

*SHAME ON MOM . . . OR ME?*

By Steve Higginbotham

Some time ago, I was on a mission trip to the island of St. Croix. While on the island, several of us handed out fliers inviting people to hear some preaching that was taking place that week. As usual, I found the responses I received rather interesting. Some people refused to take a flier from us. Some not only refused to take a flier, but they felt compelled to lecture and insult us. Others were polite, and some even promised to attend.

But of all the people I talked to, I remember a mother and her young son (who was approximately 5 years old) the most. She was exceptionally polite and enthusiastic about what I was handing her. Here's how our brief exchange went.

Me: "Hello, ma'am. May I give you a flier?"

Mother: "Sure! Thanks so much! I really appreciate what you're doing.

It's so hot out here today. Thanks!"

Me: "You're welcome." (She was so polite, I turned my head to watch as she and her son walked away, talking about the flier I gave them.)

Mother: "Look, son, that man gave us a flier about the Bible."

Son: "Bible?"

Mother: "Yes, Bible."

Son: "What's a Bible?"

I was stunned when I heard her young son ask her, "What's a Bible." This woman was the most polite woman I met all week, and yet her young son didn't even know what a Bible was.

At this point, the mother in this story becomes an easy target. We could all "pile on" and shame her for her lack of instruction. But before we "jump," we might want to read and reflect upon Paul's statement to the entire

church at Corinth. He said, "Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame." (1 Corinthians 15:34.)

Did you see that? Paul stated that Corinth's ignorance of God, was, at least in part, the blame and shame of the church. They hadn't done enough. They knew the truth, but they had been too silent in broadcasting it to others. While I was appalled by the lack of spiritual instruction this mother had given to her son, I also felt convicted when I asked myself, "Have I done enough to dispel biblical ignorance?" "Have I remained silent and missed opportunities?"

The easy "mark" in this story is the mother, but maybe the more poignant "mark" is you and me. Give it some thought!

— Knoxville, TN

*WHAT WAS A DIVINE PERSON DOING ON A CROSS?*

By Mark Lindley

It is a fact of history that a man named Jesus died on a cross. This fact is supported by the New Testament and by the secular writings of early historians. No one can successfully deny that Jesus of Nazareth lived and that He died by crucifixion.

However, many who believe that Jesus died on the cross do not believe that Jesus was a divine being. Some affirm that it does not make sense that "the Son of God" would die on a cross. The reasoning is that if Jesus possessed divine power, then He could have saved Himself, and thus, according to some, He must not have been the "Son of God." To them, it just does not make sense that a divine being would die in such a horrible manner.

But such reasoning is flawed and does not consider why it was necessary for Jesus to die for the sins of the world. Because all have sinned and come short of God's glory, it was necessary for a "sinless" person to redeem fallen man. (Romans 6:23.) Every person who has sinned needs a Savior; and he

who needs a Savior cannot be one.

Does Jesus meet the qualification of "sinless?" Notice what the Scriptures teach: "For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." (Hebrews 4:15.) "For even hereunto were you called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth." (1 Peter 2:21-22.) Yes, Jesus, and He alone could qualify to be the Savior because only Jesus was without sin.

It is true that Jesus possessed supernatural power, and that He demonstrated such power by healing the sick, enabling the blind to see, calming storms, and by raising the dead. Yet He freely chose to lay down His life for all. Jesus said, "Therefore does my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man takes it away from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to

lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." (John 10:17-18.) The all-powerful Christ chose not to exercise His power to save His life.

It may never make sense to some that it was necessary for Jesus to die for us. Some did not understand in the first century: "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness." (1 Corinthians 1:23.) Nevertheless, His death was absolutely necessary. Only by trusting and obeying Him can we be saved. Jesus is the way!

— Ripley, MS

*Old Paths*

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*"ask for the old paths" (Jer. 6:16)**GREATER LOVE HAS NO ONE THAN THIS*

By Danny Tunnell

In 1952 in Korea, twelve American soldiers were huddled together. An enemy sneaked through the line. He threw a hand grenade into the middle of them. It was about to explode.

A brave American soldier saw it and jumped on top of it. It exploded. He died but his buddies were saved. When the memorial service was held for the soldier, John 15:13 was the text: "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends." Jesus said that just before He went to the cross to die for the sins of the world.

The same Scripture was used at my brother's funeral in 1988. He died when he came to the aid of a fellow police officer.

Jesus spoke that verse about Himself. It is the greatest love story ever told. God loves you! God, the Creator of the whole universe. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." (Genesis 1:1.) God, who is a spirit, loves you. God does not have a body like yours. And because He is a spirit, He can be everywhere at the same time.

God never changes. "I am the Lord, I do not change." (Malachi 3:6.) And because God is righteous and holy, He is also a God of judgment. There is a Judgment Day coming.

Jesus said, "Every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment." (Matthew 12:36.) God has appointed a day on which He will judge the world. (Acts 17:31.)

The Bible also teaches that God is love. Without the love of God demonstrated by Jesus' death on the cross we are hopelessly lost. "For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23.) "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 6:23.)

Without Christ our punishment would be everlasting fire or hell. Whatever word the Bible uses, it is a terrible place "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?" (Mark 8:36.)

God sent His Son to rescue us because of our rebellion. On the cross He took our sins, our death, our judgment, and our hell.

They took his clothes off Him. They beat Him with long leather whips. They put a crown of thorns on His brow. They put spikes through His hands and hung Him on a cross. And while on the cross Jesus prayed, "Forgive them, for they do not know what they do." (Luke 23:34.)

He loves you so much that if you had been the only person to have ever been born, He would have died for you. "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends." (John 15:13.)

That's not the end of the story! On the third day, He rose again. He is alive today! Those who trust Him and obey Him have a glorious future.

— Miami, OK

*"DOERS OF THE WORK"*

By Cecil Burch

"But be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does." (James 1:22-24.)

Many years ago, a story was told about four people named Everybody, Somebody, Anybody, and Nobody. An important job had to be done, and Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did it. Somebody got angry about that, because it was Everybody's job. Everybody thought Anybody could do it and that Somebody would do it. But Nobody realized that Everybody thought Somebody would do it. It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have done.

The Apostle Paul left no doubt that Christians must work for the Lord. He said, "But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 15:58.)

Even Jesus Christ Himself said, "I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work." (John 9:4.) When He was preparing to go back to Heaven He prayed to His Father saying, "I have glorified you on earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do." (John 17:4.)

We will be judged according to what we have done. Paul said, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, whether good or bad." (2 Corinthians 5:10.)

We dare not pawn our responsibilities off on someone else. Paul told the Philippians, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure." (Philippians 2:12,13.) Every child of God longs to hear the words, "Well done, good and faithful servant . . . enter into the joy of your Lord." (Matthew 25:21.)

— Amarillo, TX

## Identifying What Is Important

By Joe Slater

We place a higher importance on some things than on others. Aside from simply asking, how *can* people know what's really important to us? Here are four ways:

**Talk.** We talk about the weather. We talk about our family. We talk about sports. Why? Because these things are important to us. They aren't bad things, and it's fine to talk about them. But how much do we talk about God? about the Bible? about the church? "My tongue shall speak of Your word, for all of Your commandments are righteousness." (Psalm 119:172).

**Time.** Each of us has exactly the same amount of time each day. It's up to us how we use it. It takes time to sleep, work, and eat. Most of us have at least several hours of discretionary time each day. Perhaps we watch some television or read a book. Would that book happen to be the Bible? Do we spend time in prayer and actual study (not just reading) of God's word? What about church attendance? Compare the time spent meeting with fellow-Christians to what you devote to recreation. Rest and relaxation are important, but so are spiritual matters.

**Treasure.** Paying attention to the way we spend our money requires diligent discipline. We might be shocked at how much we fritter away on arbitrary things. I challenge you to compare what you spend on recreation and vacations with what you contribute to the work of the Lord. Your estimation of the importance of His work will certainly be reflected by your material support of it.

**Talent.** Your talents are not the same as the next person's, but each one has abilities. We use our talents to earn a living, maintain a home, enjoy a hobby, etc. All of those are good things. What about serving God by helping other people and working on projects for the church? Here again, your use of your talents demonstrates your estimation of the importance of the cause of Christ.

What is really important to you?

— Justin, TX

"Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?'" (Matthew 16:24-26.)

EDITORIAL . . .

## MUSIC IN WORSHIP: ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTION

By Dalton Key

Why do we consider instrumental music in Christian worship unacceptable? Is it wrong because it is mechanical? or is it wrong because it is not authorized by New Testament scripture?

Upon what basis is worshipping God by singing acceptable? Is it right because it does not involve mechanical instruments? or is it right because it is that form of music which heaven has authorized?

What constitutes singing as commanded in Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16? Is singing defined as anything musically performed by the person of the worshipper so long as mechanical instruments are not involved? Should singing be understood as including any or all sounds that may be produced by the human voice box, just so long as no mechanical instruments of music are employed?

Joseph Henry Thayer, in his Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, defines the greek word which we have translated "singing" in these passages as "the lyrical emotion of a devout and grateful soul." Webster defines "lyric" as "the words of a song, as distinguished from the music."

What, then, is authorized by the New Testament with respect to music in Christian worship? The answer appears obvious. Singing, the musical uttering or chanting of words, is authorized. Through the singing of "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" we make melody in our hearts as we teach and admonish one another.

Is it possible to make sounds with the body (such as clapping) and sounds with the voice (such as those imitating the sounds of mechanical instruments or drums) which are not singing? Are these sounds approved in worship, as worship, any more than musical instruments? If so, in what way? and by what New Testament authority?

The reason the organ, in worship, is wrong and singing is right, is not merely because the sound of one is produced mechanically and the sound of the other is not. The organ is wrong in worship because it does not fulfill the scriptural command to sing, and the command to sing is the sum total of New Testament authority concerning music in worship for the New Testament church.

The question is not: "Is it mechanically or humanly/vocally produced." The question should be: "Is it singing or is it not?" Again, the fact is clear: the only musical form authorized in Christian worship by New Testament teaching is singing.

And by the way: what biblical argument allows clapping, grunting, whistling, and myriad examples of instrument-like, vocally produced sound effects, while at the same time prohibiting mechanical instruments in our worship? It would appear these all stand together - or they fall together.



## FROM THE ARCHIVES . . . CHRIST IS ALWAYS THE ANSWER!

By Bobby Key

Have you become despondent? Are you discouraged? Has your faith grown weak? Does your spiritual battery need to be recharged? Likely, what you really need is a good dose of God's spiritual medicine . . . the Gospel of Christ. You need to be in Bible Study and Worship services regularly.

In the long ago, Jeremiah declared, "O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps." (Jeremiah 10:23.) We live in an hour when the foundations of civilization are crumbling, the night of apostasy is deepening, lawlessness runs wild to its awful climax, the powers of atheism increase and abound, and wars and troubles circle the globe. The trail of tears through which humanity has passed since Adam is marked by the milestones of countless failures. Oh, how we need a guide in these troubled

times! We need a guide who knows the way; a guide who knows where we need to go and how to get there.

We have such a guide if we would only listen to His voice. Our guide is Christ. He can solve all our problems. Without Him our nation will die, our homes will dissolve, and our souls will be forever lost in a devil's hell.

To survive this crazed generation we must get back to God and His Way. We must accept the Bible and follow its teaching. The only hope and cure for mankind's sin and misery rests in the precious name of our Savior, Jesus Christ the Lord.

One day all the redeemed and blood-washed shall be gathered home to God, to live forever in the house not made with hands. Will you be among that number?

— Miami, OK

## WHAT IS YOUR "NAZARETH"?

By Larry Sullivan

I always get a grin on my face when I read the words of Nathaniel in John 1:46: "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"

I grin because his reaction to the village where Jesus, the one being introduced to him as the Messiah, was from, is so typical! We tend to make such assumptions, don't we? "I've seen people like that before . . . they don't ever change." "We tried that years ago and it didn't work, so it won't work now."

Even when we keep those assumptions to ourselves, they tend to work on us from the inside, don't they? They can limit what we do. They can damage our relationships, our interactions with others, and our effectiveness. Assumptions tend to give us tunnel vision and what is worse, they put up walls that block the possibility of growth, reconciliation or healing.

Most of the time our assumptions are formed from our own experiences, our own losses, or our own wounds. "I just don't see how anything good could

come out of this!" Really? Thankfully, we serve a God who is not limited by our assumptions. We serve a God, who in His wisdom can bring up a boy, raised in the "backwater" village of Nazareth, and show the world that He is in fact, the Messiah, the Savior of the world.

It is through our faith in this God that the walls of assumption fall. It is through faith that we trust in God's ability to work great things where we see only dimly. It is this God who when confronted by our petty and limiting assumptions, says (as does Philip in John 1:46), "Come and see."

— Abilene, TX

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose . . . Who shall separate us from the Love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? . . . For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor

"Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power . . . If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory." (Colossians 2:8-10; 3:1-4.)

powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:28, 35, 37-39.) "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." (Philippians 4:13.)

### Old Paths

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