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## **Things that Differ: Dispensational Church vs. Local Assembly**

*Joel Portman*

Sadly, anyone reading the majority of commentaries that mention the church would be left with a certain degree of confusion and uncertainty. Most writers fail to distinguish the local assembly from the church which is the body of Christ (otherwise also called the universal church because it includes every true believer in the Lord Jesus, the dispensational church, because it characterizes God's ordained gathering for His people in this dispensation). This is sad, because such failure has a number of results:

### **1. Confusion of Terminology**

It causes confusion in interpretation of passages such as Matt. 16:18-20, 18:18-20, Rev. 1:4, 2:5, etc. Why is there a difference between the two passages in Matthew's gospel? In Matthew 16, the Lord Jesus speaks of a church that he would build against which the entire powers of hell would not be able to succeed. How does that correspond with the reality that local assemblies can be destroyed, defiled, or for other reasons, cease to exist? How would that relate to the warning of the Lord to the local church in Ephesus in Rev. 2 that, if there was no repentance, He would remove the candlestick (lampstand) out of its place? In addition, Rev. 1 doesn't speak of the Lord standing in the midst of the "church" but in the midst of the "churches". This indicates how individual they were as He viewed them. Rev. 1:11 inserts an "and" between the names of each

church, emphasizing that they were not one church in many different localities, but rather individual churches, each with its own responsibility to demonstrate faithfulness to the Lord and faithfully shed the light of testimony in that area. This despite the fact that all those addressed were in the same locality of Asia Minor. So they didn't compose the "church" of Asia Minor, but rather were individual assembly testimonies and the believers personally were members of the body of Christ. The large aspect of the church (body of Christ) isn't composed of all the corporate gatherings of believers in the world; it is rather composed of individual believers regardless whether they are or with what they are associated. It includes those who are found in "church groups" that are not local assemblies in the scriptural sense of the Word, but they are in the body of Christ nevertheless if truly saved.

In Matthew 18:17, the one refusing to hear the admonitions of the individual believer or that of the others, must be told to the church. Does that mean the entire body of Christ, or is it with reference to the local assembly? Obviously, it refers to the latter.

How are we to interpret the teaching in 1 Corinthians, for example, that deals with assembly order and principles of gathering? How is one to understand references to the church in the Acts, such as "tidings came to the ears of the church (Acts 11:22)? This obviously doesn't refer to a building, since buildings don't have ears! Neither is it a reference to the entire body of Christ, unless one assumes that the assembly in Jerusalem was the entirety of that aspect of the church.

Such examples could be multiplied and would only serve to illustrate how far from the basic teaching of the New Testament the religious world has gone. Few recognize the significance of the individual character of a local assembly, for if they did, they would not have formed large denominational organizations that break down the autonomy of a local assembly company.

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## **2. Confusion of Application**

It results in confusion in the application of the terms used. As a result, we commonly read of the church in China (instead of the churches in China), or the Church of England (instead of churches in England), or other terminology that is not found in God's Word. In every scriptural reference where we read of a/the "church", it refers to a local congregation of such believers. Even in 1 Cor. 15:9, where Paul says that he "persecuted the church of God," he is likely referring to the church that existed in Jerusalem, though he was stopped and saved on his way to Damascus to continue his evil plans. In Acts 8:1,3 it seems clear that his persecution program was being carried out in Jerusalem only at that point.

So that it is clearly contrary to biblical teaching to speak of "the church" such as the "Baptist Church", the "Presbyterian Church", or any other. These represent organized groups with central headquarters and a hierarchy that is never seen in the New Testament. What we find is that there were only local assemblies of believers who were united in faith, doctrine and practices with others, but yet autonomous in their character and responsibility. We also need to take care that we don't speak of "the Gospel Hall church in XXX locality" or even "the assembly in such a place", since that is bordering on the same kind of terminology. Usage of terms in a careless manner results in practice if this is continued.

## **3. Confusion of Practices**

It results in confusion in application of practices. As a result, few churches of our world recognize the principles of local assembly reception, but would receive any professing believer to the Lord's Supper, whether in assembly fellowship or not.

If persons present themselves at an assembly meeting in a location, saying that they are Christians, are they to be received? And is it to the entire assembly fellowship, or simply to the meeting to remember the Lord? And if so, then how can they be dealt with on the basis of 1 Cor. 5? If anyone came in this way with those words, it would be impossible to discern immediately the heart's condition and whether or not that person was truly born

again or whether or not they held wrong doctrine or were involved in wrong practices. That would take time to be learned by what they practice or believe. Some use 1 Cor. 11:28 to justify acting in this way, claiming that the responsibility is on the individual to judge himself. However, that scripture is addressed to those who were already and presently in the fellowship of the assembly in Corinth, not to anyone who might come to the meeting. In addition, we have the example of Saul in Acts 9, that when he came to Jerusalem and was seeking (continually, as the text indicates), the brethren of that assembly were reluctant to receive him to their fellowship. One might argue that it was because of his past history, or possibly because during the three years that had ensued, he hadn't come to Jerusalem. There may be some validity in that argument, but we find the same to be characteristic of other churches in practice.

The expectation and practice of the early assemblies in God's Word was to use letters that served to recommend the bearer to the receiving assembly as a person who was recognized to be in fellowship with the commending assembly (Rom. 16:1-2, 2 Cor. 3:1). It needs to be stated, though, that such a letter is not a demand that the bearer be received; it is rather a recommendation based on the evidence of life and belief that they have demonstrated in the place from which they would come. This preserves the individual character of local assemblies from unintentionally drifting into a quasi-denominational condition.

#### 4. Confusion in Discipline

Confusion in assembly discipline also results, since if all who are in the body of Christ are also allowed into a local assembly, how can discipline such as is taught in 1 Cor. 5:13 or elsewhere be carried out? If a person who professes to be a believer is thus allowed to take part in the privileges of a local assembly, would they also be subject to the authority of that assembly as expressed in the assembly oversight? If never received scripturally, how could they be dealt with scripturally? How would it be possible for one to be dealt with according to the teaching of Matthew 18:15-20?

In the early days of the church, we know that for one to associate oneself with those called Christians implied and involved far more than today. Even baptism was a clear evidence of the reality of one's profession, since to do so would possibly involve persecution from others. So it is difficult to exactly reconcile all the practices of believers in Acts with our present day, when easy-believism is rampant and children brought up in Christian homes are continually encouraged to profess faith in the Lord Jesus. It seems clear that we shouldn't insert present conditions and practices into the teaching and practices of the New Testament; rather we should seek to faithfully apply what we see and learn from the Word of God to the present principles and practices of assemblies today.

#### Summarized Distinctions

To summarize the differences that exist and to terminate this article, let's look at a list of the differences that mark the dispensational church and a local assembly.

#### Body of Christ

#### Local assembly

- |  |                                    |
|--|------------------------------------|
| 1. Mystical entity                         | (both are spiritual)               |
|  | Physical entity                    |
| 2. No outward earthly testimony            | Testimony for Christ expected      |
| 3. No member can be removed                | Believers may be put away          |
| 4. No Gender recognized (Gal. 3:28)        | Genders recognized, diff. function |
| 5. Unaffected by Satan (Mt. 18)            | May be affected by Satan (Acts 6)  |
| 6. Full unity, undivided                   | May be divided into factions       |
| 7. Cannot be defiled, absolutely pure/holy | May be defiled by sin and evil     |
| 8. Never ceases to exist                   | May cease to exist or function     |
| 9. Endures for eternity                    | Ceases at the rapture              |
| 10. All members not together presently     | All meet together regularly        |
| 11. Reception on basis of New Birth        | Received by the local assembly     |
| 12. Lord preserves it faultless            | Believers seek to preserve         |

13. No Public functions  
Public functions are essential
14. The Lord cares for it  
Responsible men care for
15. No personal fitness to enter, only saved  
Sound in life and doctrine to enter
16. Never an unsaved person included  
May be unsaved included

## Prepared, pt 3.

*Robert Surgenor*

### WAR - Soldiers Prepared

"**A**nd of Benjamin; Eliada a mighty man of valor, and with him armed men with bow and shield two hundred thousand. And next him was Jehozabad, and with him an hundred and fourscore thousand ready prepared for the war" (2 Chr. 17:17-18).

This scripture relates to the days of Jehoshaphat, a good King in Judah. "And the LORD was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the first ways of his father David, and sought not unto Baalim; But sought to the LORD God of his father, therefore the LORD stablished the kingdom in his hand; and all Judah brought to Jehoshaphat presents; and he had riches and honor in abundance" (2 Chron. 17:3-5). Being a wise king, he established a strong army to protect his interests. You will notice that his warriors were well equipped, and ready and prepared for war. Their minds were programmed to fight for the king.

Coming to our day, I find a similarity. Did you ever consider the fact that the moment you were saved you were enrolled in the Lord's army? You automatically became a soldier of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul exhorted Timothy; "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please Him who hath chosen him to be a soldier" (2 Tim. 2:3-4). Being a good soldier brings affliction, and trouble, which is the meaning of the word "hardness." "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12).

A "good soldier" is one that is competent, able, such as one ought to be, useful and

commendable. He does not become entangled with the affairs of this life. More important things occupy his mind, namely things related to the Christian's warfare. True, we live in this world, we do business with it, but let us be careful not to become entangled with its business and its pleasures. Being absorbed with the world is not conducive to good soldiery.

Being chosen by the Lord to be His soldier, the aim of that chosen one should be to please the Lord who chose him. God said of His Son, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17). "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps" (2 Pet.2:21). If Christ pleased His Father, then if we follow His steps, we too shall please Him and His Father.

As a soldier we have enemies. One of them is very dangerous, for he is always present. That enemy is the flesh, our depraved and corrupt nature. Peter warns us; "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (1 Pet. 2:11). Anything that enters your mind that is contrary to the scriptures is the flesh. The moment you were saved, this monster declared war on you, seeking to ruin your capability to function as an effective soldier for the Lord Jesus Christ. Scripture tells us; "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Gal. 5:16-17). The battle rages and you either yield to the Holy Spirit or to the flesh.

However, there is another enemy--Satan and all his demon host! This uniquely intelligent and wise fallen cherub angel commands a tremendous army of fallen angelic beings. All the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them have been delivered into his hand (Matt. 4:8). His power far surpasses all the power of earthly rulers combined. The whole world lieth in his arms (1 Jn. 5:19). He is the "prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2:2), and the "god of this world," who blinds the minds of all unbelievers (2 Cor. 4:4).

There is an old saying, "Know your enemy." Paul said, "We are not ignorant of his devices" (2 Cor. 2:11). He is described in Rev-

elation 12:9 as, "the great dragon...that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world:"

As the dragon, he is brutal; As the old serpent, he is the experienced one in deception; As the devil, he is a slanderer; and as Satan, he is an adversary.

The Lord referred to him as a strong man armed keeping his goods (Lk. 11:21). The sinner is held by Satan's captive chain, but the Christian has been delivered from the slavery of Satan by a "stronger than he," namely the Lord Jesus Christ. This, to Satan, is a smarting blow, and immediately he wages war against the delivered one. He is cunning, cruel, clever, and untiring in holding the sons of men in his dreadful and supernatural grasp.

As a soldier, you have been called upon to go out and fight him. Yes! You! A frail, mortal, insignificant human being! You might cry out, "How can I stand a chance against such a formidable foe?" The answer is simple. There is one far greater than your foe, even the Holy Spirit that dwells within you. Remember, "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Tim. 1:7). The word "power" is, "dunamis," the word we derive the word "dynamite" from. Godly Christians are DYNAMITE! Do you believe that? Well — God says it!

God equips and exhorts His soldiers. "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth (sincerity, integrity), and having on the breastplate of righteousness (uprightness); And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace (secure footing in the gospel); Above all, taking the shield of faith (confidence and utter dependence in God), wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation (our mind set on

His coming), and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit" (Eph. 6:10-18).

The armor is readily available, have you put it on? If so, then you are not afraid to approach any mortal with the gospel. When you enter the grocery, or department store, you are armed and ready. Ready to use the sword that is living, powerful, and exceedingly sharp (Heb.4:12). The devil may have his fiery darts, but if you are a diligent soldier of Jesus Christ you have the most powerful weapon on earth — the word of God! "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds" (2 Cor.10:4).

In the secular world, skilled shooters fire over 50,000 rounds of ammunition yearly to develop and maintain their skill in hitting the target. How skilled are you with your sword? Can you use it effectively on the enemy? Skill and effectiveness takes practice. How often do you engage in battle with the powers of darkness? How often do you become engaged with sinners and speak to them about God's wonderful salvation. How many gospel verses have you committed to memory? Blind Fanny Crosby, by the age of 15, had memorized the four gospels, the Pentateuch, the Book of Proverbs, the Song of Solomon, and many of the Psalms. Remember, God's word pierces, and is very effective. Gospel tracts to me are like ammunition. Some handguns hold up to 20 rounds of ammunition, but the Christian is equipped with a "weapon" that has 31,102 rounds of ammunition. That's the number of verses in your Bible.

Then, there is the way in which you approach people. Engage in light conversation, and slowly move toward spiritual truths. Show an interest in what they are interested in. Listen well. Gaining one's confidence is an art that comes by experience. After mastering that art, you can drop a few gospel gems for them to consider. A gospel tract is a valuable tool in seeking souls. Carry a variety and give the one out that best suits their nature. Remember, God has given you a sound mind to use in your warfare. Remember, "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (Jn. 1:17). I remember an old servant saying, "Grace is the oil applied to the



sword of truth, to help it go in easier." How true. A gracious and loving manner is a great asset in speaking the truth of the gospel to the unregenerate.

So, there it is. You are a soldier. You are at war. Are you in the front line, or are you AWOL, hiding behind the line in "Coward's Cave"? Are you able to exclaim like Paul; "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For ye are our glory and joy" (1 Thess. 2:19-20). He would rejoice with the Thessalonian believers in heaven for they were trophies of his work. He could say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4:7). Do you have trophies to rejoice over? Are you prepared for the battle? Remember, you are a soldier.

### **WARMTH - Women Prepared**

"And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the sabbath day according to the commandment. Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them" Lk.23:56-24:1).

What a lovely and touching scene. A few godly sisters showing their affection, love, and reverence for the Lord Jesus, their Shepherd and Friend. Standing, they watched Joseph and Nicodemus carefully wrap the body of their blessed Lord in fine linen, then carefully lay it in Joseph's fragrant, and virgin tomb. Can you picture them going to their homes with tears streaming down their cheeks? I can, for they loved Him much, and now He was gone. It was shortly after 3 PM and the Sabbath commenced at 6 PM. They had less than three hours to procure and prepare their sweet spices in view of returning and anointing His sacred body. Sisters that are busy in doing something for God are always valuable in God's assembly. Being God-fearing, they, according to the Law of God, rested on the sabbath day. It was very early in the morning when they approached the sacred tomb. This reveals an earnestness to do something for their Lord. It is wonderful and refreshing to observe earnest Christians. They are always ready and enthusiastic to do some-

thing for the Lord. How enthused are you, especially on Lord's Day morning, with the breaking of bread in view? Is it a "last minute affair" with you, or are you like these godly sisters - "very early"?

They not only came early, they came prepared. Valuable and sweet spices, just for Him. The motivation for their earnestness and effectiveness was Christ. We as God's people are enjoined to come to the gathering prepared. The psalmist declared; "My meditation of Him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the LORD." Prior meditation on Christ will fill our hearts with "sweet spices" to anoint Him. Rising early, reading His word, and speaking to Him in prayer, is all in the process of preparing for the Lord's supper. Many years ago, an elder's wife bragged to me, that when her husband prayed, she always knew what he was going to say next. What she didn't realize was that she was exposing his carnality. How distressing to hear one using, time and time again, stock phrases in their prayer. It becomes just a ramble from the brain, and very little from the heart. I wonder often, what the Lord thinks of such presentations. Let us carefully prepare. The psalmist cried; "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in Thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer" (Ps. 19:14).

Notice; "the meditation of my heart." Solomon said; "The preacher sought to find out acceptable (delightful) words" (Eccl. 12:10). In the quietness and stillness of solitude, coupled with sweet meditation on Christ, the heart becomes filled with sweet spices, and when that person gathers with others at the Lord's supper, the full heart cannot contain its fullness, but overflows and pours out delightful words, refreshing, sweet and real, in holy praise to God. When that takes place, like Mary's spikenard, the house of God will be filled with the odour of the sweet spices prepared beforehand (Jn.12:3), and God will be delighted, and the saints blessed. Dear brother, dear sister, do come prepared.

**"Indifference to error is a sign of false liberalism and humiliating weakness."**

Nathaniel Williams, "Commentary on Jude"

## Have we Lost our Song?

*Grace Leonard Klahr*

"Serve the Lord with gladness: come before His presence with singing" (Psalm 100:2)

**A** Christian who has lost his spiritual glow is like a rose without fragrance, or a bird without song. The only people who have the birthright of joy are the children of God. A believer, saved by grace, kept by the power of God, and destined for an eternity of bliss has every reason to rejoice. The angels must marvel that we can be silent when we have so much about which to be jubilant! Someone has said, "The Lord meant us all to be walking doxologies!" Joy was intended to be one of the distinguishing marks of the child of God.

The statement has been made that during the Boxer Rebellion in China, the Christians could be distinguished from those who were not by their shining faces. A radiant Christian cannot be hid. In Matthew 5:14 we read, "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid." Years ago a man of God wrote something like this, "If Christ be dwelling in the heart, He will be seen looking out at the windows." There is a glow on the countenance and a shine in the eyes that invariably sets apart from his fellows, the one indwelt and filled by the Holy Spirit.

From the pen of Dr. F. B. Meyer comes this amazing statement: "It is a peculiar thing," said an embalmer as he stood by a woman's casket, "but it isn't necessary to tell me she was a Christian; I always know as soon as I see the body. The glory leaves its stamp on the face." All too often, however, the Christian who possesses this spiritual glow, seems to be the exception rather than the rule. Wherever such an one is found, his life is a testimony to old and young alike. Years ago there was a believer so noted for his joyous Christian life, that a child said of him that she believed he went to heaven every night because he was so happy every day! The secret of the joy and power of the early church is found in Acts 1:8, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the

earth." Bible scholars tell us that the word used for power in the preceding verse is "dunamis" in the original Greek. It is the source of our English words, dynamics and dynamo. When the Christians were filled with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, it was as though a great dynamo of power had been placed within their being, and they were henceforth transformed from weakness to strength, from cowardice to courage, and from failure to victory.

The radiance of first century Christianity seems largely lost today. A minister once said, "We have lost our spiritual ecstasy in a world of afflictions." Our twentieth century prospective is so far removed from the day when the church was in its infancy, that we are unaware of how far we have drifted. We have become accustomed to conditions as they are, and think them normal.

The church of today has a multiplicity of activities. It is highly organized, its workers well trained, and its talent abundant. In spite of all this, however, do we not share in our Lord's indictment against the church at Ephesus: "But I have this against thee, that thou didst leave thy first love" (Revelation 2:4 Revised Version). If the love of Christ is no longer the motivating factor of our service, we may stand one day before the Judgment Seat of Christ and see our works ascend in flame (1 Corinthians 3:12-15).

There are two passages of Scripture which form an intensely interesting study in contrasts. In 1 Thessalonians 1:3, we read, "Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, before our God and Father" (Revised Version). In His message to the church at Ephesus our Lord said, "I know thy works, and thy toil and patience, and that thou canst not bear evil men, and didst try them that call themselves apostles, and they are not, and didst find them false; and thou hast patience and didst bear for my name's sake, and hast not grown weary. But I have this against thee, that thou didst leave thy first love" (Revelation 2:2-4 Revised Version).

At first glance we note a similarity of wording between the passage in 1 Thessalonians and the first part of the second verse of Revelation 2. Both churches were said to

possess work, labor, and patience. But note the words omitted in the message to the Ephesians. They had works - but no mention is made of their faith. They labored - but the motive power of love was lacking. They possessed patience - but the hope of Christ's coming had grown dim. The Ephesian church carried on their activities as usual, and a casual observer might have detected nothing amiss.

Indeed, they possessed many commendable qualities. They were active in Christian work, thoroughly orthodox, and vigorously contending for the faith. The machinery was all there-but the power was gone; and He whose eyes are as a flame of fire knew that the spiritual dynamo was inoperative.

Many years ago John Newton expressed this truth, in a very striking manner in one of his poems:

"Thus saith the Lord to Ephesus,  
And thus He speaks to some of us:  
'Amidst my churches, lo! I stand,  
And hold the pastors in My hand.'

'Thy works to Me are fully known,  
Thy patience and thy toil I own;  
Thy views of Gospel-truth are clear,  
Nor canst thou other doctrine bear.'

'Yet I must blame, while I approve;  
Where is thy fruit, thy fervent love?  
Dost thou forget My love to thee,  
That thine is grown so faint to Me?'

'Recall to mind the happy days  
When thou wast filled with joy and praise;  
Repent, thy former works renew,  
Then I'll restore thy comforts too.'

'Return at once, when I reprove,  
Lest I thy candlestick remove,  
And thou, too late, thy loss lament;  
I warn before I strike--Repent.'"

The early church was a joyful church-a singing church! In times of revival and awakening there has always been a return to the radiance of New Testament Christianity. Someone has said that the Welsh Revival was a

revival of song. The Welsh had no song leader and needed none! As the Holy Spirit moved upon their hearts, song burst forth spontaneously in mighty waves of melody.

G. Campbell Morgan visited the scene of the Welsh Revival and in a sermon in Westminster Chapel reported: "In connection with the awakening there were no hymn-books, no choirs, no organs. There were organs, but silent...No song books, but ah, me, I nearly wept tonight over the singing of our last hymn. When the Welsh sing they abandon themselves to their singing...No choir, did I say? It was all choir! And hymns! I stood and listened in wonder and amazement as the congregation sang hymn after hymn, without hymn-books."

Whether serving or suffering, living or dying, the early Christians rejoiced in the Lord. It has been said that the martyrs entered the arena singing-and died smiling! Like a buoy, this joy carried them triumphantly over the crest of the angry waves of hate and persecution which broke about them. We are told in Acts 5:40, 41 that, after the apostles had been beaten for their testimony, "They departed from the presence of the council, REJOICING that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name."

Neither the cruel stocks nor their bleeding backs could quench the joy of Paul and Silas, and the foul prison walls re-echoed to the unwonted sound of prayer and songs of praise. Stephan's face shone like the face of an angel as he faced the council, and he seemed scarcely to have heeded the pelting stones that hastened his entrance into the glory which already flooded his soul.

We have a modern day example of all this in tragedy-ridden Korea. Before dawn, the Korean Christians meet for prayer in unheated buildings. Among the number are widows of Korean pastors who have been recently martyred. Others are refugees who have escaped from the enemy with their lives and little else. In spite of all that they have suffered, they not only pray but they SING and PRAISE the Lord. Satan may do his worst to destroy such a people, but the hosts of hell have always found them unconquerable. Even martyrdom cannot destroy them, for where one has fallen a score will arise to fill up the ranks behind him.



It is impossible to measure the unconscious influence and blessing of a life controlled by the Holy Spirit. The story has been related of a bigoted Chinese who never could be induced to attend a Christian service. One day, however, he called on the missionary and said, "I want to hear about your religion. I never have heard the words of it but I have the laughter in your house and in the houses of my countrymen who have embraced your faith. And if you have anything that makes people so joyous I want it."

So often the unsaved, particularly the young, will say when the claims of Christ are presented to them, "I don't want to be saved now. I want to have a good time. I want to enjoy life." Yet very often these same young people have hungry hearts and long for real joy and satisfaction. They are like a young man who once wrote to the question and answer department of a newspaper saying, "I'm puzzled about life, and I wonder if you could help me. Am I different from everyone else my age, or not? Or do they wear a false mask as I do? I go to parties and dances and ACT as if I were enjoying myself like everyone else I know. But I am not enjoying myself at all. I always feel that there is SOMETHING MISSING and I don't know what it is."

To see a life filled with the joy of the Lord and satisfied with Christ, is the only effective answer to these young people who find something missing in life. What a joy it is to see young folk who have found Christ all-sufficient for every need of their hearts. A young girl had just been saved and was radiant in her new-found joy. When giving a testimony she said, "I feel as though I had swallowed an electric light bulb, and it was all lit up!" Beecher once wrote, "Christians, it is your duty not only to be good, but to shine; and, of all the lights which you kindle on the face, joy will reach farthest out to sea, where troubled mariners are seeking the shore." The story has been told of a minister and his wife who invited to their home a young woman whom they were anxious to win for the Lord. As they prayed about the matter, they felt led to refrain from urging a decision upon her at that time, but rather to make her visit just as joyous as possible. After the girl returned home she wrote, "I always thought

that to be a Christian meant to sacrifice all joy and happiness, and to become sad and long-faced; consequently, I had no desire to be one. But the day which I spent with you showed me how mistaken I was. I never have been in a home more joy-tilled than yours. You have shown me, not only that one can be a Christian and still be joyful, but also that one cannot be really joyful without being a Christian. I want you to know that I have accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as my own personal Saviour, and I am just beginning to learn what true joy and happiness mean."

The joy of the Lord, unlike mere happiness, is unaffected by circumstances of adversity. Years ago in a home for aged and helpless ones lay a woman who was completely paralyzed. She was known far and wide for her radiant Christian life. They called her "Sunbeam." Ministers and missionaries loved to spend a few moments at her bedside. All who visited her came away with fresh joy and blessing in their hurts. She had learned the truth of Habakkuk 3:17, 18 "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: YET I WILL REJOICE IN THE LORD, I WILL JOY IN THE GOD OF MY SALVATION."

A minister often called to see an aged invalid who was both deaf and bedfast. He went to bring comfort to her, but always came away with a blessing in his own soul. One day when he asked her the secret of her happy Christian life, she smiled and said, "I am learning to enjoy the comfort of the Holy Spirit." Yes, God has made abundant provision for every experience of life. Nothing can separate us from the love of God, nor from the joy and peace which He can bestow. Even the dark valley of the shadow of death is made bright with the presence of our Lord. As the Psalmist wrote, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; FOR THOU ART WITH ME." Psalm 23:4. A lad in his teens lay dying. His father asked, "It is all peace and joy, Frank, is it not?" "Oh," he replied, "It has been peace and joy all along; but now it's OVERFLOWING."

The joy of the Lord should be deeper and the song in our hearts sweeter, as we near the journey's end. Our lives should be like the book of Psalms. The crescendo of praise swells as the book nears the conclusion. The last Psalm is a veritable hallelujah chorus! Thirteen hallelujahs in six short verses! This song of praise, begun in earth, will reach its grand finale in heaven.

In the book of the Revelation the curtains of glory are parted, and we catch a glimpse of the glorified throng of the redeemed as they gather before the throne, singing praises of the Lamb who washed them from their sins in His own blood. Though our feet still stand on the shores of time, earth's discordant clamor seems momentarily hushed as we hear them saying, "Alleluia! Salvation, and. glory, and honour, and power, unto the lord our God. Alleluia! For the lord God omnipotent reigneth." Amen!

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**"Doctrine must always precede exhortation since in doctrine the saint is shown his exalted position which makes the exhortation to a holy life a reasonable one, and in doctrine, the saint is informed as to the resources of grace he possesses with which to obey the exhortations."**

K. Wuest

## Our Lord and His Bible

*E. W. Rogers*

After our Lord Jesus was raised from the dead, He opened the Scriptures to the understanding of His people, revealing Himself to them in "the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms." This was then, and still is, the recognized division of the Old Testament Scriptures which constituted our Lord's Bible. Obviously, in the days of His flesh, none of the New Testament was written.

The fact that the Lord Jesus taught, obeyed, read and explained the Scriptures is, in

itself, a certificate of the highest authority of their validity and accuracy. He was eternal in His Being, and therefore was at the time when all the recorded events happened. He, in Manhood, was omniscient and, therefore, knew whether or not the records were accurate, distorted, exaggerated, or fabricated. Since His endorsement of the Old Testament Scriptures is absolutely unequivocal they may, with good reason, unhesitatingly be accepted by all in their entirety.

The allegation that the Lord Jesus shared the ignorance which was common in His day is blasphemous, and cuts right across the Deity of our Lord.

### He Simultaneously was God and Man

His affirmations concerning the Old Testament Scriptures are, therefore, the competent assertion of their reliability by One entitled to speak, and were in no way assertions made according to the alleged ignorance of His day.

The human parents of our Lord Jesus were, each of them, devout adherents of the Scriptures. Mary's Song in Luke 2 is a wonderful specimen of a Spirit-given extempore utterance made up of extracts from sundry parts of the Old Testament such as Genesis, Job, Samuel, The Psalms, Isaiah and Micah. This maiden's mind was stored with the Scriptures, the result of a diligence exerted before domestic duties made increasing demands on her time. Joseph's cogitations by reason of the difficulties in which he found himself concerning the birth of Mary's child (i.e. whether to put her away or to make her a public example) were not the product of his own ideas, but the alternatives prescribed in the Holy Scriptures by which alone he desired to be guided. Would God that all Christian homes were marked by such Bible-reading, memorizing, conversant and obedient parents!

At the age of twelve our Lord was found in the Temple with the doctors, hearing them and asking questions, such was His keenness for Bible knowledge. To His parents, who were disturbed because they had lost Him, He said, "Wist ye not that I must be in the things of My Father?" or paraphrased, "Are you surprised that I am reading, meditating in, and inquiring concerning the Scriptures which are My

Father's things." Oh, that God would stir up the youth of our land to adopt a similar attitude despite the exacting claims on time which studies, duties and business make. "I must get at my Bible"—"I must hear my Father's voice"—"I must learn my Father's will" should be the attitude of all His children.

This is essential, for it is acquaintance with the Scriptures that furnishes a safeguard in the hour of temptation. This the Lord Jesus proved. Thrice to the devil He said "It is written." If the devil in his subtlety misquoted Scripture the Lord bound Himself by "It is written," knowing full well that no two scriptures contradict each other or justified opposing courses. He was the true David who took out of the brook of Scripture the five smooth stones of the Pentateuch (the Law) and slinging but one of them (Deuteronomy) stunned the devil (who "departed from Him for a season") only later to take his own sword (death) and by it to slay him.

To the Father's voice, in the Scriptures of truth, He opened "His ear morning by morning" (Isaiah 50). In His heart, as the unbroken tables of stone in the ark, He hid God's word that "He should not sin against Him." "By the words of God's lips He kept Him from the paths of the destroyer." He was the "godly man" who "meditated in God's law day and night." Finally, when on the cross, having regard to the accomplishment of all the things that had afore been written concerning His sufferings, He cried, "It is finished," and on the completion of the foreshadowed word concerning Himself He lay His head down to rest.

If the Scriptures played such an important part in the private life of the Lord Jesus, they no less figured in His public ministry. In Nazareth, His native city, He read the word of God reverently (He stood up) and intelligently (He knew where to finish the reading for His immediate purpose) and enforced His comments thereon by citing Old Testament historical examples which, He made plain, were historical records and not mythical compositions. To the dead rich man in Hades it is said concerning his living brothers, "They have Moses and the Prophets—let them read them," for they are more powerful than the visible resurrection of a man from the dead. To the Pharisees He says, "Search the scriptures, for in them ye think ye

have eternal life, and they are they which testify of Me." He certified the origin of the human race by saying that in the beginning "God created male and female." Thus He branded the evolution theory as a lie. He speaks of the flood, Lot's wife, Jonah and the whale, Daniel the prophet, Abel's sacrifice, Moses and the bush, etc., etc., as historical events, the inspired record of which was altogether trustworthy. It was He who said **"The Scriptures Cannot be Broken"**—it all hangs together, is a united whole, binding on its readers from which they cannot free themselves.

Of what use indeed is he, either to God or man, who assuming the place of a public preacher, has misgivings concerning the accuracy of the Scriptures? If one of its links is unsound then the whole chain is broken.

But not only did the Lord Jesus use the Scriptures for Himself personally, and to the outside world, He also expounded them to His own followers. To His disciples He explained that He had not come "to destroy the law and the prophets," but contrariwise "to fulfill." The Sermon on the Mount must not be read as if it was a setting aside of the Old Testament and the bringing in of a new teaching: it is the amplification, the filling up of that which had been sketchily furnished before. After His resurrection, He expounded the true meaning of the Old Testament to His own. He was the center of that book and the key to its proper understanding. In Him the types had their fulfillment. Adam's coat, Abel's lamb, Noah's ark, the son on the altar, Joseph in the pit, the blood on the door post, the animal on the altar, David in the valley, etc., etc., all become plain when Christ is known: all is dark and without significance when Christ is unknown. By the presence of the Holy Spirit who indwells the believer the book becomes "opened" and its inner meaning is available for the soul's enjoyment. That a further volume was to be added to the Old the Lord foreshadowed. "When the Spirit is come He will bring "all things to your remembrance" which He has now done in the gospels: "He will take of my things and show them to you" which is effected in the Epistles : and He will "show you things to come" which we have in the Revelation.