

## WE NEED THE BIBLE!

By Bobby Key

Several years ago a denominational preacher hurled his Bible across the auditorium before the eyes of his startled congregation. He then shouted, "If the study of this book is going to hide the real Jesus from me, there goes my Bible!"

I wonder what this man could possibly have known of Jesus Christ apart from the Bible. Did he have access to a more trustworthy source than the Bible itself? Could he look into his own heart and see a better Savior revealed there than he could see from the pages of the New Testament? Surely this preacher had become vain in his reasonings and his senseless heart had become darkened. He was afraid the Bible would stand in his way of some new revelation of truth. We cannot help but pity such a sad exhibition and pity a preacher willing

to stoop to such cheap and irreverent showmanship.

The Bible is certainly the word of God, the medium through which the will of God is revealed. By it the man of God is completely furnished unto every good work. (2 Timothy 3:15-17.) We can know nothing of the real Jesus outside of what the Bible says about him. We have no further revelation since "the faith" has been delivered "once for all." (Jude 3.) The Lord has already given us all things that pertain to life and godliness. (2 Peter 1:3.)

There is not one solitary thing a man needs in religion that he cannot find in the Bible. It is indeed all sufficient.

It is true that the Bible does not flatter man, but rather condemns him as a sinner. However, the Bible does

reveal a way of escape. Christ came to enable us to escape the servitude of sin and Satan. He came to make us free.

The whole duty of man is to fear God and keep His commandments. (Ecclesiastes 12:13.) As I see it, the only thing left for me to do is accept God's sin offering and completely submit myself to His will - and all I know about God's will is what I read in the Bible.

— DECEASED

"For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Hebrews 4:12.)

## YOU CANNOT GROW IN RIGHTEOUSNESS

By Danny Tunnell

Righteousness is a gift we receive by faith. "For with the heart man believes unto righteousness." (Romans 10:10.) Paul calls it "the gift of righteousness." (Romans 5:17.)

What is righteousness? It means "right standing with God." We receive this "right standing with God," not because of what we did, but because of what Jesus did for us. A newborn Christian has the same standing with God as a Christian who has lived many years for Him.

Some in the Bible tried to create their own righteousness and did not submit to the righteousness of God. (Romans 10:3.) Paul exclaimed that he did not have his own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith. (Philippians 3:9.) He said, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness," and that those who are of faith are the children of Abraham. (Galatians 3:6,7.) This gift of righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. (Matthew 5:20.)

A Christian is not just "an ol' sinner saved by grace" - he is a new creature! (2 Corinthians 5:17.) The Christian is made righteous by the blood of Christ. The gospel reveals God's way of making men righteous. (Romans 1:16,17.)

A person can be saved and still have a sense of unworthiness, constantly struggling to try to be better to be accepted by God, not realizing this gift of righteousness is a free gift. In Christ we have been made the righteousness of God. (2 Corinthians 5:21.) We have right-standing with God, we are accepted and approved by God. That should free us from a sense of shame, guilt, unworthiness, rejection, or feeling inadequate; or struggling to do better so we can be accepted. It totally removes a "sin consciousness" and literally produces a "righteousness consciousness."

The righteousness given by God is a legal declaration. You are declared righteous by the highest Judge in the land! It is all legal in the eyes of God! We didn't become righteous from an "illegal jail break!" We didn't sneak

out of prison, cutting the steel bars, climbing through the razor-wire fence, running with an orange outfit on with dogs chasing us!

This righteousness is not something we produce. We didn't sneak out; we walked out in the clear light of day and were declared "not guilty" by God! We are the righteousness of God, and it was produced legally from the highest court in the land. God declared you justified and no other court can reverse that verdict!

This righteousness is a free gift; you can't earn it. And you really can't get any better at it. You cannot grow in righteousness. However, you can grow in holiness, and get better at living the Christian life, but that's another subject.

All the Old Testament saints strived for this righteousness. Paul did that, too, until he met Jesus. Then he was washed in Jesus' blood, redeemed by His blood, and declared righteous by His blood.

— Miami, OK

# Old Paths

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"ask for the old paths" (Jer. 6:16)

## INSTEAD OF COMPLAINING, GO TO WORK!

By Joe Slater

Pity the poor souls who see it as their God-given duty to nit-pick and find fault with anything and everything at church! You see my personal philosophy about such behavior in this article's title. Could we improve? Most assuredly! But rolling up your sleeves will bring positive change more effectively than pointing fingers.

Isaac Watts (1674-1749) complained to his father about the dull, lifeless songs in their Sunday assembly. His father challenged him: "Well, then, young man, why don't you give us something better to sing?" He did! For the next two years Watts wrote a new song each week for their Sunday service. We still use dozens of his songs such as "Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed" and "Joy To The World."

In Acts 6 the Hellenists (Jews from Greek-speaking areas) in the church complained that their widows were being neglected by the Hebrew brethren in the daily distribution. Was their grievance legitimate? Evidently so, for the apostles developed a plan to remedy it. "Seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business." (Acts 6:3.) Observe the names of the chosen men in verse 5. Every one of them is a Greek name! Whether any or all of them had personally lodged the complaint we know not. But the church wisely selected them to make certain the need was met. And it worked! Everyone was happy, a potential split was averted, and the gospel continued to spread.

Finding something to be unhappy about is easy. Voicing your frustration takes little effort. But climbing out of your chair and working to effect needed change requires shifting from critic to volunteer.

Which is more helpful? Which are you?

— Justin, TX

"Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain. Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me." (Philippians 2:14-18.)

## GOD'S RAINBOW

By Milton Smith

The Bible tells us that after the flood, God gave the rainbow as a token of the covenant which He made with all living creatures that there never again would be a universal flood upon the earth. (Genesis 9:12-17.) The Bible also tells us that before the flood came, the earth was watered by a mist that went up from the earth. (Genesis 2:6.) Could it be that no rain fell from the sky before the flood? Many scientists believe that a "vapor canopy" surrounded the earth during its early history. Some have suggested that this canopy may have collapsed when the "windows of heaven were opened" to bring about the great flood. (cf. Genesis 7:11.) Under these conditions, many scientists concur that it is quite possible that no rainbow was seen on earth before the flood.

Before man discovered that the rainbow is caused by the refraction and reflection of the sun's rays upon raindrops, many superstitions existed about this strange, multi-colored image in the sky (that could never be reached or touched). Most all of us remember the old legend about there being a "pot of gold at the end of the rainbow." Many early cultures believed that the rainbow was a sort of omen that foreshadowed the coming of some future event. In ancient Scandinavian literature the rainbow was presented as a link between the "gods" and man. During medieval times there was a tradition that there would be no rainbow for forty years prior to the end of the world. Because of this belief, many medieval people had a false sense of security whenever they saw a rainbow in the sky, believing they were guaranteed the world would exist for at least another forty years!

The rainbow is no mystery. We know what causes it, and God set into motion the physical laws that bring about this beautiful phenomenon. It is simply a token and a sign that God has placed in the heavens. We also know that the appearance of the rainbow has absolutely nothing to do with predicting the final coming of Christ. The Lord can return at any time, and we are warned to be constantly ready and watching for this event. (Matthew 24:42.)

If people would take time to simply read what the Bible clearly teaches on matters such as this, silly theories and man-made superstitions would never be taught nor believed.

— Tulsa, OK



## SOME THOUGHTS ON TREES

By Richard Dent

Recently I lost an old friend. No, it was not a human or an animal. It was a pine tree planted in 1977 by a Christian neighbor. It grew to be a very large tree until recently when a family with allergies from pine decided it must go.

As I reflect upon that tree, I remember some characteristics of trees and people. God's word states that a man should be like a tree planted by the rivers of water that brings forth its fruit in season. (Psalm 1:3.) How can we be like trees?

Since our God created the firmament (earth), much beauty has been appreciated, such as trees. (Psalm 19:1.) Many trees produce fruit which provides nourishment for many. God tells us in His word to be fruitful in good works for our works will follow us. (Revelation 14:13.) If we become unfruitful in this life then we will be ultimately cast away and withered. (Mark 11:20-21.)

Trees provide shade for the birds of the air to nest under their branches. (Mark 4:32.) God's word tells us of the importance of hospitality toward one another. Consider the story of Abraham and Sarah and the messengers sent by God to warn about wickedness. (Genesis 18.) Sarah fixed a meal for the angels and they ate under the shade of a tree. (Genesis 18:8.)

Like everything else, trees must endure the storms of life. Limbs are often broken by the force of the wind. You and I will have to deal with our own personal storms in this life. They may be sickness, loss of jobs, and temptations from Satan, etc. But we must stand strong as that old pine tree did.

Be faithful to the end and you will receive the crown of life. (Revelation 2:10.)

— Liberal, KS

"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.)

## EDITORIALLY SPEAKING . . .

### "UNTO DEATH"

By Dalton Key

Any religion worth living for should be worth dying for as well. The King James Version of the Bible, the translation many of us grew up learning, had it right with respect to its treatment of Revelation 2:10. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Many translations use the word "until" rather than "unto," yet the suffering saints of Smyrna were not being encouraged to faithfulness merely "until" they died; they were urged to persevere even "unto" death, to the exacting throes of martyrdom.

John Fox in his Book of Martyrs, describes one such example of faithfulness which took place during the church's early years: "Agatha, a Sicilian lady, (who) was not more remarkable for her personal and acquired endowments, than her piety: her beauty was such, that Quintian, governor of Sicily, became enamored of her, and made many attempts upon her chastity without success. On her confessing that she was a Christian, he determined to gratify his revenge, as he could not his passion. Pursuant to his orders, she was scourged, burnt with red-hot irons, and torn with sharp hooks. Having borne these torments with admirable fortitude, she was next laid naked upon live coals, intermingled with glass, and then being carried back to prison, she there expired on February 5, 251."

This chaste soul ventured beyond the living for her faith - she bravely died for it. She was indeed "faithful unto death."

For those of us blessed to live in a place and time less violent toward Christians and Christianity, the more pertinent question is not, "would I die for my Lord?" but rather, "am I willing to live for Him?"

As an able-bodied child of the King, why do we find it so difficult to rouse ourselves from sleep in order to attend the assembly's services of worship? Why do we work harder at keeping our religion a secret from friends and co-workers than in actually doing the work of the kingdom? Why do we over-schedule our time so as to leave no time for Bible reading, prayer, or using our God-given talents for furthering the Lord's cause and edifying the Lord's people?

Before singing "I Surrender All," we should first take note whether we are currently willing to surrender anything at all.

Somehow it seems that Agatha, if living today, would do more in her Christian life than merely warming a pew once a week and then complaining about that.

What do you think?



## JESUS, HIS WORD, AND HIS CHURCH

By Dalton Key

One of the more disturbing quirks of the post-modern pseudo-disciple: A professed enthusiasm for Jesus unequally yoked with an obvious distaste for both His teaching and His church.

Too many of those claiming faith in Christ are willing neither to submit to His will nor align themselves with His body. And many preachers are encouraging such nonsense.

Nothing is more oxymoronic than the image of disciples attempting to embrace a Master wholly excised from His own teachings. Didn't Jesus once say, "If you love me, keep my commandments?" (John 14:15.) Our Lord spoke plainly, proclaiming, "He that rejects me, and receives not my words, has one that judges him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." (John 12:48.) Jesus viewed a rejection of His words as tantamount to a rejection of Himself.

The inspired John clearly taught that our fellowship with both the Father and the Son depends upon our abiding "in the doctrine of Christ." (2 John 9.) And this "doctrine of Christ" is not meant to describe only those red-lettered words found in the four gospel accounts or the singular conviction that Christ has come in the flesh. Paul declared that the inspired words he wrote and spoke had been received "by the revelation of Jesus Christ," and affirmed such words to be "the commandments of the Lord." (Galatians 1:11,12; 1 Corinthians 14:37.)

Whether the matter before us concerns salvation from sin, personal conduct, pure and proper worship, or any one of the myriad spiritual concerns with which we grapple day by day, we who voice allegiance to Christ must heed His word.

Neither should Christ and His church be separated. Those voices

crying out, "Jesus, yes! The church, no!" fail to acknowledge the following: Christ promised to build His church (Matthew 16:18); the church is His spiritual body over which He rules as head (Colossians 1:24); the church is built upon Christ as foundation and was purchased by His very blood (1 Corinthians 12:13; Acts 20:28); and there is but one body - one church - recognized of heaven as belonging exclusively to Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 4:4; 5:24,25.)

To speak favorably of Christ while disparaging, discrediting, or dismissing His church is neither fair to the facts nor honest with the truth. When Saul of Tarsus was persecuting the church he was actually persecuting the Lord. (Acts 8:3; 9:4.)

Do you love Jesus? If so, show respect for both His word and His church!

## A MILLION DOLLARS AND A BALE OF HAY

By Steve Higginbotham

A couple of years ago, a brother in Florida gave me a coin that he had uncovered in Europe more than 50 years earlier. The coin is a Sestertius with the image of the Roman Emperor, Hadrian engraved on it. That places the date of this coin from 118-132 A.D.

My friend who gave me this coin happened to uncover 150 other coins in the same spot. Apparently, 1900 years ago, someone buried some money in the ground for safe-keeping, and for whatever reason, never recovered his treasure.

As I have held this coin in my hand, I have examined it closely and have mused about the person who buried it. What was the person like who once owned this coin? Was this all he had, or did he have the money buried in several "stashings?" What did he have to do to earn this coin? But the thought that impacts me the most is that this coin once belonged to another person who lived nearly 2000 years ago, and now what was once his is now mine.

When I consider this thought, it

seems to help put life into perspective for me. What's "mine" is only "mine" temporarily. Things for which we work so hard, and value so much, in a few short years will either be trashed or held in the hands of another person. What's yours today will belong to someone else tomorrow.

In light of this truth, why would I spend my life in a pursuit of that which I cannot keep? Consider the futility of grasping for that which remains mine only for a short time. All the thought, expense and work expended to own something that someone else will take from me is vanity! Would it not be a much wiser course of action to pursue treasure that will survive the grave, and be mine forever?

Friends, don't fall in love with money; fall in love with the Lord. Don't allow your life to be characterized by your pursuit of money, but rather let it be summarized by your pursuit of God. Someday, probably sooner than you realize, all the money that is yours will belong to someone else. When that day

comes, it won't matter what's in your hands, for your hands will be empty. What will matter is whether the Lord is in your heart, for he is your only hope of glory." (Colossians 1:27.)

Remember, a million dollars and a bale of hay will be worth the same on Judgment Day!

— Knoxville, TN

### Old Paths

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