

ROCK
ROCK
THE
FUND

FEBRUARY
2000



VOLUME 3
ISSUE 2

I HEAR YOU

By Paul Hoover, editor

I recently noticed something about myself that needs to improve dramatically. This is not a confession as such rather a recognition and determination to improve. In-fact, this particular shortcoming may not have been noticed by anyone but myself. It is nonetheless, disturbing and it may have serious consequences. After thinking on this for sometime I realized that I may not be the only one who needs to improve in this area. If this article strikes a chord with you I hope that you will also try to improve.

I believe the problem begins with our manner of conversation. We, in our society, are uncomfortable with silence. When we engage someone in conversation we are accustomed to filling every moment with words. We will say anything to fill that awful silence. Perhaps this fundamental means of conversation is wrong. Think about that for a moment. Since we are so very uncomfortable with silence in our conversation what must we do while someone else is speaking? We must digest what they are saying and assemble our reply at the same time. Now, here is the shortcoming I have noticed in myself. At times I find myself giving more thought to my reply than to what the other person is actually saying. What will I say? How will I say it? What will the other person think about my reply? Will they believe it to be an intelligent reply? Will they think it to be a silly reply? Have you ever found yourself thinking similar thoughts during a

conversation?

This problem is multi-fold. First, with all of these thoughts going through our minds while someone else is talking we may not really know what they are saying. Second, when trying to listen to someone and assemble our thoughts simultaneously we may not reply in the best way. Third, pride may govern our conversation more than we recognize. Perhaps we are more concerned with impressing people with our knowledge and wit than with truly listening to and helping the person we are talking with.

The following is a good passage to consider. "Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others (Philippians 2:3,4). Our focus in word and deed should not be on ourselves rather we must consider the welfare of other people. This includes conversation. If we esteem others better than ourselves, we will, out of deep concern, truly listen to them. So, in order to meet the needs of others in word and deed we must not be overly concerned with ourselves and the things of this world. But, with bills to pay, kids to raise, places to go and things to do, how do we overcome the tendency to be self-absorbed? How do we keep a proper perspective on our own concerns?

Perhaps the key to keeping our own concerns in their proper place is a matter of faith. The Lord said, "...take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" (Matthew 6:32-34). When we grow to believe the Lord's teaching in this regard and to implement it in our lives our concerns will become quite manageable. Only then will we be less concerned with the things of this world and more concerned with spiritual things. Perhaps then we can focus less on self and more on others. With less worldly baggage in our minds we can turn our full attention on the needs of others. We may then find that we are better able to listen to the people around us and really hear what they are saying.

Perhaps we need not be so concerned with silence. Wisdom may

Yorktown, IN 47396

Services: Sun. Bible Study 9:30 a.m. – Worship 10:30 a.m. &
6:00 p.m. – Wed. Bible Study 7:00 p.m.

UPON THE ROCK

PAGE 3

direct us to change the method of our conversation. If we were to dedicate our full attention to what someone is saying and then take time to organize our thoughts before replying, we may find our conversations to be more rewarding. **Paul Hoover may be contacted at P.O. Box 78, Valley Bend, WV 26293 or (304) 338-0892 or therock@meer.net**

[HTTP://WWW.GATE.NET/~JTCOC/SERMONS/SERMONS.HTM](http://www.gate.net/~jtcoc/sermons/sermons.htm)

PARTAKING OF THE LORD'S SUPPER ON THE FIRST DAY OF EVERY WEEK: THAT'S SETTLED!

By Thomas McLemore

There are voices in our ranks lately expressing doubt about weekly observance of Lord's supper and about, observing it only upon the first day of the week. Some have suggested that it may be partaken of on any day of the week.

Well, good reader, it is submitted to you that the matter is settled! There is no room for doubt, no need for further inquiry, and no call for further deliberation. The church of our Lord meets on the first day of the week to break bread.

THAT'S SETTLED!—LOGICALLY

It is clearly established by inference. It is beyond dispute that the Lord's church meets on the first day of every week. Paul wrote: "Now concerning the contribution for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that contributions need not be made when I come" (1 Corinthians 16:1, 2). The very basis of this plan for collecting the funds for the poor saints at Jerusalem lay in the fact that the church met on the

first day of every week.

Furthermore, it is clear that the church of our Lord ate the Lord's supper when they gathered for this meeting. Sadly we learn that the Corinthians were not partaking in a worthy manner at the time Paul wrote.

Yet it is clear that the Lord's church was supposed to eat the Lord's supper in a worthy manner when they gathered for this meeting. Paul wrote: "But in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. For, in the first place, when you assemble as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you; and I partly believe it, for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized. When you meet together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal, and one is hungry and another is drunk" (1 Corinthians 11:17-21). The conclusion from these observations is that when they gathered for this first day meeting, they were supposed to eat the Lord's supper and to do so in a worthy manner. Yes, someone says, but this is just one congregation. Is there evidence of uniformity in such a practice among all the congregations? There is every indication that what Paul wrote to Corinth he could, and would, have written to any congregation. Note these statements: "This is my rule in all the churches" (1 Corinthians 7:17). "...[We] recognize no other practice, nor do the churches of God" (1 Corinthians 11:16). "As in all the churches of the saints..." (1 Corinthians 14:33b). The directions he gave to Corinth he had previously given to the churches of Galatia (1 Corinthians 16:1).

THAT'S SETTLED—HISTORICALLY

Partaking of the Lord's supper on the first day of every week is so clearly the norm that the New Testament takes it for granted. It will be observed by a careful reading that there is no explicit command to meet on the first day of every week to partake of the Lord's supper. Neither Jesus, nor any apostle, nor any inspired writer commanded, "You shall meet together on the first day of every week and partake of the Lord's supper."

This is significant. There was no need to record any such explicit command. The fact that this was the church's practice was so well known and so firmly established that all the original readers of the New Testament would have been aware of it. This tells us that it goes

We are grateful for the guidance and support of elders Russell Baugh (Springfield, OH), Larry Reynolds (Yorktown, IN), Gary Seegraves (Springfield, OH) Herb Smith (Yorktown, IN) and George Welker (Yorktown, IN)

UPON THE ROCK website www.marnstreetchurch.net/upon_the_rock

BIBLE CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

Send your request to

Bible Correspondence Course
6600 Kilgore Avenue
Yorktown, IN 47396

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

I HEAR YOU—By Paul Hoover (page 1)

PARTAKING OF THE LORD'S SUPPER ON THE FIRST DAY OF EVERY WEEK: THAT'S SETTLED—By Thomas McLemore (page 3)

INTRODUCTION TO GENESIS—Mark E. Reynolds (page 6)

IN ANSWER TO YOUR QUESTIONS—By D. Gene West (page 8)

DEFINING TRUTH—By Gary W. Summers (page 11)

LABAN—By Steven Smithbauer (page 15)

SIN AND ITS CURE—Larry C. Reynolds (page 19)

East High Street church of Christ

2863 East High Street
Springfield, OH 45505

Services: Sun. Bible Study 9:00 a.m.—Worship 10:00 a.m. & 6:00 p.m. – Wed. Bible Study 7:00 p.m.

West Side church of Christ

6600 West Kilgore Avenue

will not hear” (Isaiah 59:1,2). The Bible also teaches that man is the “offspring of God” (Acts 17:29), and that God is the “Father of spirits” (Hebrews 12:9). If this doctrine were true it would make God sinful. Yet we know that God is all pure (1 John 1:5). Oh what a web we weave when we inject our own thinking.

The only way to judge the awfulness of sin is by the results of sin. Because of sin we suffer pain, sickness, suffering, death. These are things we suffer as a result of sin in this life. Think about the hereafter. “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Romans 6:23). In Matthew 25 Jesus gives a look at the judgment, in verse 41 he talks about a fire that is prepared for those who are wicked. In verse 46, he says that they will go into everlasting punishment. But the great thing about it is that we have a choice. We can turn away from sin and live for God (James 4:7).

What is the cure for sin? Jesus the Great Physician has the cure. He has the correct diagnosis and prescribes the correct remedy. We need to listen to him and follow what he prescribes. The Great Physician tells us that faith is essential to salvation from sin (John 8:24). He also taught that we must repent of our sins (Luke 13:3). He wants us to confess him (Matthew 10:32,33). He prescribes in His word that we should be baptized for the remission of our sins (Mark 16:16). Then we are to live our lives as lights to the world. Teaching the world about the Christ that is the cure for sin. Will you obey Him today? **Larry Reynolds may be contacted at 6600 Kilgore Ave., Yorktown, IN 47396.**

UPON THE ROCK is published for the purpose of setting forth sound biblical material concerning first-principles and evangelism. We strive to print articles that are informative for both brethren and non-Christians.

Paul Hoover, Editor

Larry Reynolds, Co-editor

Mark Reynolds, Associate Editor

Chic Barrett, Copy-Editor

Jason Ridgeway, Web-site Editor

therock@meer.net

without saying! What the New Testament has no need to say says it all!

This is amply borne out by passages which mention the communion. For instance, 1 Corinthians 11:17-33 is clearly not instructing Christians concerning what their practice is to be, but to do what they were already doing in a worthy manner. Neither is the establishing of the church’s practice the point of Acts 20:1-12 (especially v. 7). The church’s first day practice was a detail incidental to the narrative. The author of Acts states in essence, “Here are some interesting events which happened when the disciples met on the first day for the purpose of partaking of the Lord’s supper.” The author has no need to write, “Incidentally, Theophilus, I need to inform you of the little known fact that the disciples in any given place meet on the first day of every week for the purpose of eating the Lord’s supper.” (One might contrast Mark 7:3-4, 11, 19, which contain parenthetical statements in which the author must explain the obscure). There is no need to explain what is given and granted to the reader’s knowledge.

Add to this the unanimous witness of writings from the early Christian centuries and there is no question that this meeting on the first day of the week to break bread was the norm.

THAT’S SETTLED!—DOCTRINALLY

The meaning of the Lord’s supper and the significance of the meetings on every first day of the week are inseparable. The first day of the week is the Lord’s day (Rev. 1:10). There are several reasons why the first day of the week is the Lord’s: it belongs to him. The first day of the week is the Lord’s resurrection day. Notice the pattern according to which the resurrected Jesus met with his disciples. He met with them on the first day of the week (John 20:1,19,26). The Lord’s death is proclaimed on the day of the Lord’s victory over death, the first day of the week. The first day of the week is the day when his death was shown by the power of God to be a victory! Without question, this is the day on which to celebrate! In addition, Pentecost, the birthday of the Lord’s church, was the first day of the week, the Lord’s day (See Acts 2:1; Lev. 23:15, 16).

The breaking of the bread is the Lord’s supper (1 Corinthians 11:20). Doctrinally, the Lord’s day and the Lord’s supper BELONG TOGETHER. Either without the other is unthinkable! The natural thoughts of Christians are the following: It’s the Lord’s day. Let’s

celebrate the Lord's supper! We ought to celebrate the Lord's supper. It is the Lord's day! How awkward it seems to even think of celebrating the Lord's supper on some day other than his day or to meet on his day and not observe his supper!

These things should be learned and taught. They should be taught diligently to our children. There is no need for us or them to ever wonder if meeting on the first day of every week to break bread is questionable. **THAT'S SETTLED! Tom McLemore may be contacted at 338 Lake Harbour Dr., Ridgeland, MS 39157 and tmdidymus@juno.com**

INTRODUCTON TO GENESIS

By Mark F. Reynolds, associate editor

It is the intent of this writer to write an introduction to each book of the Bible, and submit it for publication in Upon The Rock. Hopefully this will give the reader a good, basic understanding of each book, and will help to set each book in its context as one sets out to study the Word of God. The best place to begin is with Genesis, the Book of Beginnings.

NAME

The name, Genesis, comes from the title given it in the Greek Septuagint Version, meaning, "The Book of the Generation." In the Hebrew it comes from a word meaning, "In the Beginning," the first words of the book. Genesis has often been called, "the book of beginnings," and with good reason. Genesis records the beginning of many things, consider just a few of them. The heavens and the earth have their origin recorded in the book of Genesis.

Plant, animal and human life begin (Genesis 1). Human culture is seen within this great book. Nations are developed, and nations fall. Various races of people are seen within Genesis. Cities are developed, along with government for those cities. Agriculture is created as a means for caring for one's family. Music is created during the times of Genesis. And, families are begun during the time of the book of Genesis. Where would we be without the book of Genesis to give us the history of so many beginnings? So much

And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, So that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God: And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee (Genesis 28:20-22).

We too, would do well to emulate this kind of dedication, and be willing to serve our God as fully, and without reservation, as Jacob did. **Steve Smithbauer may be contacted at 3169 Pennsylvania Ave., Weirton, WV 26062.**

<http://www.gospelgazette.com/index.shtml>

SIN AND ITS CURE

By Larry C Reynolds, co-editor

"Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come. Then said the Jews, Will he kill himself? because he saith, Whither I go, ye cannot come. And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world. I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:21-24). It is a sad occasion when a person dies. Yet is far worse when a person dies in their sins. In the above passage Jesus was talking to a group of Jews that had the opportunity to obey the words of Jesus. Because of their prejudiced hearts rejected the Christ that was sent to save them from their sins (Matthew 1:21). Because of that rejection many left this world in their sins.

In this article we want to explore sin and its cure. We realize that many religious groups teach that we inherit sin. They teach that we are born with sin and are totally depraved. But the Bible does not teach such a doctrine. It does teach sin is a transgression of God's law. "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4). Sin is something that we do not what we inherit. Listen to what God says in Isaiah. "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he

A MAN INVOLVED IN IDOLATRY

Idolatry is the ultimate expression of materialism. When Jacob “stole away” from Laban, Rachel took her father’s images (gods). It is not mentioned why she took them, either for their monetary value or for worship. Perhaps because Laban’s mind worked in such a materialistic fashion, the concept that God is a spirit may have eluded him.

Christians are to be aware of idolatry. We do not have as much trouble with the classical form of worshipping graven images, as we do with allowing material possessions to become the controlling forces of our lives. Paul told the Colossians in 3:5, “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry.” While we certainly recognize that we need to have material possessions to survive, to make them the top priority of our lives is a terrible mistake. Jesus said, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things, (Material needs, SPS), shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33).

Conclusion

It is interesting to notice that Jacob, too, possesses some of the same characteristics of his father-in-law, albeit to perhaps somewhat less of a degree. Jacob grasped the opportunity to take away Esau’s birthright, when his brother returned home from hunting and was hungry. (See Genesis 25:29ff.) And Jacob was deceptive in stealing away Isaac’s blessing which he intended for Esau.

It is possible that God used Laban to reveal Jacob’s own treacherous faults. By seeing Laban’s materialistic tendencies and the results of them, Jacob may have been persuaded to be a better person, one more suited to following Jehovah God. And to be fair, Laban did show generosity at Mizpah when he finally parts ways with his son-in-law and his daughters. He also showed reverence to God by obeying the voice of the angel who warned him not to harm Jacob. This may be, perhaps, due to Jacob’s influence during the past twenty years he was with Laban’s household.

At any rate, what distinguished Jacob from Laban was his dedication to God He had made up his mind at Bethel before even meeting Laban that God would be revered.

confusion as to our origin, the home as God would have it, and much more could be solved if people would just study and apply this inspired book.

PURPOSE

The Purpose of the book of Genesis is twofold. Its immediate purpose is to record the origin of the world and mankind, and then to trace the development of Israel as a divinely purposed and separated people. The ultimate purpose is to lay the foundation for the later unfolding in the New Testament of the divine plan of redemption. As one delves into the book of Genesis one begins to understand the nature of God Almighty, and how He deals with man.

AUTHOR

The inspired author of Genesis is undoubtedly Moses. A lot of books in the Bible state the author at the beginning of the book, but Genesis does not, so it is necessary to look elsewhere in the Bible for proof. Genesis is part of the Pentateuch, which are the first five books of the Bible. The Pentateuch is called the law of Moses by Bible writers, because he is the author of these books (Ezra 7:6; Neh. 8:1; II Chron. 25:4). Jesus believed that Moses was the author of the Pentateuch as he referred to Leviticus and attributed it to Moses (Matthew 8:4). Christ also referred to Deuteronomy and attributed it to Moses (Matthew 19:7-8). Further, Jesus knew that Moses had the ability to write: “For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me” (John 5:46). Still further, the term “the Lord spoke unto Moses” is used countless times within the Pentateuch (Exodus 17:17; 24:4; 34:27; Lev. 1:11; Deut. 1:1, etc.). It being the case that the book of Genesis is part of the Pentateuch, and that Moses is the author of the Pentateuch, it follows that Moses is the inspired author of Genesis.

SIGNIFICANT FACTS

Following are some other significant facts about Genesis. (1) There is a greater range of time represented by Genesis than in any other part of the Scriptures. It extends from the beginning of the world to

the death of Joseph. (2) Genesis tells the story of the race from a state of innocence to a state of sin. We have therefore three great basic facts - the fact of God, man created by God and the beginning of the moral history of man. The fourth great fact gives us the foundation of the whole Bible system - the first promise of a Redeemer for the salvation of a fallen race (Genesis 3:1 5). (3) In the first three chapters, Genesis furnishes the groundwork for all that is to follow in the Bible. One must begin where the Bible begins if one wants to trace the unfolding of God's redemptive plan, the central fact of the Bible.

OUTLINE BY GENERATIONS

- (1) The Generations of heaven and earth (2:1-4:26).
- (2) The generations of Adam (5:1-6:8).
- (3) The generations of Noah (6:9-9:22).
- (4) The generations of the sons of Noah (10:1-11:9).
- (5) The generations of Shem (11:10-26).
- (6) The generations of Terah (11:27-25:11).
- (7) The generations of Ishmael (25:12-1 8).
- (8) The generations of Isaac (25:19-35:29).
- (9) The generations of Esau (36:1-37:1).
- (10) The generations of Jacob (3 7:2-50:26) - Israelites.

Mark E. Reynolds may be contacted at Towne Acres Church of Christ, 2411 E. Riggin Rd., Muncie, IN. 47303.

<http://www.glasgow-coc.org>

IN ANSWER TO YOUR QUESTIONS

By D. Gene West

The questions are as follows: Are elders in the church all powerful? Does "rule over" mean make all decisions in matters of opinion and operation or to merely keep those decisions scriptural?

In reality this question, dealing with the work and responsibility of elders, can be divided into three areas, and that we will do as we attempt to answer the question as we have received it. I should point

A MAN OPERATING UNDER THE RULE OF DECEIT

One of the characteristics of a materialistic person is the fact that he will usually go to extreme lengths to receive gain. Laban was this way to the point of dishonesty. He deceived Jacob by giving him Leah as a wife, instead of Rachel, whom he loved, and for whom he had worked for seven years. Laban had realized that it was Jacob that God was blessing, and he was benefiting from that. So he devised a scheme to keep Jacob a little longer. He had to work another seven years for Rachel and so had two wives.

Jacob also worked an additional six years for a portion of Laban's livestock. The deal that was struck was one that Laban felt he could not lose. Jacob offered to take only the spotted and speckled from the herds for his wages, an infrequent if not rare variation. Laban no doubt felt that he would emerge on top of this deal, but there was a God in heaven on the side of Jacob that he failed to consider (For the full account see Genesis 30:31-43.)

There was no power in the "pilled rods" to cause the cattle and sheep to produce speckled offspring, but the God of heaven caused it to turn out this way. It is entirely possible that God commanded Jacob to do such as a test of faith. This would be similar to the command to Naaman to dip seven times in the Jordan River (2 Kings 5:10) or to our command to be baptized today (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38 etc.).

Yet, even though Jacob's acquisition of Laban's livestock was perfectly legal with regard to the agreement the two men made, Laban and his sons were angered, and felt as though Jacob had stolen their possessions from them (Genesis 31:1-2). After slipping away from Laban, and then later being overtaken by him, Jacob accuses his father-in-law of changing his wages "ten times" (Genesis 31:41). Such deception and dishonesty is to be expected of a man caught up in materialism.

Christians are told to lay aside "all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings" (1 Peter 2:1-3). Such dishonesty is not compatible with the religion of Jesus Christ. In fact, lying, is listed among other sins such as murder, idolatry and fornication as that which is responsible for relegating one's soul to the "lake of fire" (Revelation 21:8).

happens, God is with Jacob and continues to bless him, a fact to which even Laban concedes (Genesis 30:30). But after the deal with the “spotted, speckled, and ringstraked” cattle (Genesis 30:31-34), Laban and his sons feel that Jacob is cheating them, and stealing what is rightfully theirs. Jacob takes his wives and children and all the livestock rightfully his as per the agreement and slips away quietly and is gone three days before Laban notices his absence and begins to pursue him.

Laban is considered an undesirable character in the Bible. Why is that? The Bible reveals that Jacob’s faults are very similar to Laban’s; although Laban’s faults seem to be more exaggerated than Jacobs.

A MAN EASILY IMPRESSED WITH WEALTH

The first mention of Laban is in Genesis 24. Here, the servant of Abraham has come to Haran at the behest of his master to find a wife for Isaac among his own kindred. Laban is quick to invite the man to his father’s house simply because of his appraisal of the man’s expensively equipped party (Genesis 24:30-31). God is never impressed with a man’s possessions, although, men often are. Jacob, while concerned about profit, does not seem to be so enamored with it as to allow it to cloud his spiritual judgment.

James 2:1-9 tells Christians that we must not give special treatment to the rich. In fact partiality in this regard is sinful, according to verse 4. The young preacher was admonished to warn the church not to “trust in uncertain riches” (1 Timothy 6:17). Riches are also called a snare in 1 Timothy 6:9-12: But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.

It should be pointed out that it is not a sin for one to possess wealth. In fact, it is God who blesses us with wealth. (See Deuteronomy 8:18.) However one can be rich in worldly possessions and fail miserably in spirituality. Such is the case of the rich man in Luke 12:21, whom God called a fool. “So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

out that the one answering the question is an elder in the church and so he has no axes to grind in the way in which he answers.

Are elders in the church all powerful? Without knowing what the person asking the question means by the words “all powerful,” we are going to answer in the negative. The only Being in the Kingdom of Christ who is “all powerful” is the King himself, that is, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Jesus himself answered this question when he said to the apostles on the day of his resurrection from the dead, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:18). If Jesus spoke the truth when he made this statement, and he did, then the only Being in whom all power (authority) resides, in the church, is the Lord Jesus Christ. This is not to say that elders do not have the authority to do the work that God has given them to do. If that were not the case, then the Apostle Peter wrote nonsense in 1 Peter 5:1-4 when he warned elders not to domineer (Lord over) God’s flock. We cannot think of any reason why any Christian man who understands the meaning of biblical love, and who truly loves the church would want to domineer the flock of God. If he just wants to boss people around he should get a job as a foreman somewhere.

Elders must never forget that we have a Chief Shepherd who is watching us! The eldership is a work in the Kingdom of Christ, and not just a decision making position.

Does “rule over” mean to make all decisions in matters of opinion and operation or to merely keep those decisions scriptural? The words, “rule over” from Hebrews 13:7 & 17 is an unfortunate translation in the KJV and other translations as well. The Textus Receptus literally says, “Remember your leaders, who spoke to you the word of God. .” In the climate of the times in which the KJV was translated, leadership was always thought of in terms of “ruling.” But “ruling” in those days did not always mean what we mean when we interpret it to as to “exercise power over.” It meant to lead, guide, help and encourage. In verse seventeen of Hebrews thirteen the inspired author said, “Obey your leaders and yield to them for they watch over your souls...” The word “obey” in this passage comes from a Greek word which is the second person plural, present imperative of the Greek verb “peitho,” and means “to yield to the persuasion” of someone, in this case the leaders of the church. The word “yield” (submit) in this context comes from the second person plural, present imperative of “hupeiko,” and means to “give way to.” Both of these

words are commands since they are in the imperative, and refer to something the sheep in the flock of God, among whom the shepherds (elders) work, must do. We must yield to what they teach us from Holy Scripture, we have no choice, for to do less would be to disobey God. But if an elder were to command you to buy a Chevrolet, I know this is a silly example, but if that were to happen, you are under no obligation to obey him and submit to him just because he is an elder and you are not!

Do elders, does an elder, have a right to make all decisions in matters of opinion and operation, or merely keep those decisions scriptural? I am not sure what the querist means by “operation,” so I will omit that, but want to say this. I cannot think of any good reason why a wise elder(s) would not counsel a congregation on matters of opinion unless he thinks he is the only person who is smart enough to know what to do in all circumstances. If that is the case he has violated Romans 12:3, and is thinking of himself more highly than he ought to think. There is great wisdom in counseling many minds, but when the elders have done that, they are the ones who must make the final decision about when, where, and how a thing that falls into the realm of opinion is to be done. In such matters not everyone can be pleased, nor should all expect to be pleased, but they should be mature enough to work for Christ even if they did not get exactly what they wanted in an area of opinion. After all the area of opinion is the area in which God has not legislated (Study Romans 14 -15:13 very carefully.)

Elders, all elders, should remember the injunction of 1 Peter 5:1-4, and the writing of John in 3rd John. Members of the flock of God should not deliberately challenge elders on matters of faith for there is danger in discouraging them; and causing them to give up their work. One should hardly desire to stand before God with that on his conscience. The writer once had a woman to boastfully say, “When I finished with that eldership I ran them all out of office!” I never want to be in her shoes on the day when elders must give an account for her soul! They cannot do it with joy! **Gene West may be contacted at 69 E Thistle Dr., New Martinsville, WV 26155.**

and homosexuality are all right, they need to get back into the Scriptures to learn the truth of the matter.

If they think there are several ways for a person to come to God and be saved, they need to study Paul as he writes that there is one gospel, and if anyone preaches any other gospel, let him be accursed (Gal. 1:8-9). If they think that morality can be divorced from serving God, they need to study 1 Corinthians 5 and 6:9-11. If they think that truth is merely a matter of perceptions, they need to reconsider the Word of God, which always presumes that truth exists, that it can be known, and that it can be obeyed.

The problem with many denominational speakers, “Bishops,” etc., is that they are more in touch with the writings of today’s theologians than the epistles of Paul, Peter, James, Jude, or John. And whereas they know what Jesus said concerning love in Matthew 22:37-40, they have overlooked what Jesus said concerning the false doctrine of the Sadducees just verses earlier (23-32). Jesus did not tell the Sadducees that He respected their perception of truth; He told them, “You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God” (29). He also warned His disciples against the doctrine of the Pharisees and the Sadducees (Matthew 16:11-12). Apparently, our Lord was not interested in “a diverse community of truth.”

Laban

By Steven P. Smithbauer

Laban was the brother of Rebekah, Isaac’s wife, and also the nephew of Abraham. He came from that branch of Terah’s family that stayed in the Land of Haran after Abraham and Lot left for Canaan. He is the son of Nahor, Abraham’s brother. Most of what we know about Laban is during his twenty-year encounter with Jacob, Isaac and Rebekah’s son (Genesis 29-31).

Jacob, having tricked Isaac his father into giving him Esau’s rightful blessing (Genesis 27:22), had to flee for his life. So, Isaac and Rebekah decided to send him to Laban in Haran until Esau’s anger cooled. While he was there, Jacob took two wives, both Laban’s daughters, Rachel and Leah. He worked seven years for each of them, and six additional years for his own livestock—a total of twenty years.

During this time, both Jacob and Laban seem intent on besting the other in their dealings with each other. But no matter what else

are struggling so hard to find it? Instead, people are struggling hard to bury it as an ancient, irrelevant relic.

2. What is “a diverse community of truth”? Does that mean that we all believe what we want, but that we somehow remain united?

3. “We don’t water down truth.” Oh, so truth does exist, after all? Or is this just a phrase to salve the conscience? Most modernists and liberals try to pass themselves off as truth-seeking, truth-believing conservatives. Occasionally they throw in lines like these, but everything else they say belies this view.

4. “We respect one another’s perception of the truth.” We don’t water down truth, but we respect one another’s perception of truth. What does this phrase mean, if not that “you have your truth, and I have my truth; now let’s all agree to disagree”? The only problem with this idea is that Biblical truth says the Bishop’s perception of truth is wrong. Does anyone recall Jesus, the one who died on the cross for our sins, saying, “You shall have a perception of truth, and that perception will set you free.”

5. “It is imperative that we learn respect.” Wait a minute. The Bishop is already on record as having said that “God’s love is absolute truth” and “When a group decides there are other absolute truths, those absolute truths can become God.” Is learning respect an absolute truth that has become God? In this case, yes. That homosexuality is sin cannot be considered absolute truth; that abortion is murder cannot be considered absolute truth; but respecting beliefs which differ from what the Scriptures teach, that is an absolute truth (according to them).

6. We must not see each other as an object to be changed. [Why must we not? Is this another imperative, another absolute truth?] We can agree with the part that says not to see other people as objects. If we continue in the truths of the Bible, we will realize that all people are made in the image of God, that all have a soul which will live forever, that all will appear before the judgment seat of Christ, and that all will spend eternity in heaven or hell based on what they believe and practice.

The Bishop may have been studying too many theologians to recall that the gospel is all about change. When Paul went to Mars Hill, for example, did he try to change people from idolaters to Christians? Yes. Did he view the people as objects? No. The Bishop has set up an either-or situation which is not accurate. People are not objects, but they do need to be changed. If, for example, they think that abortion

DEFINING TRUTH

By Gary W Summers

On Monday, February, 22nd the Denton Record-Chronicle published the news story “Lecturer Seeks to Define The Truth.” An introductory paragraph states “William B Oden, the bishop of the North Texas Conference of the United Methodist Church, talked to local United Methodists Sunday night about the nature of truth, and the human tradition of trying to define it”(1A). Among other things, the speaker said: “Truth is difficult to define—I’ve heard it said that it is like trying to nail Jell-O to the wall. It’s duller than fiction. It doesn’t make for a good yarn. It’s lumpy. It’s shapeless. It needs editing.”(8A).

Most of these “definitions” imply that truth cannot be known or that it changes (or that it’s boring and not worth knowing). How different from the attitude suggested by the writer of Proverbs: “Buy the truth, and do not sell it” (23:23). This Scriptural statement conveys the idea that truth is valuable, that it can be known, and that it should be prized above inferior material things. If the speaker brought up passages of Scripture, they were not mentioned in this article (though the speech did appear to be rich in human wisdom).

As he neared the end of his lecture, Bishop Oden said that words have always been suspect when it comes to truth “because words have always been inadequate to express the deepest truths we know and live by” (8A).

What? We would be sorely tempted to ask what these deepest truths we know and live by are, but apparently the bishop cannot tell us since to do so requires words.

The Bee Gees sure messed up on this one when they sang, “Its only words, and words are all I have to take your heart away.” They should have sung, “I can’t speak words because they are inadequate to take your heart away” if feelings can be communicated by words, why cannot truths be expressed by words? The Bishop may be suspicious of these words, but the Holy Spirit inspired them: Jesus prayed, “Sanctify them through your Word; Your word is truth” (John 17:17). Frankly, we ought to be suspicious of someone who cannot communicate through words. What realm have we entered at this point unless it would be the land of subjective feelings or mysticism? God chose to communicate with us through the medium of words. He did not choose to radiate truths in our direction hoping that we would receive them—or come by them via osmosis.

Truth, the bishop said, is not a “what.” Truth, he said, is a “who.” Truth is relational, something that happens between people—between believers... “Jesus is not the truth because his words are true. The truth of Jesus is in us and among us, in our community of truth. . .” (8A).

What kind of gobbledegook is this? When Solomon said to “buy the truth,” he was not referring to a “what” but a “who”? When Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life,” He just meant that He was in us, among us, and in our community! One is reminded of a beatnik poetry reading in which people sit around listening to esoteric nonsense and affirm, “That was deep, man,” when they have absolutely no idea what was said.

THE “COMMUNITY”

In a related article appearing on the same date and page, “Bishop Commends Church Caught in Controversy,” we learn a little bit more about the “community of truth” in which Jesus allegedly exists. The bishop was present at the church on “The Day of Listening,” the day when delegates prayed for direction on matters of homosexuality and he said he has been “very aware” that the Denton church had been the target of sporadic protests because a physician who performs abortions is a member there (81A).

It is appropriate to ask “Why are people praying for direction on matters of homosexuality? Are they wondering if God still opposes it?” Yes, He still destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah over it (Gen. 19); it is still a vile and unnatural practice (Rom. 1:26); God still expects people to repent of it (1 Cor 6 9-11), and it still serves as an example of the suffering of eternal fire (Jude 7). Praying for guidance with respect to these facts would be useless; learn from them.

If the group is wondering how to deal with homosexuals, that is not a mystery, either. We should love them enough to communicate the gospel to them—just as we would to adulterers, fornicators, and thieves. They need to be told that their practice is a sin—but that it can be forgiven when they repent and are baptized (Acts 2:38).

They fellowship an abortionist, also, she is one who terminates the lives of babies in the womb. Why do they do so—unless they all believe that abortion is acceptable?

Otherwise, they would refuse her membership. Why would anyone remotely connected with the holy name of Jesus fellowship an abortionist? As John wrote, “You know that no murderer has eternal

life abiding in him” (1 John 3:15). [If they do not believe it is murder, let them debate the matter in public.]

This paragraph was followed by Oden’s comment that “it can be unfortunate for any church when groups who proclaim absolute truth lobby congregations” (8A). So, is abortion absolutely right, Bishop? If it is not, how can anyone perform it with a clear conscience? Paul wrote that “whatever is not from faith is sin” (Rom. 14:23). If someone’s position is that it is absolutely wrong, and she does it, she is a hypocrite. If she is uncertain whether it is right or wrong, she has no business doing it until she knows. And if she believes that it is absolutely right, then she should be able to defend her position.

“A community of truth can be clear that God’s love is absolute truth the bishop said in an interview following... “When a group decides there are other absolute truths, those absolute truths can become God” (8A).

So there is only one absolute truth, the love of God? Does the Bishop seriously think that it is absolutely true that God is holy and that He punishes sin? If he has not read Ezekiel lately, perhaps he may recall Ananias and Sapphira falling dead for the lie they told (Acts 5:1-11). God’s love forgives sins that are repented of; it does not overlook and tolerate sins in which people persist.

Jesus said that love was the greatest commandment—not the only one. With the Methodist Church’s failure to listen to what the Bible says on homosexuality and abortion, no wonder they need a definition of deep truths that cannot be communicated by words.

“In a day when all of us are struggling so hard to talk about and to find what is right and what is true, when we come together as a diverse community of truth, we don’t water down truth. We respect one another’s perception of truth. It is imperative that we learn respect. We must keep seeing each other as a subject to be encountered, not an object to be changed.” (8A).

This is some of the finest postmodern gibberish one could ever hope to read. The following observations, however, are in order.

1. Who is struggling hard to find out what is right and true? And how are they going about it? Faithful children of God study the Scriptures to learn wisdom and truth, but most of the academic world has simply relegated truth to that which a person feels or thinks about any particular subject. If we are content to relegate everything to a matter of “perception,” then in essence the conclusion is that “Truth doesn’t matter.” If truth is irrelevant, then how can it be accurate to say we