

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 is 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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NO. 9

“THE LIVING GOD”

By *BILLY D. DICKINSON*

There are different names and titles applied to God in the scriptures, but the one emphasized in this article has implications that take us in a number of directions. While it is used only 25 times in the Bible, it is found in both the old and new testaments, involving an impressive list of individuals that begins with Moses. Yes, this great lawgiver and a type of Christ Himself spoke of how they had “heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of the fire” (Deut. 5:26). It seems that all the others who used this terminology were following in the footsteps of this inspired man whom God spoke to “face to face” (Gen. 33:11).

That includes David, described as a man after God’s own heart, who said that Goliath should not be allowed to “defy the armies of the living God” (1 Sam. 17:26). Likewise, Joshua assured Israel that they would know “that the living God is among you” (Josh. 3:10) when their possession of the land of Canaan became a reality. Also, prophets like Jeremiah and Hosea honored Jehovah with this lofty language (Jer. 10:10; Hos. 1:10). Even a pagan king like Darius referred to Daniel as the “servant of the living God” (Dan. 6:20) and sent out the following proclamation: “That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: For he is the living God ... “ (Dan. 6:26) We even find this beautiful acknowledgment of man’s need for God in the old testament: “As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God” (Psa. 42:1-2/NKJV).

However, since it is only through Christ that one can come to God and have every spiritual need met (John 14:6), let’s now turn our attention to the new testament. A good place to begin is where Peter confessed to Jesus, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt.

16:16). This prompted our Savior to promise that He would build His church on this rock-solid foundation of truth. Also, Paul used this language in his epistles when he wrote of how the Thessalonians “turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God” (1 Thess. 1:10). Furthermore, he assured Timothy that “we labor and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, specially of them that believe” (1 Tim. 4:10/ ASV). We could also quote from Acts and Hebrews, but surely we can see how this language is rich in meaning and points to God’s greatness. In other words, it shows why He is worthy of our faith because it demonstrates what He can accomplish in our lives. With this in mind, let’s notice some implications involved in this description of God:

THE SOURCE OF ALL LIFE

Only the great “I AM” who is from everlasting to everlasting is worthy of such lofty praise: “But the Lord is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting king ... ”(Jer. 10:10). This not only proclaims that He is alive in a very emphatic sense, but it also affirms His self-existence and independence. In other words, while our existence is totally dependent upon our Creator (Acts 17:28), God is complete without us because He was “the living God” in the past, He is still that in the present and will forever be in the future! No wonder Jesus affirmed that “as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself” (John 5:26). Do you appreciate the claim that Jesus made here? If you are grappling with it, consider this succinct explanation given by Guy N. Woods in his commentary on the Gospel of John: “Those who listen to the voice of Christ and are obedient to his will escape death and come into possession of spiritual life because he is both the source and giver of life. This life which he gives is inherent in him because it exists in his Father who is the same nature as he.” When we understand who Jesus is

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Editorial

SIGNS OF WISDOM

By DON L. KING

In James 3:17, 18 James tells us wisdom from above (that which comes from God) is first “pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.” We want to briefly study these identifying marks. It appears that if we have the wisdom spoken of in the Scriptures, there will be some signs of it in our lives. One thing becomes immediately apparent. Solving a problem among church members will be less complicated IF those involved have these attributes. The absence of them presents huge problems.

The original language of the Greek New Testament means the word “PURE” is “clean, innocent, modest, perfect, chaste.” etc. Christians should always be upfront with each other. Honesty and integrity should be expected and assumed among us. When we are attempting to solve a difficulty in the church and approach a member of the church for their knowledge about the matter, we should be able to assume their words come from a pure heart with no ulterior motives. James tells us this is the first thing! (“first pure.”) We should never attempt to shade the truth in such a way as to cause a false impression about the matter in question. Such actions do not come from a pure and honest person. An effort to bring about peace between two parties will not be successful if the person is not pure. Often a wild “goose-chase” takes place rather than the desired result.

The next item is “peaceable.” The Greek indicates this simply describes a person who desires and loves peace. The Psalmist wrote: “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.” (Psalms 133:1) Yes, indeed it is! However, unity is very elusive when one or more do not seek it. Keep in mind God’s people are supposed to pursue the things that make for peace. (Romans 14:19) Unfortunately, some seem to enjoy keeping something stirred up now and again. If you truly desire peace in your home, in your congregation, etc., you will never achieve that wonderful quality if you are constantly looking for something to complain about or have your feelings hurt over inconsequential matters. Obviously, we do not

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ABORTION - LEGAL BUT WRONG

BY RONNIE F. WADE

PUBLISHER'S NOTE ABOUT THIS ARTICLE

Brother Ronny F. Wade wrote this article back in September 2018. Considering the present political and moral absurdities concerning abortion, we believe a reprint is certainly in order. The record should be clear. The current situation in our Nation is almost unbelievable with daily demonstrations, protests, and ridiculous incorrect statements appearing on the nightly news regularly. The common idea being pressed forward is that a woman should have the right to decide what happens to her own body. However, the body they want to destroy (kill) is a different human being entirely. It is not her body at all. Surely, a mother does not have a right to take the life of her unborn son or daughter! Millions of innocent little boys and girls have been aborted over the past years. Please, read the article carefully and prayerfully. -DLK

There are a number of things that are legal, but wrong. Prostitution is legal in a number of places, but it is morally wrong and condemned in the Bible. Abortion was made legal by the Supreme Court in 1973, however it is wrong. In Romans 1:31 Paul speaks of those who are without natural affection. This refers to those who do not possess the love and attachment which nature teaches all mothers to have for their young. The word literally means "no love of kindred." Abortion is one of the clearest expressions of this vice that is condemned by God. We are all shocked when we hear or read about some parent who mistreats or murders his or her child. We don't understand that. Even though we reject such events, history confirms that the practice of murdering small children was common among the Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Chinese, and Hindus. The Nazi Holocaust began with the elimination of almost 300,000 Aryan German citizens who were considered defective. Before Hitler finished, his Nazi war machine had murdered six million Jews, plus another six million Gypsies, Poles, and prisoners of war. What a horrible deed. We are repulsed by such actions. Any woman who could destroy the child within her womb would have to be judged as one "without natural affection." During the decade of the Vietnam war there were 58,655 American war casualties. Our country now kills more unborn babies than that every fifteen days. During the six major wars fought by this country we sustained 1,160,591 casualties. This is a terrible loss. However,

since abortion was legalized in this country in 1973, over 28 million unborn babies have been murdered by their mothers." Proverbs 6:16-17 "There are six things which Jehovah hates; yea seven which are an abomination unto him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood ... "Abortion sheds innocent blood. It is estimated that in a recent year in New York city alone more than 600,000 abortions were performed. Think about it, 600,000 innocent lives taken. These victims died without the benefit of a trial or counsel. They are not convicted criminals, but innocent unborn human babies. Such make Pharaoh's extermination of Hebrew boys appear as only a ripple on the ocean of time. The slaughter of babes in Bethlehem by Herod would not equal one abortion clinic's daily quota.

I. History of Abortion.

In the Greek world, abortion and infanticide were commonly practiced as a means of family limitation. We are not to conclude that such was accepted by everyone. The Hippocratic Oath states "I will give no deadly medicine to anyone if asked, nor suggest such counsel; furthermore, I will not give a woman an instrument to produce abortion" (World Book, under Hippocrates) Abortion was also practiced during the period of the Roman Empire. The practice was punishable by banishment or death, but as the Empire grew more decadent, the laws were not enforced. With the coming of Christianity, abortion was vehemently condemned. Early extra-biblical writings reflect the opposition of Christians to abortion from the earliest times.

The Epistle of Barnabas (AD 138) states "Thou shalt not kill the child by abortions." The Didache (AD 80) ranks abortion with the sins forbidden in the Ten Commandments. Tertullian (AD240) calls abortion homicide.

On January 22, 1973 abortion became legal in the United States. Since that time countless millions of unborn children have been aborted out of selfishness and immorality. In its ruling the high court stated that any state abortion law in the future would have to meet certain guidelines i.e.: First Trimester: During the first months of pregnancy the states must leave the abortion decision to the woman and her doctor. i.e. abortion on demand. Second Trimester: During the second three months the states may only enact laws maternal health." i.e. who may perform abortions and where they may be performed. Third Trimester: After the sixth or seventh

month of pregnancy, the states may forbid her to have an abortion that is not determined to be necessary to preserve her "life or health." The court defined "health" as "social well-being" making it next to impossible for the state to protect a child after the sixth or seventh month of pregnancy.

II. When Does Life Begin

The primary question that demands an answer is this: "is the fetus a human life?" Is that which is growing in the mother's body alive? The Supreme Court did not address this vital question. They only determined that a woman had a right to an abortion if she wanted one. The answer to this question, however, is crucial in the determination of truth regarding this all important subject.

What The Bible Says Some Basic Facts

1. Life is a gift from God. "He gives life and breath to all things." Acts 17:25 God alone has the right to take man's life. Only human life is made in the image of God. Genesis 1:26 Because of this human life is elevated to a plane above all other forms of earthly life.

2. Christ taught the value of human life in John 3:16 and Mark 16:15-16. Little children were precious to him Matthew 19:14.

3. In the scriptures there is no distinction between babes in the womb and those born. The word "brephos" in the Greek is used to describe the baby in Elisabeth's womb and is used interchangeably for both prenatal and postnatal babies Luke 1:41. It means "an unborn child, embryo, fetus, a newborn child, an infant, a babe." (Thayer page 105) Anyone who questions this should ask themselves "was it the Christ-child in Mary's womb or just a lifeless blob of fetal tissue?"

The following scriptures teach that the unborn child is a human being: Jeremiah 1:5 "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee, and before thou comest forth out of the womb, I sanctified thee." If Jeremiah's mother had chosen to have an abortion, she would have killed Jeremiah. Isaiah 49:1, 5 "Listen, O isles, unto me, and hearken ye peoples, from far; Jehovah hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name ... and now, saith Jehovah that formed me from the womb to be his servant." This indicates that Isaiah was a person before birth. Job 3:11 "Why did I not die from the womb? Why did I not give

up the ghost when my mother bore me?" If the fetus had died in the womb, it would have been a person, it would have been Job.

By the time the baby is 18-25 days old, the heart starts beating. At 45 days, electroencephalographic waves can be picked up from the baby's developing brain. By 9-10 weeks the thyroid and adrenal glands are functioning. The baby can squint, swallow, and move his tongue. By 12 weeks the fingerprints of the hands are already formed, and except for size will never change. At 13 weeks he has fingernails, sucks his thumb, and can recoil from pain. In the fourth month the growing baby is 8-10 inches in height. In the fifth month there is a time of lengthening and straightening of the developing baby, skin, nails, and hair grow. All of the internal organs are present and function. This is the month in which the movements of the infant are felt by the mother.

The scriptures teach "thou shalt not kill" i.e. "thou shalt do no murder." The deliberate taking of a human life is murder. Abortion intentionally kills a human life. The abortion victim is totally innocent, having done no wrong towards the mother, the doctor or society. What abortionist doctor would want a corrosive poured over his body and forced into his lungs and stomach and then be left to convulse for an hour or more till death? This is the baby's fate in the saltpoisoning abortion. (Used when the baby is 16 weeks or older--Needle penetrates through the abdomen and into the sac holding the baby) In about a day the mother goes into labor and delivers the baby. What nurse who attends in abortions would want to be ripped apart by a powerful suction machine? By the time early abortions are performed (8-12 weeks) the baby has his entire organ system in place and has the sense of pain. The body parts are sucked into a disposable jar, after being torn to pieces. Psalms 139:13-16 "Thou didst knit me together in my mother's womb." This passage obviously testifies to the fact that the fetus is a person-at the-time of conception.

Murderers Will Be Punished

Exodus 20:13 "Thou shalt not kill.

Deuteronomy 27:25 "Cursed be he that taketh a bribe to slay an innocent person." Proverbs 6:16-17 God hates "those who shed innocent blood. God hates abortion. What does God think of the premeditated taking of a child's life? We cannot take the sin of abortion lightly; "Lo children are a heritage of the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is his reward. Psalms 127:3 Abortion may be legal, but it is clearly wrong.

III. The Significance of Abortion in Our Society.

1. Abortion signifies a rejection of the knowledge of God. “And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful” Romans 1:28-31).

2. Abortion on demand, signifies that family values are on the decline, as well as sexual morals. Marriage is honorable Heb.13:4. Fornication is a sin. I Cor.6:18 “Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that commits fornication sins against his own body.” The sin of fornication is often responsible for unwanted pregnancy which results in abortion.

3. Abortion is evidence of a loss of respect for human life. “And God said, let us make man in our own image and after our likeness ... “Man is not a brute animal, but a person created in the image of God. Since Abortion is murder, it is but another manifestation of how little we value human life in our society today ... Abortion indicates that covetousness is taking our land by storm. Children are discarded, like garbage, because they will cramp someone’s lifestyle. Everyone should give serious thought to what God says about abortion. He will not let this grievous sin go unpunished. If God will not permit us to kill a child already born and get by with it, neither will he let us get by with killing an unborn child. Abortion is a sin; it is murder in the first degree.

LETTERS FROM GOD

BY AARON BOONE

Letters make up a large portion of the New Testament. 21 of the 27 books of the New Testament are in fact letters. Upon the delivery of these letters there was an urge to read them and share them with the surrounding congregations (Colossians 4:16). Within these letters were words of doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16-17), the very words man should live by. Seven letters that often pique the interest of readers are the seven letters in the book of Revelation.

The seven Churches of Asia, in the book of Revelation, find themselves with letters postmarked Heaven. While each letter is unique in that each Church needed different instructions, within all seven God repeats two important phrases, “I know your works” (Revelation 2:2, 2:9, 2:13, 2:19, 3:1, 3:8, 3:15), as well as “He who has an ear let him hear” (Revelation 2:7, 2:11, 2:17, 2:29, 3:6, 3:13, 3:22). If God desired for the Churches of Asia, no matter what unique circumstance they found themselves in, to read these two remarks we must realize the importance of them for us as well.

First, God’s acknowledgement of knowing our works is a source of encouragement to those who with humility are going about their Christian works. It comes with the understanding that the “Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly” (Matthew 6: 1-4). People often forget the importance of works in our Christian life. James wrote of our faith working with our works to make us complete and that “man is justified by works and not by faith only” (James 2:22-24). The death of Christ was so that He could “purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works” (Titus 2: 14) and yet we may be disqualified if our works are “abominable and disobedient” (Titus 1:16).

God follows up His statement of knowledge by commanding us to hear his words. It is God’s word that judges us. (John 12:48) Thus to live by any other standard than the Bible’s teaching is to miss the mark. We as Christians are “called,” that requires hearing, out of darkness and into His light (1 Peter 2:9). We are commanded to be “Transformed” (Romans 12:1-2), how? Not by letting God’s word enter one ear and go out the other, but by looking into the scriptures and obeying them (2 Corinthians 3: 18). The God who has given us eyes to see and ears to hear (Proverbs 20:12) is the same God who expects us to use them to have faith which comes by hearing (Romans 10:17) and to search the scriptures as we “work out [our] own salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12).

Throughout all of this we learn important truths that must be applied to our lives. We learn that God cares about our works and our obedience to His word. Even the two Churches who needed no correction, Smyrna and Philadelphia, God still commanded them to pay close attention to His words, because He knew their works. In a similar manner Paul speaks of his continual need to grow in that he had not already “attained

FIRST BE RECONCILED TO THY BROTHER

BY *HOMER A. GAY*

In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus distinguishes service to God from other service by showing that God requires a heart service. The laws of the land are against the action. Your soul may be a veritable hell, your mind may teem with black, licentious and passionate thoughts, and your memory may live amid tragical, bloody and rebellious scenes; but so long as the tongue is still, and the hand is guiltless, and the feet refrain-before the state and all her laws you are an unoffending person. But not so in our obedience to God. The slate says, "DO not commit murder," but Jesus says, "Whosoever shall say to his brother, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire." The state says, "DO not commit adultery"; but Jesus says, "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."

Hence, Jesus says, (Mat. 5:23, 24), "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way: first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." This, my brother, sister, comes to you and me. It is not, if we have something against our brother"; but, 'if thy brother hath aught against thee.' It is not what "the other fellow" has said or done; it is what I have done.

When we stand over the grave of someone, we are willing to remember only their good traits, and forgive their short-comings. But the remembrance of the wrongs we have done to them stays with us. And oh, how we wish we could now make amends for our wrong treatment.

Irving says: "If thou art a child, and hast ever added a sorrow to the soul and furrow to the over brow of an affectionate parent; if thou art a husband, and hast ever caused the fond bosom that ventured its whole happiness in thy arms, to doubt one moment of thy kindness or thy truth; if thou art a friend, and hast ever wronged, in thought, or word, or deed, the spirit that generously confided in thee; if thou art a lover, and last given one unmerited pang to that true heart which now lies cold and still beneath thy feet, then be sure that every unkind look, every ungracious word, every ungentle action, will come thronging back upon thy memory, and knocking dolefully at thy soul; then be

sure that thou wilt lie down sorrowing and repentant on the grave, and utter the unheard groan, and pour the unavailing tear, more deep, more bitter, because unheard and unavailing.

"Then weave thy chaplet of flowers, and strew the beauties of nature about the grave; console thy broken spirit, if thou canst, with these, yet futile tributes of regret; but take warning by the bitterness of this thy contrite affliction over the dead, and henceforth be more faithful and affectionate in the discharge of thy duties to the living."

If my brother has aught against me it is my duty to go to him and confess that wrong, saying, "I repent," and make amends. The brother will love me better and I will feel better after doing my duty. I have known brethren to worship together who would not speak to each other! I do not think God will accept such service. "Be first reconciled to thy brother." If we would only do this, then we could realize how pleasant it is for brethren to live together in peace.

Dear reader, this is a lesson for you; that unfriendly word, that unpleasant glance, that indifference with which you treated your brother, still stands against you; go to him and beg his forgiveness. Pay that little debt; set a good example for others by doing your own duty. (From the files of The Apostolic Way)

**IDENTIFYING MARKS OF THE
NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH, PART I**

BY *MELVIN BLALOCK*

Editor's note: Brother Melvin Blalock, from Cleburne, Texas has generously agreed to have some of his excellent articles published in the Old Paths Advocate. He has published a weekly newspaper article for many years where he works in the Cleburne and Weatherford areas and on Facebook in more recent years. Brother Melvin and his family are known and loved by many, and he is highly respected for his work's sake in the Kingdom of God. - Greg Gay

There are certain identifying marks of the church revealed in the New Testament. The church is a New Testament institution. Jesus during his ministry promised to build His church. He said to Peter, " upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates

of hades shall not prevail against it," Matt. 16:18. Peter had just confessed Him as the Son of God, Matt. 16:17. This great confession of truth is the rock upon which the church is built. This great confession is the confession that every believer verbalizes before becoming a member of His church. It is the essential confession prior to baptism, Mk. 16:16; Acts 8:36-37; Rom. 10:9-10.

It is important to remember that the church was yet in the future when Jesus gave this wonderful promise. The church becoming a reality depended upon his resurrection from the dead. Jesus said, "and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." Jesus overcame death and Hades, resulting in the establishment of His church. The Apostle Peter, preaching a sermon to a large Jewish audience, said that God had sworn an oath to King David, "that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption," Acts 2:30-32.

Jesus arose from the dead and His church was established. Christ sits upon His throne today and rules over His Spiritual kingdom, the church. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Colossians, and said of Jesus, "And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence," Col. 1:18. The one head of the church is Jesus Christ. He is the builder of it. The church does not belong to any man, or any group of men. Jesus, speaking to Peter called it "My church."

The church had its beginning in the first century A.D. It officially began on the first Pentecost following the resurrection of Jesus Christ, Acts 2:38-42, 47. One of the identifying marks of Christ's church is its beginning place. It began in Jerusalem. Any religious organization that traces its beginning to any other place on earth is not the church of the New Testament.

THE SUPREME COURT, SCHOOL PRAYER,
AND BIBLE READING
BY LARRY PARKER

Pages From The Past

If you are a regular user of Facebook, you have probably seen the Facebook meme that tells us the ills

of society are to be blamed on banning prayer from the public schools. The following article is from the July 1975 issue of the Old Paths Advocate. It was written by the late Dr. Larry Parker. Dr Parker was a long-time educator serving in the classroom, as well as working for the Georgia State Board of Education. In this article Dr. Parker offers a perspective on school prayer and bible reading that perhaps many people have never thought about. - Rick Martin

In the past several years no branch of American government has received as much criticism from "church people" as the judicial, and no part of that branch has been the object of such disdain as has the Supreme Court of the United States. The purpose of this article is not to try to remove that criticism; indeed, much of it is justified. The writer would like, however, to clarify some misconceptions and to state some well-deserved appreciation for some of the decisions of that august body of judges. Hopefully, these things will help Christians in fulfilling a bit better those commandments related in Romans 13 and other passages.

School Prayer-No decision by the Supreme Court has brought about such religious discussion as the one commonly called the denial of school prayer. Many, many times our brethren have openly criticized that decision from the pulpit, and I would like to set forth as clearly as possible the errors in the reporting of that decision. Following are brief summaries of the cases which led to the prayer decision.

A. Engel vs. Vital (United States Reports; Vol. 370, 1962) In this case, the Board of Regents of New York State decided to write a prayer which would be acceptable to any person and would be used in schools throughout the state. That prayer follows:

Almighty God, we acknowledge our dependence upon thee, and we beg thy blessings upon us, our parents, our teachers and our country.

In its decision on this case, the Supreme Court said in part, "(It is l ... no part of the business of government to compose official prayers for any group of the American people to recite as part of a religious purpose carried on by government." (p. 425)

B. Abingdon School District vs. Schempp (United States Reports, Vol. 374, 1963) The Supreme Court combined two very similar cases in this decision.

In those cases, the state or school district had passed laws requiring Bible reading and or prayer as a part of opening ceremonies each morning at school. One law required the reading of ten verses and the recitation of the "Lord's Prayer." The other required the reading of a whole chapter and recitation of the "Lord's Prayer" if so desired. In these situations, a student was not forced to take part; he could leave the classroom and stand in the hall during the service or ceremony. Also, it should be pointed out that no specific translation or version of the Bible was suggested or was required. Students could read from any one. Indeed, the Jewish Holy Scriptures and the Catholic Bible, along with the King James Version and others had been used. Parents who objected to the fact that their children were either singled out by going in the hall or subjected to the devotionals took the cases to the Supreme Court.

Obviously, the Court struck down as unconstitutional the laws requiring the Bible reading and prayer in the ceremony. However, the Court said, in part, "Nothing we have said here indicates that such (literary and historic) study of the Bible or of religions, when presented objectively as part of a secular program of education, may not be effected consistently with the First Amendment." (p. 225)

It was the decision in the cases above, reported in 1963, that caused a storm of protests over the fact that the Supreme Court had removed prayer and Bible reading from the schools. Can a Student Pray In School?- The answer is a resounding yes: that is, if the student is on praying terms with God. Since real prayer is a communication between a Christian human and God, there is no way that any court can remove that privilege. This is true especially when one realizes that prayer does not have to be oral and that no specific posture is required. May I say that the Supreme Court did not and cannot remove prayer. It did, and to my thinking rightly so, remove the sham which the above-mentioned laws required.

What About the Decisions? - I, for one, have grown to appreciate the court's decisions in this regard even though I was also a harsh critic at one time. Why? First, what the Court has tried to do is to bring about the complete separation of church and state. This, I believe, is a significant goal since laws require your children to attend school. In the years I have been in education, I

have seen very few teachers I would want discussing Bible with my children, if I had any. It is so difficult to discuss God's Word and not be personal. One's opinions slip in much too easily. For that reason, it is good and reasonable that Bible teaching in God's plan is to be, done in the home and church, and not in public schools.

Second, prayer, to be effective, must be sincere, from the heart and fervent (James 5: 16, etc.). If the Board of Regents or any other body writes the prayer for students to mouth every day, that prayer will not meet the requirements. For students to recite the "Lord's Prayer" daily certainly is not effective prayer.

Third, a Christian cannot honestly pray the "Lord's, Prayer in its standard form since it asks for the kingdom to come.

What About Bible Reading? - If I were a parent, I would not want my child subjected to just any version or translation of the Bible. Some of those referred to above are certainly not wholly acceptable to us as Christians. I would not want some person showing mockery of the Scripture through voice intonation and facial expressions as can so effectively be done.

Christians have the responsibility to teach the Bible to our children at home and in the church. We should never expect the school to do that for us.

Conclusion - In view of the above, I am appreciative of the Court's decisions. May I say for the sake of my readers that students can pray in school any time if they can pray at all. Many times, in the course of my day I pause to ask God's help and guidance. Young people would certainly find it beneficial to pray often at school and in other places.

As I said at the beginning, I am not trying to remove criticism from the Supreme Court; it deserves much of what it gets. I do hope, however, that this will clarify the situation regarding school prayer and Bible reading. Note: Those interested in more detailed information can read the entire case summaries and decisions in the United States Reports, Vols. 370 and 374. These can be found in any college or university library which is a depository for government documents. Many law offices have them as well.

THE LIVING GOD ...continued from page one

and all He means to us, that's why He is worthy of our faith and allegiance!

Way back in April of 1966, religious people were upset when these words appeared in big, bold letters on the front cover of Time Magazine -- "IS GOD DEAD?" An article introduced people to a so-called theologian by the name of William Hamilton II who became the face of what became known as the "Death of God movement." Unable to reconcile in his mind the existence of God with evil, pain and suffering in the world, he argued that the concept of God had run its course in human history and there was a need to "redefine Christianity as a possibility without the presence of God." How foolish and arrogant can one man be? Here we are in 2022, some 56 years later, but where is Mr. Hamilton and Time Magazine? The answer is that the periodical is no longer the influential magazine it once was and the so-called theologian is dead and gone from the world. Please get this point: William Hamilton II died in 2012 at the age of 87, but here we are today still worshipping "the living God" and proclaiming the gospel of Christ!

A GOD OF ACTION

The fact that He is "the living God" implies that our heavenly Father is a God of action, meaning that He watches over us, hears our prayers and gives us what we need. Sometimes the main point of this expression has to do with making a contrast between idols and Jehovah. We've already noticed how Paul said the Thessalonians had "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God" (1 Thess. 1:9). Idolatry, of course, involves the worship of false gods that have no real existence, a shameful practice the children of Israel often engaged in (1 Cor. 10:7), and they were sorely rebuked for the worthlessness and futility of such conduct. Psa. 135:15-17 says, "The idols of the heathen are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not; They have ears, but they hear not; neither is there any breath in them." The point is that idols possess no life or intelligence, just like those who "trust in them" are lacking understanding and spiritual discernment (verse 18).

However, those who trust in "the living God" realize

there are benefits and blessings that come to them as a result. After all, "the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers" (1 Pet. 3:12). We willingly place ourselves into the hands of God because "the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment" (2 Pet. 2:9). We believe that God has an active interest in His children: "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" (Matt. 7:11) The fact that He is "the living God" is truly a source of comfort and encouragement to keep trusting in Him.

IMPORTANCE OF THE CHURCH

Paul wrote to Timothy that he needed to know how to behave himself "in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15). Although many people downplay the importance of the Lord's church, claiming that membership in it is unessential to salvation, the Bible teaches otherwise. The use of the expression, "church of the living God," indicates that it is under divine protection and will prevail in the end. "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved," the writer assures us in Heb. 12:28, "let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear." The church is the spiritual body of Christ that receives life, direction and ultimate victory from its head. "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body" (Eph. 5:23) Dear soul, you can become a member of this glorious body by simply obeying the gospel, just like they did on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:38-41), and then you must do your best to be faithful unto the end (Rev. 2: 10). The most blessed and wonderful promise to the Christian is that some day we will have a home in that "city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem" (Heb. 12:22).

SIGNS OF WISDOM ...continued from page two

have doctrinal matters in mind here. When the truth is at stake Jude tells us we "... should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." (Jude 3) Come what may, we must always contend for what is taught in the Bible, no matter what it is or who it offends. However, it has been our observation through

the years that some of the difficulties confronting us are not matters of doctrine at all. It is often a person who wants their way and cannot be at peace until they achieve that goal. It is a sad fact that some have trouble getting along with others.

James also insists that wisdom from above will be “gentle.” Somehow, it just seems natural that a truly wise person will also be gentle. This word is said to also indicate a patient person. If you have tried to deal with an individual who is not patient, but impatient, you know how frustrating that can be. A gentle, patient person is a joy to work with in every way. We all love such an individual. One who quickly becomes angry will usually spoil all attempts to create peace in any situation.

Have you worked with those who are easily entreated? This refers to one who is approachable about any topic. If two have a disagreement, the one who is easily entreated will often be the first to agree to a peaceful resolution. Not that they won’t stand for their standards. However, their loving attitude will not allow them to be stubborn and difficult with which to reason. If they happen to be at fault in some way, they will easily see that for themselves. Stubborn and unreasonable isn’t his or her nature. Church difficulties can often quickly be resolved when such a great person is involved.

Then, James mentions “full of mercy and good fruits.” Have you had the unfortunate experience of trying to bring about peace between those who simply have no mercy toward those with whom a difficulty exists? If so, you have first-hand knowledge of how frustrating is the lack of mercy. True wisdom will expose itself among brethren, if indeed it exists. They will exhibit compassion toward those with whom they are involved in some sort of disagreement. How disappointing to hear a brother remark with reference to another brother having heartaches: “Well, he brought it on himself!” Mercy literally means to have compassion for the unfortunate. Jesus said: “Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.” (Matthew 5:7) For a brother or sister to be compassionate toward those who are in the wrong, is to show a basic mark of real Christianity. This is not to say we should excuse wrong doing, not at all, but we feel compassion for them. This will cause us to try to bring about a resolution to any problem, because mercy reveals itself in our actions. Jesus said that a good tree brings forth good fruit. (Matthew 7:17) As Brother

Homer Gay used to say, “We are fruit inspectors.” His meaning was that we can know whether a man is a good tree (Christian) or a bad one by the life (fruit) we see them living. A good life is an indication of wisdom from above.

“Without partiality, and without hypocrisy.” There seems to be two meanings to the word “partiality” found in the original Greek word. However, there should never be any form of partiality allowed within the mind of a sincere Christian. That is just not what we should be. One of the meanings would refer to a person who might be tempted to treat one person differently than another because of social standing, etc., and the other meaning refers to one who wavers in what he says or does, depending upon whom he may be with at the time. With either meaning being accepted, it is not something a Christian should allow within himself. We should never show preferential treatment to anyone.

“Regarding hypocrisy: there just isn’t any way to characterize such a deplorable trait in a positive manner. Unfortunately, we can be tempted to act one way when in fact we actually feel a completely different way. Probably, we all realize the original term of “hypocrite” referred to one who was an actor and played the part of someone he was not. This is sometimes a problem with church members though it should never be the case. For instance, a critic is sometimes a hypocrite because he or she may be ashamed of the real reasons they are critical of another. Judas was such a man. He criticized that the ointment was used to anoint the Lord when it could have been sold for a large amount and the money given to the poor. (John 12: 3-6) John himself tells us that Judas cared not for the poor but was the one who carried the bag (treasurer) and was a thief. So, his real reason for the criticism was that he had hoped to sell the ointment and have the money for himself! Obviously, he would have been embarrassed to reveal his real motive so he made up a reason which was totally false. Likely, such hypocrisy can still exist. Before we criticize our brother or sister, we should ask ourselves if our motive is pure. We have known teachers to condemn others for their lack of attendance during their lesson on Sunday morning and then themselves fail to come back that evening.

Wisdom from above will be obvious among us when it does exist for real. May the Lord bless us all with such wisdom, and we pray that He will also help us to

utilize it all the time. Let us be careful how we behave toward one another, let us be mindful of how damaging a careless and thoughtless remark may be upon our brother in Christ. Also, let us ever be mindful of the very real possibility that we will be held accountable before our Lord in the final Day!

Think on these things. DLK

Bonds of Matrimony

BAKER - COZBY

In the evening of June 17, 2022, at the University of the Pacific in Stockton, California, Landon Baker and Emilee Cozby were united in marriage. A large crowd had gathered to witness the wedding in the beautiful chapel on campus. I was especially honored to have been asked to perform the ceremony. Both Landon and Emilee are members of the Stockton congregation and are faithful Christians. Landon is our eldest Grandson, the son of Robert and Kristina Baker and Emilee is the daughter of Anthony and Stefani Cozby. The wedding took place on the same date as mine and Pat's wedding 60 years ago to the day. It also took place at the same location where we were married by Don McCord in 1962. Emilee wore the same wedding gown Pat wore 60 years earlier and was also a very beautiful bride. A reception was held after the ceremony at the Stockton church building. We pray the Lord to grant them many years of happiness as they begin their lives together. They plan to make the Stockton congregation their home church. - Don L. King

Field Report

Melvin Blalock, 214 Pearl St. Cleburne, TX 76031, melvinblaock@sbcglobal.net. We have had a rewarding summer in the Lord's work. Our summer began with our annual visit to San Angelo, TX the last Sunday in May. It is always good to be with these brethren. They have helped to support our work for close to forty years. The very next week we began a meeting at Cleburne with Brother Mike Criswell. Mike did a wonderful job, speaking to good crowds at most services. We so appreciate this evangelist and his dedication to preaching the gospel. Following the close of our

meeting on June 5, we climbed into my van and began our drive to Alaska. My oldest daughter, Melanie and my granddaughters, and my wife, Alberta accompanied us on this trip. Melanie did most of the driving, and we could never have done it without her. The trip to Alaska was a dream vacation for which we had spent a great deal of time planning. The entire trip amounted to about ten-thousand miles. One of the highlights of our trip was our visit with the church at Kenai, Alaska. We worshiped with these good brethren for two Sundays while we were there. The brethren there are so kind and hospitable. They were kind enough to invite me to preach for them for the four services we were there. They were so receptive to our visit and our preaching. I cannot say enough good things about these brethren and their dedication to the Lord. Should you have the opportunity to visit this congregation you will be blessed. We were overwhelmed with the beauty and grandeur of Alaska. We wonder how anyone who beholds this magnificent scenery, including the wildlife, could doubt that there is a God who created everything. Shortly after our return from Alaska, Brother Don King began a meeting in Weatherford, Texas. I work with this congregation, as well as the Cleburne congregation. We were able to attend most of the meeting. Don did his usual good job of preaching. He was accompanied by his wife, Pat. We view her as a great asset to Don's work in the gospel. Our meeting was beset with an uptick of Covid in this area and so it did hinder our crowds, but we enjoyed a good meeting. It was my privilege to furnish them with a ride to the airport for their departure. I immensely enjoyed my association with Don and Pat. We treasure them both for their devotion to the work. This past Lord's Day my grandson, Bryson and I visited the congregation at Hoyte, near Cameron, TX. I have preached many times over the years for this congregation. Their hospitality and their love for the Lord is admirable. As you can see we have had a good summer laboring among our brethren. May God bless and keep the faithful everywhere.

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WALKS THROUGH THE BIBLE...

THE HIGH COST OF LOW LIVING (BECAUSE OF MANESSEH)

By JERRY DICKINSON

“Then the LORD said to me, ‘Even if Moses and Samuel stood before Me, My mind would not be favorable toward this people. Cast them out of my sight and let them go forth. And if they shall say to you, where should we go? Then you will tell them thus says the LORD: Such as for death, to death; And such as for sword, to the sword; And such as for the famine, to the famine; And such as for the captivity, to the captivity. And I will appoint over them four forms of destruction, says the LORD: the sword to slay, the dogs to drag, the birds of the heavens and the beasts of the earth to devour and destroy. I will hand them over to trouble, to all kingdoms of the earth, because of Manasseh the son of Hezekiah, king of Judah, for what he did in Jerusalem.’” (Jeremiah 15:1-4)

That is a perfect description of the high cost of low living! Jeremiah describes in horrific detail the calamity coming on Jerusalem because of their repeated sin and refusal to repent. Jeremiah prophesied in the last days of the kingdom of Judah and his scorching words tell of the complete devastation which will be wrought by the Babylonian invaders. It is God’s judgment about to fall on them and the results will be devastating. Reading his words we might think he is being figurative in his description of the coming destruction, however he describes literally what will happen.

When he uses the word “sword” he means sword. Thousands would perish by the sword of the Babylonians. When he says “famine” he refers to the Babylonian siege where thousands would starve and would drop dead in the streets. When he talks about “dogs to drag”, he refers to the dogs who would drag off the dead to devour their bodies. And the “birds and beasts” would literally devour and destroy those who perished. Those who survived would be carried off in chains to be captives in Babylon. What an awful cost for continued disobedience to God and stubbornly ignoring the voice of the prophets, especially the urgent warning of Jeremiah.

Did you notice, however, the name of the man on whom God placed special responsibility and blame for the coming destruction? Because of Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah, says the Lord, and what he did in Jerusalem I will hand them over to trouble. That is an amazing indictment. Manasseh is blamed, especially, for the doom of Jerusalem. Who was Manasseh? He was the fourteenth king of Judah, the son of one of the greatest and best kings who ever reigned in Jerusalem, Hezekiah. He reigned 55 years and for the greater part of that time he was the most wicked man who ever reigned in Jerusalem. He is accused of “seducing Judah and Jerusalem to do more evil than the nations whom the LORD had destroyed before the children of Israel.”

His wicked and pernicious deeds are recorded in 2 Kings 21 and 2 Chronicles 33. He rebuilt the high places (which his father Hezekiah had destroyed) where heathen sacrifices were offered. He constructed altars to Baal all around Jerusalem, and he had the audacity to place a wooden statue of Asherah (a pornographic image of a female fertility goddess) in the Temple itself! He burned his son as an offering to Molech a heathen deity, and he consulted mediums and wizards and worshipped the host of heaven the Bible says. He also filled Jerusalem with violence from one end to the other, shedding the blood of righteous men who would not go along with his corruptions. In Hebrews 11 the writer talks about some who were sawed asunder because of their faithfulness. Jewish tradition says that the prophet Isaiah was sawed in half by a wooden saw - and Manasseh they claim is the man who did it. Can you believe that? He killed Isaiah, thus filling up his cup of corruption and sin. Don’t forget that the record says he seduced the people to go along with him and thus they were complicit and guilty as well. No wonder, then, God declares I am punishing my people “because of Manasseh.”

There is one caveat in the story of Manasseh. God allowed the Assyrians to capture him and he spent some time in fetters in prison. While in prison, Manasseh no doubt remembered his good father Hezekiah, and also Hezekiah’s God. He even repented and prayed, asking God to restore him to the throne, and the Lord, in his amazing grace, heard his prayer. He was released and returned to reign for a last few years in Jerusalem. He even tried to undo all the evil he had done. He tore down the altars to Baal and removed the statue of Asherah from the Temple and tried to convince the Jews to return to true service to God. He failed! Miserably failed! The people he had seduced were too far gone. After his death his son went right back to the wicked ways of his father, and in just a few short years Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians and the utter destructions predicted by Jeremiah came to pass. What a stark example of the high cost of low living!

One last note needs to be heard from this tragic story. As bad as Manasseh was he repented. He even tried to undo the evil he had done but he could not. He went to his grave knowing that he had caused the degradation on so many souls. What an awful thing to have on your conscience when you leave this world! I knew a man years ago who quit the church when his kids were young. They grew up outside the influence of the gospel and the church. After his children were grown he repented and returned to the Lord and was a very faithful Christian. He would cry as he told me he could not get his children interested in the church. “It’s my fault they are lost!” he would lament. I told him there was nothing he could do to change the past and he needed to pray for them and be an example for them. That was my advice to him, but he was right. He was the reason they were lost. The sad fact stares us in the face in the story of Manasseh, and those many who follow his path. The high cost of low living - indeed!