

The Reflector

PUBLISHED IN THE INTEREST OF NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTIANITY

CHURCH OF CHRIST

MEETING AT

1480 NORTH MAIN

VIDOR, TEXAS

Volume 39

April 2003

Number 4

SEEKING HIM FIRST!

If we as Christians are going to be able to please God, then we are going to have to learn to put Him first in our lives above all else. Jesus made the following statement in Matthew 6:33: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

The kingdom of God and its blessings must be more important to us than anything else. We also must seek the righteousness of God first, that is to be like God in our personal lives. And this will involve making personal changes and sacrifices in our lives. (Romans 12:1-2) And once we make the decision to serve God, then we cannot look back. Jesus said in Luke 9:62: "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

So when you have made that decision to put God first in your life, then make sure that you serve Him with all your heart. Paul said in Colossians 3:23: "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men."

ANSWERS TO LAST MONTH'S BIBLE QUESTIONS:

Both David (Psalms 110:1-4) and Zechariah (Zechariah 6:13) mention the fact that Jesus would be both a priest and a king at the same time. Melchizedek is mentioned in the Old Testament as being both a priest and a king at the same time as well. (Genesis 14:18/Hebrews 7:1)

The name of the first Christian martyr is Stephen (Acts 7:54-60) and the name of the last Christian martyr mentioned is Antipas. (Revelations 2:13)

QUESTIONS FOR THIS MONTH:

What is the name of the king in the Old Testament who had 88 children?
(How many sons and daughters did he have?)

What Christian performed miracles in the country of Samaria while preaching the gospel there? (Who is one of his more notorious converts at that time and what did the people think about him?)

DOES ANYONE LIVING TODAY HAVE SPIRITUAL GIFTS?

The answer to this question is "NO!" There were only two means by which a person had the power to perform miracles after the church was established: (1) "Through the laying on of apostles hands" > (Acts 6:6-8/Acts 8:18-19/Acts 19:1-6); and (2) "Through the baptism of the Holy Spirit" > (Acts 1:8 & 2:1-4/2nd Corinthians 11:5 & 12:11-12). Since there are "no living apostles on earth" at this time, then the "laying on of apostles hands" is likewise not available today. And since there is only "one baptism" available today according to Ephesians 4:5, and that is the "baptism of the Great Commission" (Matthew 28:18-20), then no one today is receiving Holy Spirit baptism; therefore "no miraculous gifts." According to 1st Corinthians 13:8-10, the miraculous gifts were "temporary in nature", lasting only as long as it took to "reveal & confirm God's revelation to mankind." (Mark 16:20/Hebrews 2:1-4) When that revelation was complete and confirmed, the miraculous gifts ceased. When you therefore hear of someone claiming to be able to perform miracles today, you can know right away that it simply is not true.

“HINDERING SOUND PREACHING”

To some, “sound preaching” necessitates rude, obnoxious speech. And, when an audience tires of the ranting in sermons drawn out into infinity (more recently practiced as a kind of proof of soundness), they are dismissed as “soft” and “just can’t take good, sound preaching.” I suppose I must have missed that somewhere in what Paul wrote to Timothy. Most of the fellows I know who habitually try to preach over an hour don’t have the ability to hold an audience’s attention that long. And, then there are preachers who write articles that are derogatory by implication – preachers for whom I had some respect and believed they were genuine and fair minded. Such writing does not make me uncomfortable, because the charges are a figment of their imagination but I am insulted by their innuendoes – debasing insinuations about a brother must surely be justified in instructions to Timothy somewhere as well – must have missed that too.

Some claim that I am too soft while others are adamant that I am too hard – I learned as a young preacher not to be too impressed with what people thought, to be independent in my thinking and just do the best I could to preach the word (cf. Galatians 1:10). Young fellows who may be enamored with a champion of a cause would do well to learn to be students of the scriptures for themselves. I strongly resent someone telling me that I have to preach lessons the way they do and if I do not identify by name every brother who is supposed to be “off” on Romans 14, then I am soft on the fellowship issue. Furthermore, charges like believing in “unity in diversity” are loosely thrown around by preachers who make the same, basic approach that I do to fellowship in a congregation composed of those who disagree. And they cover their differences on marriage, divorce and remarriage by a patent – “we agree in principle but disagree in application” – which says, within itself, that they “fellowship” (accept and/or endorse) each other while disagreeing on some things. But that defense is about like saying of a Baptist who believes in baptism that “we agree in principle on baptism but disagree on the application.” The truth of the matter is that they do disagree on a doctrinal matter, because it is the old position of mental divorcement, after the fact, that was first affirmed by Lloyd Moyer and refuted by Gene Frost in the middle 60’s. It appears that they are resolving that difficulty by adopting the mental divorcement position held by the one preacher in attempting to be consistent but that is just compounding their problem.

And then, when elders decide not to have a preacher hold a meeting who seems compelled, as do others, to warn its members of the modern apostasy (as they would call it), the elders are charged with “hindering the spread of the gospel.” That necessarily means that all the teaching and preaching we have done on Romans 14 and marriage/divorce/remarriage is inadequate and we must have someone, whose interpretations are less strict and whom we believe to teach error on the subject, to instruct us so that we might be sound in the faith. God forbid!

And, to those who scrutinize writings and sermons and share personal correspondence to get something on someone and decide for the brotherhood where to place us, let your consciences be your guide. – Jim R. Everett