

THE ROAD THAT LEADS TO ETERNAL LIFE

By Danny Tunnell

The Highway to Holiness is found in Isaiah 35. “The unclean will not travel on it, but it will be for the one who walks that way, and fools will not wander on it . . . but the redeemed will walk there, and the ransomed of the Lord will return and come with joyful shouting to Zion, with everlasting joy upon their heads.” (Isaiah 35:8,9,10, NASB.)

Ginger Hendricks wrote the song, “Holy Highway”: “There’s a road called the holy highway that once was a desert land. Very soon you’ll hear the sound of a holy marching band. Everlasting joy upon them, there’s a remnant strong and true. We bring the song back to Zion, we bring the praise back to you. We exalt You God Almighty, You are worthy to be praised. Let all nations bow before You, Holy Ancient of all days. There’s a road called the holy highway, where the people dance and shout. For the enemy is running with confusion all

about. Raise our banners in victory, raise them high. His word is true. We bring our song back to Zion, we bring the praise back to you.”

God says if you’re not on the highway that leads to everlasting life, you’re a fool. (Isaiah 35:8.) The psalmist said, “Lead me in the way everlasting.” (Psalm 139:24.) He’s saying, “Lead me down the road that leads to eternal life.”

Jesus said, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no man comes unto the Father, but by me.” (John 14:6.)

How can we get on the highway that leads to eternal life? The Bible is our road map. Jesus came to put us on the right road. (Matthew 7:13,14.) Jesus said, “I am the Way.”

There is a story told about an American aviator who had to parachute into a jungle in Burma. A Burmese man slashed his way through the jungle with his machete. Understandably, the America pilot was scared, not knowing

what might happen. He yelled out, “Where is the way?” The Burmese man replied in broken English, “I am the way, follow me.” And he got him out.

Jesus tells us He is the way and that there is no other road, no other way, but Him. (Acts 4:12.)

The road that Jesus leads us on is the “Highway to Holiness.” (Isaiah 35:8.) “Without holiness no one will see the Lord.” (Hebrews 12:14.) It is not a holiness that we can achieve or merit by ourselves. (Isaiah 64:6.) It is an imputed holiness, clothed in His righteousness alone. (Romans 4:21-24.)

Are you on the road that leads to eternal life? Are you on the Holy Highway?

— Miami, OK

Jesus’ Family Tree

By Joe Slater

Someone said, “Don’t shake the family tree too hard because some fruits and nuts may fall out!” I’ve found that to be true in my own family history research, and it holds true in the genealogy of Jesus too.

I wonder how many people, as they begin reading the New Testament, just skip over the first seventeen verses of Matthew. Whew! All those “begats”! All those difficult names! Why do we care about them anyway?

Among many other reasons, we ought to learn about those people because they show that our God uses less-than-perfect people to accomplish His perfect will.

Human wisdom would have Messiah’s family tree filled with pure, spotless ancestors. Some people think we shouldn’t even mention the character flaws exhibited by some in Jesus’ pedigree. However, doing so isn’t disrespectful; it’s honest! Scripture portrays even its heroes “warts and all.”

“Judah begot Perez and Zerah by Tamar.” (Matthew 1:3.) Tamar had been the wife of Judah’s two sons, both of whom died. Judah didn’t keep his promise to give her to his youngest son when he came of age, so Tamar dressed like a harlot and duped Judah into getting her pregnant. Despite their obvious moral failures God used these people to bring Messiah into the world.

“Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab.” (Matthew 1:5.) Rahab’s background as a Gentile and a harlot in no way prevented God from accomplishing His will despite her flaws.

“David the king begot Solomon by her who had been the wife of Uriah.” (Matthew 1:6.) We all know the sad and sordid account of David and Bathsheba. But despite their glaring defects they are listed in Jesus’ genealogy.

This doesn’t excuse anyone’s sin or make it ok! Quite to the contrary, it demonstrates the universal need for a Savior. Jesus came to save sinners.

That includes His own blood kin. And it includes you.

— Justin, TX

“This is a faithful saying and worthy of acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.” (1 Timothy 1:15.)

Old Paths

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“ask for the old paths” (Jer. 6:16)

URGENT AND IMMEDIATE!
Due to ongoing theft of our mail at the church building, please begin directing all correspondence/contributions for OLD PATHS to my home address: 830 W. Fargo Drive, Broken Arrow, OK 74012. Thank you for your ongoing and much-needed support!

What Time Is It?

By Joe Slater

“And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.” (Romans 13:11.)

Saturdays and Sundays used to be my opportunities to “sleep in.” School was out, and church wasn’t a priority. On school days, however, my parents would say, “It’s time to get up! You don’t want to be late for school.”

Some of the Christians to whom Paul wrote in Romans needed to wake up! Physical sleep wasn’t the problem; Paul used sleep as a metaphor for their spiritual lethargy.

Who knows why they had become sluggish? Being the capital of the empire, the city of Rome contained every vice, every philosophy, and every strange religion you can imagine. Christians might well struggle to stay true to the gospel. How should they interact with different religious groups? What should their relationship to the government be? How should they treat fellow Christians and people in general? Wrestling with such issues can make you tired and sleepy!

Paul exhorts: “Wake up!” Why? Because “now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.” This salvation refers not to our initial cleansing at baptism, but our ultimate salvation when the Lord takes us to Heaven. Paul wasn’t saying that Jesus’ return was imminent, but our departure to be with Christ (Philippians 1:23) draws nearer every day.

Our challenges aren’t identical to those of the Romans, but vice and false religions confront us too. And the same lethargy infects us, especially after we’ve been in Christ several years. Time draws shorter for each of us every day. That being so, may God help us to wake up!

— Justin, TX

WHAT A CHANGE!

By Milton Smith

I rather imagine that you have either said - or had someone say to you - the old expression, “Heard any good news lately?” It is possible that the average person might hear this question (or one similar) several times a year. Many times we ask this question as a mere greeting to friends. Or maybe this question might be asked to “jump start” a conversation. Sometimes we may simply suggest it in an almost mocking manner, implying that “good” news is hard to come by these days.

Within the context of mere human life, good news can often be a rare thing. In some parts of the world living conditions are so abysmal that any news that might brighten a person’s life is almost impossible to find.

Most of us are aware of the fact that the word “gospel” actually means “good news.” The Christian needs to fully realize that we have a wonderful opportunity each day to present this unequaled good news to friends and family members alike.

If you know someone who is in a lost condition, chances are they are desperately seeking after some good news in their life. You can do this person an enormous favor that carries with it eternal blessings! When the opportunity presents itself, give them the best news they will ever hear!

Are we seriously to believe that it was nothing more than an accident - a mere happenstance - that God chose a word that literally means “good news” for the divine message that we are charged to deliver to the world?

The apostle Paul once persecuted Christians because they promoted this “good news.” He was confronted one day by Jesus while traveling on the road to Damascus. Paul’s mission on this trip was a simple one: If he found any Christians, whether they were men or women, he was going to arrest them and bring them, bound, back to Jerusalem. Many of them might likely be put to death. But Paul met Jesus on that historic trip and was baptized and became a Christian a few days later. After learning the truth about the glorious gospel of Christ, he would later write, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one who believes; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.” (Romans 1:16.)

What a change!

Paul would spend the rest of his earthly life traveling the world to bring the gospel (good news) of Jesus Christ to those lost in sin. Today, you and I have the same privilege. Let’s not waste such a blessed opportunity.

Heard any “good news” lately?

— Tulsa, OK

DECISIONS HAVE CONSEQUENCES

By Glen Walton

Decisions have tremendous implications for our lives. I read somewhere of a young man who was planning a medical career who had to make a decision one evening about studying or attending a ball game. He attended the game and the next day made a low grade on the test. It so happened that the low grade kept him out of medical school, and made it necessary for him to change his plans for the future.

At times, what seems to be an innocent choice is fraught with grave consequences.

A man named Lot once made what seemed to be an innocent choice. Strife arose between his herdsmen and the herdsmen of his kinsman, Abram. In order to avoid even more serious problems, Abram thought it best for them to separate, but gave Lot the privilege of choosing whatever land he desired. Lot chose the plain of Jordan and journeyed east. He "pitched his tent toward Sodom." (Genesis 13:12.) What seemingly was an innocent choice led to disaster. In Sodom his righteous soul was vexed, and he lost a part of his family. Even in fleeing the tragedy continued. His wife looked back and became a pillar of salt. Afterward, his daughters, contaminated by the immorality of that wicked place, made their father drunk and conceived children by him. Moses, in Genesis 18-19, shows us the real ugliness of this innocent but unwise decision.

But there are better examples in the book of God. "By faith, Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to share ill treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." (Hebrews 11:24,25.) Moses chose God and His people, and became God's great leader and lawgiver. As long as the world stands, his influence for good will abide.

May God bless us in our decisions. These are very important to the worth of our own lives and the lives of those around us. Undergirded by good moral principles, and with our attention focused on things eternal, we can make decisions which are sound and good. - Amarillo, TX

"Now therefore, fear the Lord, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the Lord! And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." (Joshua 24:14,15.)

EDITORIAL . . .

THE SCOURGE OF APOSTASY

By Dalton Key

Do you feel them? The winds of change blowing their way through the brotherhood of the Lord's church? It seems as if the voices demanding upheaval are growing stronger, becoming evermore insistent and demanding. As a result, many once-faithful congregations are being affected - and infected - with the scourge of apostasy.

The changes in question are by no means trivial. They are fundamental, going to the very core of who we are and what we, since New Testament times, have held dear. We find ourselves pressed to change our very understanding of biblical truth; to accept the idea that almost nothing we've ever considered distinctively true is actually true.

We have long taught the Lord's church as being unique and fundamentally different from denominational bodies. No, we're told, the church of Christ is just another denomination among many, just a small part of a larger, universal body of saved saints. We have always stressed the importance of New Testament authority in determining matters of salvation, worship, faith, and practice. No, we hear, this emphasis does nothing but distance us from our religious neighbors. Instrumental music in worship? Why not? Women taking a public, leading role in congregational worship and governance? Bring it on! Baptism as essential to salvation? What an archaic, small-minded notion! You name it; we're being pressured to rethink it.

These unrelenting demands for change appear to have one unchangeable formula: The bulk of everything taught, suggested, or implied by preachers and teachers once considered faithful or sound is now suspect and deserving of rejection and ridicule. Conversely, nearly anything taught, suggested, or implied by denominational or denominationally-inclined "experts" is considered tantamount to the gospel message itself!

And what about the gospel? What about the very words of New Testament Scripture? They are picked through, picked over, and picked apart until nothing is left but that which lends credence to the pre-determined agenda of the change agents. What Paul said about grace is accepted; what he said about doctrine and obedience is ignored. What John wrote about love is heralded; his words concerning divine truth and the dangers of false teaching is summarily squelched.

The intolerant and judgmental arrogance foaming from the lips and pens of these agents for change is nothing short of shocking. Finally, after nearly 2000 years, they have it all figured out. We've all been wrong all along! Job's sarcastic jab at his comfortless comforters comes to mind: "No doubt you are the people, and wisdom will die with you!" (Job 12:2.)

I realize I may be in the minority, but I choose not to change. I'd much rather hold to heaven's changeless truth than foolishly attempt to catch the tail of an ever-evolving message of religious populism.

Paul's words seem especially apt: "We should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head - Christ." (Ephesians 4:14,15.)



"WORKS TO BE REMEMBERED"

By Bobby Key

"He has made His wonderful works to be remembered." (Psalms 111:4.)

Why did God create such an immense and complex universe? So far as science now knows, no other planet is populated. I know that thousands of spheres sail serenely through space and we use them as fixed points for navigation. These same spheres exert influence on our reckoning of time, establishing the cycle of seasons. But I wonder if an all-powerful God could have done this by simpler devices.

Our mind falters in seeking to estimate the great enormity of space. The heat of the sun warms us; the size of the sun stuns us. Its diameter is 109 times that of the earth, but it is only

one of billions upon billions of other similar stars. Astronomers affirm that many of the stars would outshine the sun if they were as close to earth as it is (the sun is a mere 93 million miles from earth).

Why is God's creation so vast? Reason and science surmise the answer, but the answer is clearly revealed in our text: "He has made His wonderful works to be remembered."

We often are made to suffer because of a failure to remember. Parents sometimes fail to remember their children. Spouses too-often fail to remember their obligations to one another. But forgetting the God of heaven is especially dangerous.

May we gaze into the heavens and ever be constrained to remember the God who created them - and us. (1929-2018)

"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them He has set a tabernacle for the sun, which is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoices like a strong man to run its race. Its rising is from one end of heaven; and there is nothing hidden from its heat." (Psalm 19:1-6.)

REMAINING SANE IN A CRAZY WORLD

By Joe Dale Wilson

Wars have been fought and governments have issued laws to bring about peace and harmony between ethnic groups and tribes.

It has not worked real well.

In heaven there are not going to be races and gender differences for we will all be like the angels. (Matthew 22:30.) God wants us to learn that now! Therefore God has given us a place where such beloved peace and harmony can be found. That place is Jesus Christ!

"But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both (Jews and Gentiles) one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace." (Ephesians 2:13-15. "And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off (Gentiles) and to those who were near (Jews). For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. Now, therefore, you are

no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God." (Ephesians 2:17-19.)

I cannot change the race or gender into which I was born. Therefore, I cannot become less white as one well-known company once told their employees to be. I can make sure that I have the attitude that Peter learned when he went to Cornelius' house. "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him." (Acts 10:34,35.)

All races and both genders are equal in Christ, even as the rich and poor and the educated and uneducated.

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:28.)

While many in our country seem to have lost touch with reality and are being totally silly, Christians should know that we respect all races and love our neighbors as ourselves.

We need to be sane in a crazy world!

— Vernon, TX

"Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets." (Matthew 7:12.)

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