

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 ordinances 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 for your souls’ (Jer. 6:16). ‘And they that shall 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’ (Isaiah 58:12).

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HOLY GROUND

By *Wayne Fussell*

Moses had to leave Egypt in a hurry. Pharaoh was out to kill him because he did what he thought was right in defending one of his people. He went from being a prince in Egypt to being a shepherd in Midian. But one day he had an experience that changed his life. He stood on “holy ground.” He saw a bush that was burning, but it was not consumed. In curiosity, he said, “I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush does not burn” (Exodus 3:3). Out of the bush, the Lord spoke to him, saying, “Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground” (v. 5). Much could be said about this incident, but we are mesmerized by the fact that Moses was standing on “holy ground.” Is it possible for us to stand on holy ground today? I believe that it is, and in fact, it is necessary for the Christian.

Why was this called holy ground? The simple answer is that God was there. Anywhere God is, is holy ground! The place where Moses saw the burning bush was called “the mountain of God.” This is where eventually God would talk to Moses “face to face,” and where He would deliver the law that would govern Israel for 1500 years. But on this occasion, God was there, and it was holy ground.

Every time Christians meet together to worship God, the place where they worship becomes holy ground because Jesus is there. Jesus declared in Matthew 18:20, “For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.” Jesus is present in the worship assembly. A failure to recognize the presence of the Lord in the assembly makes a failure of the

worship and of the worshiper also. This is what makes worship especially meaningful. Jesus lets us know that He participates with us in the communion. He told His disciples when He instituted the Supper, “I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom” (Matthew 26:29). He gathers with us about that Table, and *that* is holy ground.

Jesus told the woman at the well, “the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father...But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:21, 23-24). Anywhere people gather to worship God in Jesus’ name becomes holy ground. It might be in a church building or in a cave, like the early persecuted Christians.

So anywhere man meets God is holy ground. It was here on the backside of the desert in the land of Midian that the Lord spoke to Moses, and Moses listened. It was here that the Lord introduced Himself, and Moses really became acquainted with the Almighty. It was here Moses learned of God’s interest in His people. It was here Moses and God communed. Anywhere God and man fellowship is holy ground.

In Genesis 28, Jacob stopped at a certain place. The night came, and he dreamed. In his dream he saw a ladder that reached to heaven and angels ascending and descending on it. The next morning, he called the place “Bethel,” which literally means “house of God.” He exclaimed, “Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it...How awesome is this place! This is

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none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!” (Genesis 28:16-17). Any place God lets down His ladder is a Bethel – a place where we meet God and commune with Him.

We meet God when we come to Him in obedience to His gospel. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6). We come to Him when we believe in Christ, repent of our sins, confess the sweet name of Jesus, and are baptized into Christ (Galatians 3:27). We are then in Him, and He is in us.

We commune with God through His word—He talks to us through His word, and we say, “speak Lord, your servant is listening.” We commune with Him in prayer—we talk to Him. He speaks us in His word, and we speak to Him in prayer. Peter declared, “For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their prayers” (1 Peter 3:12). Scholars tell us that it literally means that He bends right down into our prayers, anxious to commune with us. (Here He “lets down His ladder.”) It behooves us to study His word daily and humble ourselves in prayer.

The Lord’s Supper is called “communion” in 1 Corinthians 10:16. We have just read that Jesus communes with us each Lord’s Day as we eat the Supper. We commune with the Lord in the Lord’s Supper, and we commune with Him in service. The Scriptures tell us that we are “laborers together with God” (1 Corinthians 3:9). We are not alone in Christian service. God works with us, in us, and by us. So wherever we are should be holy ground. We should recognize that God is with us and we are with God.

The burning bush incident suggests that it becomes holy ground when we realize our real purpose in life. Moses, until this time, thought mostly of himself. Now his life has new meaning—a holy purpose. God challenged Moses to be a deliverer of His people. God said, “Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt” (Exodus 3:10). Here Moses entered into a close partnership with God in accomplishing a divine purpose. Here something happened that changed the whole course of his life—and history, too.

When you see your real purpose in life, it can change the whole course of your life and those around you. Whatever purpose you might have had before, you have now a fuller purpose—whatever meaning your life had, you have a higher meaning—a spiritually oriented meaning. As you fulfill your God-ordained purpose, you are treading on holy ground.

What is that goal or purpose? God said in Isaiah 43:7, “I have created him (man) for my glory...” This is our God ordained purpose—to glorify, worship, magnify the Lord. Where do we do that? The Bible says we do it as a part of the Lord’s church. “Unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end” (Ephesians 3:21). It is so important that we become members of the Lord’s church and work in it for His glory. Your salvation depends on it. Jesus said, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).

Don’t leave God out of your plans, your goals, your purposes. Keep Him in the center of your thinking, planning, purposing, preparation, decisions, desires, and dreams. Consult with Him, lean on Him, ask His help, take Him as a partner. Then wherever you go will be holy ground. The religion of Christ is not confined to one spot, nor to a particular hour. You take your religion wherever you go. Everywhere you go can be holy ground, if God is there and you are with God.

Paul urged the Roman Christians, “present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service” (Romans 12:1). The word “present” is a priestly term which certainly accords with the act of “sacrifice.” God was present in the Tabernacle and Temple when the Old Testament priests were offering their sacrifices. The place was called “holy” and “most holy” (Exodus 26:33), so it was holy ground. Christians compose a “royal priesthood” (1 Peter 2:9) who daily offer their sacrifices to God. Wherever we are living the sacrificial life of a Christian is holy ground.

Let us internalize this great truth that the ground on which we stand can be holy ground if God is there, and we are fulfilling our purpose in glorifying Him, and offering our lives as daily sacrifices. What a grand privilege for the Christian to

live all his life on holy ground! We occupy the best real estate in the world. Wfusell1@comcast.net

Editorial

DEATH: WHAT THEN? (Part 1)

By Don L. King

This is a topic many find uncomfortable. However, it is Bible teaching that there certainly is a life beyond the grave; a state of awareness, or consciousness, which continues after death. Some believe a person merely goes to sleep at death and does not wake up until the judgement. Some may choose to believe this because it tends to delay considering judgement for a while. Others may simply have such thoughts because they have never studied the Scriptures. The Bible gives us quite a bit of information, and we will briefly notice some of it.

One passage that is always interesting to me is found in Matthew 22: 31-32: “But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.” The next verse says the multitude (His audience) were astonished at his doctrine (teaching, dlk), Likely, none of them had ever considered such a wonderful thought. Certainly, they all knew that God was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but they had not considered that He *still* was their God! Those men had been dead for many years. When Jesus reminded them that God was not the God of the dead but of the living, that forced them to consider something entirely new. This meant that those three men were still alive somewhere in another place than this earth! That had to be if God was not the God of the dead but of the living. What does this mean for us? Simply this: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were still alive somewhere though they had died physically. So, their spirits were still living; and the same would have to be true of all of men everywhere! When we die physically, we continue to be alive and aware in another world! That can be comforting, or it can be frightening!

Of course, the passage in Ecclesiastes 9:5 immediately comes to the mind of most Bible students,

which tells us that the "...dead know not anything..." That would seem to negate what Jesus taught the Sadducees in Matthew 22:31, 32. However, Ecclesiastes 9:6 informs us that the dead know nothing that happens "... under the sun." That is easily understood. For example: I have made nearly 40 trips to the Philippines beginning in 1981. When I went over there in the early days of the work, we didn't have cell phones, and I knew nothing of what my family was doing in the USA. However, I certainly was conscious and aware of what was going on in the Philippines because that is where I was. The dead cease to know what is going on under the sun, (this life), but they obviously know what is going on where they are because they are still alive and aware in the spirit world.

The Bible tells us that the body without the spirit is dead (James 2:26). However, the Scriptures never tell us the spirit without the body is dead. Obviously, our physical bodies cannot survive without our spirits living within us. That gives us our physical function in this world. However, if our physical bodies die, the spirit continues to live because it is immortal and eternal. Ecclesiastes 12:7 informs us when we die our bodies return to the dust of the earth, but our spirits return unto God who gave it. There is an old true saying that goes like this: "There *was* a time when you were not, but there will never *be* a time when you are not." Before you were born, you simply didn't exist. Now that you do exist, you will always exist somewhere! Uncomfortable with that? Perhaps, but it is a principle that is Biblically taught, and we must consider it as a fact. There are several other passages which teach the truth of what we have just written, such as Luke 16:19-31; Matthew 17:1-8; and Revelation 6:9-11, among others perhaps.

We will write more next month, Lord willing. However, it is hard to understand how people can read and understand the nearness of Almighty God, yet fail to live as though they do. How can brethren fail to get involved in the Lord's work if they understand what He does for us on a regular basis? Sometimes, a person may get quite a scare and for a while be more faithful to the Lord, but in time seem to forget how good the Lord has been to them and return to their old ways. We are living in a time when too many pay too little attention to the church and our responsibilities.

They don't seem to be bothered by church services, or even a gospel meeting if some event comes up they want to attend. I'm reminded just here of a good brother who had a heart attack one evening, which happened to be an evening the church met for services. The ambulance took him to the hospital over his objections. He didn't want to miss the services. As he went out the door on a stretcher, he was heard to say: "Oh my, what will the Lord think?" That incident has come to mind so many times over the years when I notice those who are absent because of some sporting event, etc., and I have wondered, "What does the Lord think?" We are pretty thoughtless sometimes. Think on these things. DLK (More next month)

THINGS TO CONSIDER ABOUT THE CHURCH: TERMS OF ENTRY

By David Griffin

The churches of Christ are a distinctive group in the modern age for a number of reasons, but one in particular is our stance on how sinners become members of the body of Christ. Most evangelical denominations (which, by the way, do *not* include churches of Christ) teach that sinners become members of the body of Christ by faith alone. A common mantra across many evangelical denominations is this: "Salvation by faith alone, in Christ alone!" Accordingly, the teaching that other things, including water baptism, (in addition to faith) is essential to salvation sets the churches of Christ apart from most other religious groups. But why do churches of Christ insist on such a thing?

The book of Acts is not only a narrative of the "Acts of the Apostles" but is also an inspired account of the way in which the apostles applied the Great Commission (as it is sometimes called). The Great Commission is laid out, in part, in the words of Jesus to the apostles in Matthew 28:19-20, "¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (NKJV, also used throughout this article).

Ten days later, on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ, the apostle Peter preached to the huge crowd that was gathered in Jerusalem

(Acts 2). His preaching convicted many of them of their sins. We know this because “they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Men and brethren, what shall we do?’” (v. 37, emphasis mine, deg). The expression “cut to the heart” coupled with the tone of urgency in their question indicates that these people were convinced of the truth of Peter’s words; to put it another way, they “believed.” By posing the question, “What shall we do?” they indicate, as the modern expression states it, that they “came forward for salvation,” that is, they “heeded the invitation,” so to speak.

Peter’s response to them is significant. He did not tell the people anything like modern evangelical preachers tell their audiences today. He said, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (v. 38). Modern audiences under the preaching of evangelical pastors and evangelists will *never* hear this response. More commonly, they hear things like this: “Baptism cannot save you, but you need to receive Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior. This means you must believe on Him and put your trust in Him. Please pray the Sinner’s Prayer with me.” One reads the book of Acts in vain to find even one case of conversion of the many recorded there in which the apostles or any other first century preacher ever uttered such words to sinners seeking salvation. The account in Acts 2 then summarizes the people’s response in verse 41: “Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.” “Added to them” refers to their being added to the body of Christ, that is, becoming members of the church.

Depending on how you count them, there are at least nine detailed cases of conversion described in the book of Acts, including the one at Pentecost just described. There are a few additional “summary statements” of conversion, but the more detailed accounts are as follows.

We do not have space in this short article to analyze in detail all nine of these cases, but I will summarize briefly. In Acts 2, even though the words “believe” or “have faith” do not occur, the people there were “cut to the heart” and responded positively to Peter’s admonition. Thus, we can

know that they “believed.” Then Peter told those who believed to “repent and be baptized for the remission of sins.” The people complied (v 41). Next, in the case of the Samaritans in Acts 8, the people “believed” and “were baptized” (v. 12). The Nobleman from Ethiopia “believed,” as well as confessed his belief, and was immediately “baptized” (Acts 8:37-38). Saul of Tarsus certainly believed in Jesus the moment the Lord revealed himself to Saul on the Damascus road. We can also tell by Saul’s subsequent behavior (fasting and praying for three days!) that he was indeed repentant. Yet later the Lord sent Ananias to tell him, “Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (22:16). Then “he arose and was baptized” (9:18). If Saul was saved on the Damascus road when he believed, why did Ananias tell him to be baptized and wash away his sins? Next is the case of the gentile Cornelius and his household in chapter 10. All indications in this account of conversion point to the fact that as Peter preached, Cornelius and his household believed the message. Then Peter “commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord” (10:48). Then in Acts 16, Lydia’s “heart was opened” and “she and her household were baptized” (vs 14-15). In the same chapter, the Philippian jailor believed and was baptized “immediately” (v 33). When Paul preached in the great city of Corinth in Acts 18, the account tells us “many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized” (v 8). Finally, in the city of Ephesus, Paul preached to a group of people who had already been baptized with the baptism of John the Baptist. When Paul learned that they had only partial knowledge of the fully-revealed gospel, he taught them further, with the result that “they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus” (19:5).

When we summarize all these accounts, we discover that when the apostles carried out the Great Commission given by Jesus, they essentially told the people to believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, to repent of their sins, to confess him as the Son of God, and to be baptized “for the remission of sins”—that is, to “wash away their sins.” In the New Testament, these steps were the entry into the New Testament church (Galatians 3:27). There is no record in the New Testament of the evangelical practice that people are “added to the body of Christ by faith only,” and later should be baptized into a local denominational church.

In all these accounts, it is remarkable that the one thing that evangelicals constantly tell people is not necessary—baptism—is the one thing that is mentioned by name every single time! Now, I am aware that evangelicals do baptize people. They often say, “We are not against baptism.” However, they do not baptize for “the remission of sins.” They usually describe baptism as something you do because “God for Christ’s sake has already forgiven me of my sins.” Or, it is just an “outward symbol of the inner reality” of the forgiveness you already have. I challenge any evangelical to produce the passage where baptism is ever thus described in the New Testament!

Moreover, for the evangelical, baptism is not at all a matter of urgency. This is evident in their delay for an extended time before baptizing their converts. I recently had a study with a young man from an evangelical “non-denominational” church who had, as he put it, “given my life to Christ” about a year prior to our study. He also said that “Christ has completely changed my life!” I read Acts 2:38 to him and asked if anyone had ever told him what Peter said and if he had ever been baptized. He response was, “No, I have not heard that, and I have not been baptized.” I told him that when I study with people who want to obey the gospel, I baptize them “without delay.” He then said he had never heard of such a thing! However, if he had read the book of Acts more closely, minus his “evangelical glasses,” he *would have* heard of such a thing. In spite of the fact that evangelicals constantly affirm their belief in baptism, here is a case where baptism obviously is not important to the leadership of this young man’s non-denominational church. In his case, they have a year-old convert yet to be baptized! And I suspect that this may not be all that uncommon.

In all the conversion cases in Acts, the persons who responded in obedience were added to the body of Christ. These are the “terms of entry” into the New Testament church. No man today, no matter how popular, no matter how sincere and dedicated to his cause, has the authority to change that. davidgriffin75@gmail.com



MIRACLES TODAY

By Greg Gay

Around the world many sincere people believe miracles still happen today. In recent trips to Africa and India, there were many questions about miracles, especially from individuals who are just starting to learn about Jesus and his Church.

False teachers who prey upon the innocent appear willing to do anything and promise everything, seeking to boost their popularity and fill their bank accounts. In the first century, Peter wrote: “But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words...” (2 Peter 2:1-3, NKJV).

Exploitation with a combination of covetousness and deceptive words is especially prevalent in religion. This is true in affluent countries, but it is especially true in the poorest countries in the world where individuals in extreme poverty are victims of smooth talking shysters.

“No one like that really exists,” we may think? In my travels in the last year, I met a man who said he had been hired when he was younger to pretend to be blind by various faith healers who would come to his town. He was not the only one hired to lie. Investigations have proven things like this happen all over the world. Again and again attendees are duped when “greeters” carefully ask questions and then pass on the information so the “healer” can appear to know things that could have only come through a miraculous message from God.

I have also met a man who claims to have the power to raise people from the dead. He offers healing services, including exorcisms. He offered to sell a child of our members for a large sum of money, from which he would take a commission, if they were interested. Not surprisingly, it seems everything he did involved money. He sincerely inquired if I would like to give him some money. I declined. One would think such a man could

produce a fish with a coin in its mouth to provide his needs, if he is truly as powerful as he claims. I was glad to answer a question from him that allowed me to introduce the church, how to be saved, and then to enter into a brief discussion about how miracles have stopped long ago in this last dispensation of time (1 Corinthians 13:8-13).

Like Simon the sorcerer, if this individual listens and obeys the gospel, he will have to cease thinking he is “some great one” (Acts 8:9) and start over as a newborn spiritual baby to learn how to serve God without deception.

As we learn from the scriptures, miracles did exist in the first century of the church. The quality of miracles then sent a clear message. God was working through individuals to perform supernatural actions with no possibility of deception. An example is when Peter and John healed the lame man who had never walked.

“Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. And a certain man lame from his mother’s womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms from those who entered the temple; who, seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked for alms. And fixing his eyes on him, with John, Peter said, ‘Look at us.’ So he gave them his attention, expecting to receive something from them. Then Peter said, ‘Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.’ And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them—walking, leaping, and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God. Then they knew that it was he who sat begging alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him” (Acts 3:1-10, NKJV). What a great miracle! He who had never walked was able to get up, walk, and jump as he praised God.

Notice the person with this issue was known by others in the immediate vicinity where the healing occurred. In most instances of miracles in the Bible, the issue prompting the miracle was clearly observable in their body or in behavior, such

as in demon possession, and known by others.

No known cure existed for the issues that prompted first century miracles. In the example given of Acts 3, there was no known cure for the paralysis of the man who had never walked. Multiple credible witnesses could testify of the man’s paralysis and then of his ability to walk. In Acts 3, many who lived there had knowledge he had never walked, not even once in his life.

The healing was immediate. First-century healings were never accompanied by a warm up show or hysterics on the part of the performer of the miracle. There was no stage full of singers and musicians. No one was shouting or twitching. Peter just said a few words and reached out his hand. The lame man took Peter’s hand and immediately stood up.

Here was the reaction of the crowd to the healing of the man who had never walked: “Now as the lame man who was healed held on to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the porch which is called Solomon’s, greatly amazed. So when Peter saw it, he responded to the people: ‘Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go. But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses. And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all” (Acts 3:11-16, NKJV).

Nothing in the account is about the faith of the man healed. He was only requesting money, nothing more. He did not know Peter and John as Apostles of Jesus. It is not the lame man’s faith in God that allowed him to walk. It was the power of Jesus, working through the faith of Peter and John.

Jesus’ miracles were many, all without the possibility of any deception: “Jesus departed from

there, skirted the Sea of Galilee, and went up on the mountain and sat down there. Then great multitudes came to Him, having with them the lame, blind, mute, maimed, and many others; and they laid them down at Jesus' feet, and He healed them. So the multitude marveled when they saw the mute speaking, the maimed made whole, the lame walking, and the blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel" (Matthew 15:29-31, NKJV).

When we read about the miracles of Jesus, notice the calmness of the scenes. By contrast, today's so-called miracle workers work themselves and their audience into an emotional state where their so-called healings can take place. The person doing the healing may strike the person to be healed in some way by pushing them or hitting them. Then, the person being healed may fall to the floor or into the arms of waiting attendants, apparently overcome with the power of the healer. Later, if for "some" reason the healing does not last, or does not happen as hoped, *the faith of the person being healed* is usually blamed.

Recently in my travels, a man who was drunk came into the place where we were meeting to study. When he found out I was a preacher from United States he wanted to meet me to share his problem. He wanted me to understand he had paid for healing to cast out the demons responsible for his drinking. Since he was drunk he knew he had been cheated. Of course he had been cheated. Hopefully he recalled his opinion the next day to stay away from the person who is taking his money, but not helping his problem.

A healing service I recently watched online was of a very experienced faith healer, as she supposedly received revelations from God for what was wrong with the individuals in her audience. She prayed for things like body pain, knee pain, neck pain, and issues with internal organs. Everyone repeated her frequent sayings of "Hallelujah" and "Praise the Lord," but there was nothing that could easily be verified as a genuine miracle.

She spoke much about "releasing your faith," whatever that is supposed to mean, as if not doing so could prevent miracles from occurring. She also began speaking in a repeated gibberish that would be described in some religions as

"speaking in tongues," as if that made what she was pretending to do in healing more valid.

By contrast with the healing "show" I saw online, the miracle of Acts 3 was a calm occasion. There was no shouting on the part of Peter and John, no warm up music, no one to excite the crowd, and no gibberish as if God was saying special things only the healer could understand. There was just a calm statement and an outreached hand in the name of Jesus.

If Jesus' miracles are announced, the announcements are usually in conversational tones, unless the circumstance made it necessary for him to raise his voice so others would know who was responsible for what was about to happen. He did raise his voice when he brought Lazarus forth from the grave, likely only so those around the tomb could know what was happening. We can read of the scene when Jesus reached the scene of Lazarus' burial.

"And He said, 'Where have you laid him?' They said to Him, 'Lord, come and see.' Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, 'See how He loved him!' And some of them said, 'Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind, also have kept this man from dying?' Then Jesus, again groaning in Himself, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. Jesus said, 'Take away the stone.' Martha, the sister of him who was dead, said to Him, 'Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been dead four days.' Jesus said to her, 'Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?' Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead man was lying. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, 'Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I know that You always hear Me, but because of the people who are standing by I said this, that they may believe that You sent Me.' Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come forth!' And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with grave clothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, 'Loose him, and let him go'" (John 11:34-44, NKJV).

Jesus' healing of the woman of the issue of blood was likely the most private of the miracles recorded, yet Luke the historian and physician

lets us know she was well known in the medical community and no one had been able to help her. Jesus drew attention to her in the midst of a throng of people and identified her to all as the healing took place (Luke 8:43-48).

Even though miracles have ceased long ago, it is true many things happen in life for which we do not have an explanation. We are not told in the scriptures exactly how and when God helps us in our everyday lives, yet we know he does. God welcomes our prayers and expects us to pour out our hearts to him in thanksgiving and with the cares of our lives. Jesus taught it is appropriate to ask God for his providential care in prayer but does not explain how it works. "And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one..." (Matthew 6:13, NKJV).

But what if it appears a miracle has happened? Does that negate God's truths? There is an Old Testament warning that if something predicted does come true, but the prophet then says words to lead them away from God, he was a false prophet, a false teacher. "If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods'—which you have not known—and let us serve them,' you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the Lord your God is testing you to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul" (Deuteronomy 13:1-3, NKJV).

To my knowledge the religious miracle crowds have little interest in what the Bible says about many subjects including how to be saved, how to worship, and which church is the one Jesus said he would build (Matthew 16:18). Apparently, they are all saying, "let us go after other gods," namely their own made up versions of religions.

While we wait for the end of time when more of God's promised miracles will happen, in the meantime we have God's word that tells us of the miracles that occurred when Jesus was here and in the first century of the church. All of those miracles are as real to us as if we were there when they happened. We have no reason to seek cheap substitutes today. John reminds us: "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the

disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:30-31, ESV). papagreg@aol.com

WERE YOU THERE?

By Homer Gay (1938)

It was the mid-week meeting,
The quiet hour of prayer:
The Master of Assemblies
Patiently waited there.

A look of pain and sorrow
Shadowed His face Divine,
"I cleansed ten," He murmured,
"Where, then, can be the nine?"

Have they so soon forgotten
The sins I washed away?
Has not their Weakness taught them
The need to watch and pray?

On mountain and in desert,
Beset by Satan's power,
For them I prayed and fasted,
Can they not watch one hour?"

They had not meant to slight Him
Because they did not go:
Their heart had never told them
That He would miss them so,

And so the Master waited
In loneliness and grace,
While they, alas! neglected
The holy gathering place.

Oh, Savior dear, forgive us,
We are so slow to come
To seek the blest communion
Of the quiet upper room:

Lord, give us clearer vision,
Thy loveliness to see,
Till naught shall so delight us
As fellowship with Thee.



Conscientious Objectors

Date: 2-1-2023

To whom it may concern:

I cannot take part in military service in any form, directly or indirectly, in combatant or noncombatant service; nor the police force (or any type of law enforcement); nor can I practice self-defense. Below are listed some of the reasons:

1. My duty and obligation to God is superior to all other obligations (Acts 5:29; Matthew 22:37).
2. My God in the Bible forbids that I engage in carnal warfare, law enforcement, or self-defense, in the following references: "put up again thy sword...for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." (Matthew 26:52); "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal" (2 Corinthians 10:3-4); "Turn the other cheek" (Matthew 5:39); "Recompense to no man evil for evil" (Romans 12:17); "Love your enemies" (Matthew 5:43-44); and "when He (Jesus) was reviled, did not revile in return" (1 Peter 2:21-23).
3. To enter any military service, combatant or noncombatant, or law enforcement, I would be compelled to "swear" (take an oath), but the Bible forbids that I do so. "Swear not at all" (Matthew 5:34)
4. To enter any military service or law enforcement. I would be compelled to be yoked with unbelievers, which is forbidden: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers" (2 Corinthians 6:14).
5. To be in any branch of the military service in any way, or law enforcement, I would be part of an organization and would therefore have fellowship in the service, but such is prohibited, "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Ephesians 5:11).
6. To serve in the military service or law enforcement in any way, I would be deprived of obeying the command to assemble on the Lord's Day to worship God in the Bible way, at least part of the time, hence would disobey God. (Hebrews 10:25; Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2).

Therefore, I cannot conscientiously engage in

carnal warfare, law enforcement, nor self-defense in any form or branch, and for the above reasons, I ask that my name be listed in support of the above principles. Respectfully,

Amy Janeth Rodriguez and
David Jair Rodriguez Campos
2107 Jones Blvd., Murfreesboro, TN 37129

Our Departed

Eloise M. "Sis" Bee—Eloise M. "Sis" Bee was born in Cherrytree, Pennsylvania, on May 2, 1927, to Martin J. and Marie (Madden) Lineman. She passed away Saturday, January 28, 2023, at the age of 95. I was honored to officiate her funeral service on February 4th, in Greenville, Pennsylvania. Sis attended Penn High School, was a homemaker, and also helped with her son's business, Contour Form, for 35 years. She was a member of the Lord's church in Greenville. She was an active volunteer at the Greenville Railroad Museum for many years, and also served thirty years as a volunteer of the Greenville Hospital Hospitality Shop. Sis loved to travel, cook, and exercise at the Greenville Wellness Center. She married Donald H. Bee Sr. on January 27, 1945. He preceded her in death on October 26, 2021. She is survived by a daughter, Margie Dorf, and her husband Robert of Greenville; two sons, Donald H. Bee II and wife Jeannie, of Greenville, and William G. Bee and his wife Jackie, of Jamestown; a sister-in-law, Deborah Bee of Mebane, NC; three brothers, Neil Lineman and his wife Mary of Greenville, Leroy Greenfield and his wife Linda of Georgia, and David Greenfield of Clearwater, Florida; six grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren; three great-great-grandchildren; and multiple nieces and nephews. She was preceded in death by a son, James H. Bee; four brothers; a granddaughter Laura Ennis; and a great-great granddaughter. Sis had all the qualities of the virtuous woman extolled by Solomon in Proverbs 31. She was a beautiful person, a good cook, had a good sense of humor, and was active and hard-working. I am reminded of the many wonderful times Phyllis and I have had as we enjoyed the hospitality of Don and Sis Bee's home through the years. I am reminded of their wonderful sense of family. The first time I ever went out to a dinner with them and about six other family members, we sat at a long rectangular table in a nice restaurant,

joined hands, closed our eyes, and bowed our heads while someone offered thanks for the food. We followed that pattern every time we ate. I knew right then that God and family were very important to this family. That Sis and Don loved the church is evidenced by the fact that all their children are faithful members of it. Our lives have been enriched immeasurably by our association with the Bee family. We share in their sense of loss and offer our deepest sympathy. Carl M Johnson, carlmj33@gmail.com

Gary Lynn Cannon—Gary Lynn Cannon was born on January 14, 1951, in Wilson, Oklahoma, to Jimmy and Betty (Tate) Cannon. He passed from this life on January 26, 2023 at the age of 72. Gary married Janet Seale on October 11, 1974, in Walled Lake, Michigan. He was preceded in death by his parents and his brother Dennis Cannon. Gary was the ultimate sportsman. He loved football, hunting, and fishing. Above all, however, Gary was a Christian and often said, “Nothing else matters.” As a “fisher of men” (Matthew 4:19), Gary could be found nearly every Lord’s Day in a pulpit somewhere preaching the Gospel of Christ. He was also called to conduct a lot of funerals. I ordained his father Jim as an elder of the Healdton, Oklahoma church, and I conducted Jim’s funeral years ago. In turn, Gary was taught in Healdton elementary school by my mother-in-law Bernice Smith. She lived to be 98, and before she died she specifically asked Gary to preach her funeral. He did a beautiful job. More recently, he, Don Pruitt, and I collaborated to conduct our mutual friend, Skeet Chapman’s funeral. Gary also loved Gospel singing. The last time I saw him was at the recent Oklahoma New Year’s Meeting. He especially loved the New Year’s Eve singing that climaxed with the traditional singing of “Rock of Ages” at the stroke of midnight—singing out the old year and singing in the new. Gary, of course, loved his family dearly, especially his grandchildren, and he was so proud of all of them. He is survived by his wife, Janet of Hugo, Oklahoma; a son, Blake and wife Carrie of Skiatook, Oklahoma; two daughters, Linda Byrd and husband Leighton of Hugo, Oklahoma, and Monica Moffett, and husband John of Hugo, Oklahoma; grandchildren, Addison Byrd, Peyton Byrd, Ashia Jordan, Jaxon Moffitt, Presley Moffitt, Jacob Cannon, Elijah Cannon, and Aubrey Cannon; special family friend, Dr. Mike Irvin; along with a host of other

relatives and friends. Joe Hisle and I conducted Gary’s funeral on February 1st in Hugo, and William St. John conducted the singing. A severe winter storm with freezing rain, snow, and sleet, hit the Hugo area the day before the funeral making for extremely hazardous driving conditions. Nevertheless, a large crowd still made it to the service. Carl M. Johnson, carlmj33@gmail.com

Field Reports

Wayne Fussell, 6126 Land O’ Trees, Shreveport, LA, February 9, 2023. As an old preacher in Oklahoma used to say on the radio every morning, “God is on the throne, and prayer changes things!” And as Ervin Waters would say every morning, “It’s great to be alive!” I’m sorry to say that I was not able to hold the meeting at Healdton, OK because of a minor surgery. I thank the congregation for their understanding. I am planning to hold a meeting at Temple, GA March 9-12, Lord willing. The next month, April 14-16, I hope to preach in Nashville, TN. God is good to this old preacher, and I love this great brotherhood more than ever before. I miss so many who have “gone on before” us. God bless you all. Wfussell1@comcast.net

David Griffin, PO Box 1038, Lebanon, MO 65536. The Lee’s Summit church near Lebanon, MO is in unity and is “at peace among themselves.” I have recently had the privilege of preaching at Lee’s Summit a number of times this month. I have also had engagements at the Pleasant View church (Springfield, MO) and the congregation at Montreal, MO. Montreal is a tiny community north of Lebanon and just south of Camdenton, MO (in the area of Lake of the Ozarks). Although the town is a tiny, there is a thriving congregation of the Lord’s people there. We are always lifted up when we preach there on first Wednesdays and fifth Sundays. Moreover, about a year ago, a woman and her daughter took a stand with us (at Lee’s Summit) from the cups and classes after they had moved here from out of state some time prior to our studies. Consequently, earlier this month, the mother’s brother, who also recently moved to the area from out of state, took a stand with us. They all now worship with the Lee’s Summit congregation. It is a blessing to have this new and zealous addition to the congregation at Lee’s Summit. God bless all in His service! davidgriffin75@gmail.com

WALKS THROUGH THE BIBLE...

SIGHING AND COMPLAINING RIFFFAFF

by Jerry Dickinson

“Now when the people complained, it displeased the LORD; for the LORD heard it, and His anger was aroused. So the fire of the LORD consumed some in the outskirts of the camp. Then the people cried out to Moses, and when Moses prayed to the LORD, the fire was quenched. So he called the name of the place Taberah, because the fire of the LORD had burned them. Now the mixed multitude who were among them yielded to intense cravings; so the children of Israel also wept again and said, ‘Who will give us meat to eat? We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; but now our whole being is dried up; there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes!’” (Numbers 11:1-6)

According to Exodus 12:38 when the children of Israel made their exodus out of Egypt a “mixed multitude” went out with them. The Hebrew word *ereb* used here literally means a collection or a mob of different persons. In Numbers 11:4 another Hebrew word is used, *asaphsoph* which is similar in meaning but more literally could be translated, a great rabble. Some scholars even suggest it is similar to our word ruffraff. Rabble and ruffraff are words that refer to a motley group of people who are disorganized and tend to cause trouble. Who were these people? Why did they leave Egypt and go out into the wilderness with the children of Israel?

Some of them may have been slaves themselves from other nations conquered by the Egyptians and they saw a chance to be free by joining the Israelites as they exited Egypt. Others may have been disaffected Egyptians who were of the lower classes and saw no future for themselves in Egypt, and decided to take their chances with the fleeing Israelites. No doubt many of them were children of mixed marriages between Egyptians and Israelites and they had to decide to stay in Egypt with their Egyptian fathers (if they would acknowledge them) or leave with their Israelite mothers. A mixed multitude went out with them, or as one translation renders it, “A great rabble went out with them.” This great rabble, or ruffraff, was to be a source of trouble along the way.

After being at Mount Sinai for almost a year, they start out for the Promised Land with joyful songs of praise but three days into the wilderness journey (only three days?) they begin to complain. Interestingly, the word complain here is more literally “constantly sighing.” They sighed and sighed and murmured against Moses and of course the Lord. They were tired. Tired of the journey (after three days?). They were tired of the manna God had so graciously provided for them, with all its nutrition, and for which they did not have to work. They remembered the fish and all the wonderful condiments they ate in Egypt and the Bible says they had an intense craving for fish and garlic—“Our whole being is dried up!” they complained and they actually wept (Numbers 11:6). Alas! Sometimes I fear we are no better. It has been a couple of hours since we last ate and we exclaim, “I am about to starve to death! If I don’t get something to eat I may pass out!” Really?

Take note, however, that the source of the sighing and complaining comes from that mixed multitude. Only three days into the journey and this rabble and ruffraff start complaining and the whole camp is infected. The problem with the mixed multitude is they have a mixed loyalty. They did not want to stay in Egypt, but they do not want to be out in the wilderness either. They did not like the life they had back in Egypt, but now that they see the hardship and deprivation of the long journey to Canaan they think maybe it was not so bad in Egypt after all. They are not all in! They have not committed themselves to the leadership of Moses—or the LORD for that matter. Too, they really do not know who they are. “Are we Egyptians or Israelites?” is the question they are asking themselves in this desolate wilderness. They are halfhearted, half committed, and half baked! Having such a rabble and ruffraff is a recipe for disaster. A burning fire from the LORD sweeps through the camp and only the intercession of Moses stops it. If there is one thing that stirs up God’s anger it is complaining. We have been warned!

We have a mixed multitude among us today! Right? There are those in our congregations who are not all in. Their loyalty is divided. They are not satisfied in the world so they become members of the church, but when the journey gets difficult they are not satisfied and begin to complain and sigh about what the church preaches and practices. Egypt was not so bad after all! The denominations have a lot going for them and they have an intense craving to be like the megachurches they read about on Facebook. Their cravings and sighings infect the church and soon everyone is sighing. They are like the ruffraff who followed Israel into the wilderness—they really do not know who they are. “Am I a member of the church of Christ, or am I an independent free thinking spiritualist?”

I have written previously about a woman asking me awhile back if I was a “one cupper,” and my reply to her was that I do believe we must use one cup in the Lord’s Supper, and I am not offended by the term “one cupper.” Problems arise when we have those among us who do not know who or what they are. I think some do not know if they are one cuppers or not. They accept and use one cup, but they not convicted and committed, and when the journey gets rough, they complain and even abandon the Bible pattern. Beware of the mixed multitude. Be watchful of those whose loyalty to Jesus and his Word is halfhearted. The mixed multitude in our midst is a recipe for disaster. We have been warned!