 11 preachers who attended on this occasion. Last Feb. 19, 2007, we went back to Pug-os, Sinai, Ilocos Sur for the internment of the child of a member at the same time, I preached also to the death of a non-member, relative of a member there. Last March 2, 2007, my wife and I together with brother

Dario Estavillo, Nestor Jara and Florendo Antonio, went to Pagudpud, Ilocos Norte and the 3 towns of Cagayan Province, Sta. Praxedes, Claveria and Sanchez Mira, the town of my wife. We dropped by at Panzian, Pagudpud, Ilocos Norte and I preached there. At 8:00 PM, I preached also in the house of my brother-in-law at Namuac, Sanchez Mira, Cagayan. We slept there and the following day, March 3, 2007 at 9:30 AM, we approached the congregation of mini-cups wherein I am preaching before at Cadcadir, Claveria, Cagayan. They agreed, so I preached them about communion. The coming day, March 4, Sunday, after the worship services here in Parado and Ver Congregations, we went back to Cadcadir and we conducted the first worship service using one cup during communion. We were 14 attended. By the help of our Lord, this congregation was added to His Kingdom. Please continue praying for us and the Lord's work here.

Don L. King, 1147 Sherry Way, Livermore, CA 94550, e-mail old_paths@juno.co., March 14- Recently, we had occasion to travel through Bakersfield, CA and enjoyed speaking at the Sunday evening service for the Planz Rd congregation. It was good to see them all again and find them at peace. The Fremont congregation is also at peace for which we give God thanks. Lord willing we are to be at Yuba City congregation this coming Lord's Day and we look forward to hearing Alan Bonifay at Fremont soon. Some of you have mentioned that your paper was late for March and asked why? Our information is that it was delayed several days at the Lebanon, MO Post Office for some unknown reason. We are sorry about that but can do nothing about the mail. Your patience is appreciated. Preachers, we need your field reports and articles. Pray for us in the work, please.

Gregory S. Robbins, 7440 Hwy 6 Apt. 1012, Hitchcock, TX, (940) 986-4749 - Since I last posted, the month afforded me the opportunity to be with the brethren at the North Brighton congregation in Kansas City, MO. It was a short meeting, however they tell me that many of their members who were not faithful in assembling with the saints are now coming on a regular basis. To this I say, may they continue in the faith. I will be holding a meeting in Duncanville, TX, April 20-22, 2007, if you are reading this and are living in the Dallas/Ft. Worth area, please come to the meeting. The work here in La Marque has slowed down some, due to a cold I can't seem to get rid of, at the same time I am troubled by the race problem in the Church. I feel this is not caused by any prejudiced from white congregations, but however, by the black congregations wanting to stay to themselves. May I quote you the Apostle Paul Let "there be no divisions among you." (1 Cor. 1:10) In these latter times of so much internal problems, that face us, may we never be "ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." (Rom. 1:16) I hope these words find everyone laboring for the kingdom.

Kiason Turner, 203 NE 6th Ave., Mineral Wells, TX 76067, kiason_joni@yahoo.com, (817) 597-8824, February 27- We just closed out a great young speakers meeting here at home. The topics were themed on the nature of the church. Micah James, Randy Loftin, Derek Guy, Eric Cox, Clint DeFrance, and Lee Grant all did an excellent job of presenting God's Word. Many brethren made great efforts, traveling many miles, to support the meeting. Every service was well attended and we had a few visitors from the community present. Our next meeting here will be with Carl Johnson, May 25-28. While traveling last December, my wife and I went to Philadelphia, PA to worship with the church which meets in the home of James and Pam Smith. The small congregation there has a good number of young people and was quick to extend a brotherly welcome. We were thrilled to meet the brethren and it was an honor to preach there. In January I preached in Hoyte, TX and it was good to see that Courtney Mayer, the young lady I baptized at Sulphur last year, is doing well and stands faithful. I currently have two meetings scheduled for this year: Ratliff City, OK (March 23-25) and Mozier, IL (April 29-May 6). I look forward working with the brethren at both places. May we all continue to love God, keep His commandments, and may our work be to His glory.

VIRGILIO O. DANA O SR., 94-371 Ikepono Street, Waipahu, HI 96797; February 28, 2007:- I am glad to inform faithful brethren everywhere that the annual preaching itinerary of Bro. Don L. King last month, January, was a success. This year, he was accompanied by an able preacher who works with the Planz Road congregation in the Bakersfield area in California. As usual, I often interpreted their messages into the dialects most of our brethren there speak. Eduardo Danao went with us, and also interpreted for Bro. King and Bro. Brancato. Schedules on Luzon were shortened because Palawan, another Island, was included in their itinerary. Their preaching itinerary on Luzon covered from January 4 to 18. There were 87 baptisms held in different places in Luzon, because of the meetings and studies, primarily conducted by Bro. King and Bro. Brancato. As usual, the brethren in Luzon continue to respect, appreciate and are always grateful for the continued sacrifices and support of Bro. King towards the work there since it began in 1981. They acknowledge that without him, the work there should have not reached the stage it is enjoying today. They also appreciate Bro. Brancato because he easily adjusted to Filipino culture, especially his message deliveries. On January 19, from Manila, we flew to Palawan Island. Bro. Alan Bonifay and Bro. Greg Cardoza joined us there. The following day, we conducted meetings in Princesa Urduja and in Mainit in the morning and afternoon, respectively. The travel, round trip from Puerto Princesa and back, on very dusty and rough, rugged, roads was a lasting experience, the effect of it affected our physical health up to the time we finished our itinerary in Palawan, Mindoro and Mindanao. Before

Bro. King and Bro. Brancato left for Manila on January 23, on January 21, we confronted Bro. Teddy Beltran, and inquired about the truthfulness of the report that he had joined the no-exception. He, together with his wife, assured us that the report was not true, making a promise, and God was his witness, before us all, that he will never join the no-exception. We prayed for forgiveness on his behalf for whatever bad effect such a report might have had in the brotherhood. Bro. Bonifay, Cardoza, E. Danao and I continued our scheduled meetings and studies in Palawan, which resulted in another 54 baptisms there. We drove from Manila to Mindoro on January 25; and immediately after the Sunday worship service with brethren there, we returned to Manila. We conducted meetings and studies in four places in Mindoro. There were 23 baptisms there, including two denominational preachers and their wives. A church, which was known as "Victory Church," was converted, led by their preacher, Bro. Edilberto Sungcang. There are now seven preachers, one of whom is receiving financial support from the U.S. brethren, working in Mindoro. On January 30, we flew to Dipolog City (Mindanao), where Bro. Conrado Libertine, and his family reside, and has worked, since 1999. We conducted meetings and studies in North Cotabato, in Polomolok and Dipolog City. In Polomolok, we held a study, where Bro. Cardoza and Bro. Bonifay lectured. Bro. Bonifay made it clear that we were there to preach the gospel, no more and no less. He also made it plain that whoever, and he included all of us, goes there and preaches things foreign to the Scriptures, they should reject the teacher as well as the teaching. We were there to help destroy any walls, which divides the brethren in the area, if any, so brethren with like precious faith may continue to work together for the cause of Christ there. The preaching brethren and leaders of congregations who were present were clarified, and extended their full hands of fellowship to us. They accepted us as part of the brotherhood, though there were some, we were told, who did not come because they feared their support might be terminated. The total of baptisms in Mindanao was 24. Our schedules were very tight and hectic, since we were also in Palawan. However, we thank God that there was no serious physical illness it brought to our health. This trip was my second time to be with Bro. Bonifay, and my first with Bro. Cardoza. I continue to admire Bro. Bonifay's Biblical knowledge, and Bro. Cardoza's preaching. Bro. Cardoza also easily adjusted himself speaking with a translator. They are both dedicated workers of Christ. E. Danao was with us, and assisted in translating there also. I salute all these --King, Bonifay, Brancato and Cardoza-- as servants and soldiers of the Master. When brethren Bonifay and Cardoza left for the US, I returned to Roxas on Luzon. While there, preaching brethren in Isabela and one in Kalinga province came and we held an impromptu meeting, and tried to renew intimate relationships as colaborers in Christ's Kingdom, the Church. I arrived back in Hawaii on February 15, and found the Church here at peace, through the leadership of Bro. Eric Stone and Bro. Edimar Daguio. May God bless us all.

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THE BACK PAGE...

THERE THEY GO AGAIN

BY CARL M. JOHNSON

A documentary that aired last night (March 4) on the Discovery Channel entitled, "The Lost Tomb of Jesus," purported to present archaeological, statistical and genetic-science findings that prove a tomb unearthed in 1980 contains the bones of Jesus and His entire family. Based upon the timing of the documentary you would think this is "Easter" season.

It seems that about this same time every year when much of the religious world is focused upon the resurrection of Christ, a sensational made-for-television documentary comes out attacking the credibility of Christianity. Last year the National Geographic Channel sent popular media into a frenzy over its announcement that they were making public "The Gospel of Judas," a Gnostic Gospel that asserts Jesus asked Judas to betray Him. A few weeks later the movie "The Da Vinci Code" premiered in theaters around the world. The movie and the book upon which it is based argue that Jesus was just an ordinary man and that He never claimed to be the Son of God.

The executive producer of "The Lost Tomb of Jesus," is James Cameron, who has also produced such movies as "The Terminator," "Aliens," and "Titanic," and like his other works this flick is pure science fiction. The alleged use of "DNA evidence" to bolster the credibility of the show's theory that the ossuary (bone-box) unearthed in a tomb near Jerusalem contains the remains of Jesus and His family is impossible to the point of being laughable.

True scholars classify the discovery as the latest entry in a field called "fantastic archaeology," a practice that dates back at least to the Crusades. It is the practice of discovering Holy Land relics, like the fingernails of biblical figures or a fragment of Noah's Ark. The discoveries often draw attention but offer little credible proof. If the timing is right it is a great way to cash-in financially. Joel M. LeMon, consultant to Emory University says, "It doesn't have to be true-it just has to be profitable."

That is why at least three purported heads of John the Baptist are on display in Europe; a coffin in a church in Padua, Italy supposedly holds the remains of Luke, the author of the "Gospel According to Luke" and the "Acts of the Apostles;" and several cathedrals claim to have the remnants from Jesus' circumcision.

Simcha Jacobovici, the director of last night's documentary, said at a New York press conference that he believed this bone-box could be linked to the "James ossuary" discovered in 2003. The James ossuary was purported to contain the bones of James, the brother of Jesus, and proved to be a media sensation. Jacobovici failed to mention, however, that the James ossuary turned out to be a hoax and that its owner Oded Golan has been arrested and is currently on trial for forgery.

Another fantastic archaeological find was showcased in the 1993 CBS documentary "The Incredible Discovery of Noah's Ark." A man named George Jammal displayed what he claimed to be a piece of wood from the actual ark. Jammal was later found to be a Long Beach, California, actor who found the wood at railroad tracks near his home and had never visited Turkey, where the ark is supposed to have ended up.

Perhaps the most famous fantastic archaeological find is the "Shroud of Turin." The image of a bearded man was declared to be the image of the crucified Christ for centuries until carbon dating in 1988 suggested it was a medieval forgery.

Despite the popularity of fantastic archaeology, some discoveries are in fact genuine. The Dead Sea Scrolls, for example, found in 1947 by Bedouin goat-herders, have proved to be an extremely valuable resource for scholars. Most of the general public, however, do not have the expertise to validate such claims and many people who long for archaeological artifacts of biblical figures and events become easy victims for sensational hoaxes.

Keep in mind that television is not in the business of education, even with the so-called educational channels like Discovery. Dr. Garrett G. Fagan a classics professor at Penn State University says, "Television is ultimately in the business of making money. When critics pounce on these discoveries it's often too late. By the time the rebuttals come out, the mass media have moved on to the next sensation, and people will have this vague notion that they have found the tomb of Jesus."

If the tomb of Jesus were to be found today, it would be empty-just as it was early in the morning upon the first day of the week after His Crucifixion (Mk. 16:1-6). Christ's empty tomb is what makes Christianity different from every other major religion in the world today. The remains of Mohammad, Buddha, Confucius, and all the other founders of world religions remain in their respective tombs. Christ's tomb remains empty, however, and His resurrection gives Christians a glorious hope of life beyond the grave (1 Cor. 15:14-17). "Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!" (15:57). - carlmj@cableone.net