

# SEARCHING *the* SCRIPTURES

"Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me" — John 5:39.



"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" — Acts 17:11.

"DEVOTED TO THE SEARCH FOR DIVINE TRUTH"

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## THE CHIEF CORNER STONE

O. E. Watts

### The Stone

Picture a huge "squared" building stone among others which are ready to be laid as a foundation for a large building. The excavation has been done and the bed rock chipped level. The dimensions have been exactly determined. The stones have been pre-cut to fit. They are ready to go in.

Note the one particular stone. It has been especially selected as to its "grain" indicating uniform strength, and its pleasing appearance. More than that, at the quarry where the stones were finished it has been given particular attention. The angles and the edges are exact. The sides are flush. In a famous castle built by a western railroad tycoon the stones were so true that no more than one-fourth inch thickness of mortar was permitted anywhere. Just so, and even more than the others, our subject stone has been perfected.

Bible readers know that we are referring to the foundation stone used as a type of Jesus Christ in prophecies and in New Testament comparisons. He was prepared to be that one main part in God's great new building (system, church).

### The Builders

Now come the builders. They look over the materials and plan the work. First they decide that another stone must be placed at the main corner. Surprisingly they are not aware of the excellencies of the special stone which was so painstakingly selected and shaped for this position. More than this, they conclude that the one stone can not be used at all, not even in a minor place at the side. They completely reject it.

In the figure we are led to search for some reason for this action. We must conclude that their ineptness and ignorance are due to their own neglect, slovenness, and prejudice. The Master Builder who had the stones prepared knows what He is about. As is so often true of the unqualified these so-called

builders highly overrate their own abilities and attainments. The self-styled religious experts of Christ's time completely "missed the boat".

### The Master

Fortunately the expert planner arrives on the scene. He takes over and reverses the ridiculous decisions of the bunglers. Psalms 118:22-23 puts it this way,

"The stone which the builders rejected

Is become the head of the corner.

This is Jehovah's doing;

It is marvelous in our eyes."

Jesus applied this scripture directly to the Pharisees. He made it so plain that they perceived that he spoke "against them" (Luke 20:19).

### The Builder

God overcame all of the interference and completed the building as planned and prophesied. Isaiah 28:14-19 foretold that the "scoffers that rule this people in Jerusalem" would be overruled. Their covenant with death (killing Jesus) came to nothing. Their "refuge of lies" was ineffective. Hiding themselves "under falsehood" proved worthless. In the midst of this teaching Verses 16 and 17(a) read, "Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone of sure foundation: he that believeth shall not be in haste. And I will make justice the line, and righteousness the plummet." Here we see pictured in advance expert construction using the best materials and divine instruments.

### The Fulfilment

Whether represented in the New Testament as the main part of the foundation or as all of it, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the base upon which the church is built. "For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3:11).

To the Jewish council (Acts 4:11-12) Peter boldly said of Jesus, "He is the stone which was set at nought of you the builders, which was made the head of the corner. And in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under

heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved".

It was this same apostle who years later was inspired to give the most complete explanation of Jesus as The Stone in 1 Peter 2. "A living stone", he wrote. This is expressively figurative. Stones are not alive; but this one is so represented. "Rejected indeed of men", he continues, as a review of what they had long known about the reactions of the Jews. He points out God's contrasting attitude. This stone was the **corner** stone, the **chief** one, **elect**, **precious**. Choice and specially selected, the marvelous stone was very honorable and valuable in God's sight.

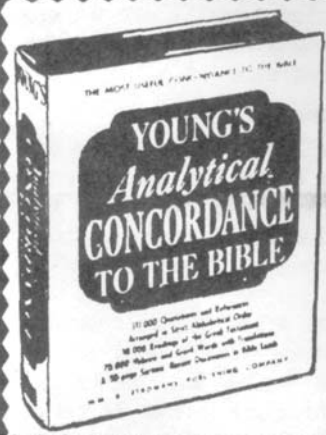
### The Superstructure

In the same passage Peter comments upon the church as built upon that foundation. In Verse 5 he states that Christians, as **living stones, are built up a spiritual house**. In Verse 7 he explains, "For you therefore that believe is the preciousness", even though unbelievers continue the rejection, the stumbling, and the disobedience. Moreover, Jesus never fails one trusting in Him. No one is caused to hurry or be disturbed because He has let him down. He does not make anyone ashamed; never does He disappoint.

In Ephesians 2:19-22 (NIV) the apostle Paul states that the Christians to whom he is writing are "members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit."

We note that the growth of the building is continuing. We all should be sobered by the consideration that the Spirit of God dwells in this temple (1 Cor. 3:16), in us! Verse 9 there states that we are "God's building". As living stones let us rejoice that the permanence of the structure is guaranteed by the eternal, living foundation stone.

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CONNIE W. ADAMS, Editor

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# Editorial

Connie W. Adams

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## GOD RULES IN THE KINGDOM OF MEN

Our country is now on the eve of its 200th birthday. On every hand we are reminded of this. Our people have been wonderfully blessed. We have enjoyed a form of government which, for the most part, has insured basic rights and dignities to its citizens. Even the most deprived have opportunity to better their lot if they really wish to do so. The scruples of the founding fathers against tyranny and the oppression of conscientious convictions led them to fashion a governing document which permitted every citizen to worship as his conscience determined or not to worship at all, if he were so inclined. In this atmosphere, the gospel has been able to run and have free course. We have been free to preach and defend it far and wide. This is a blessing we take too much for granted.

We have achieved a level of material prosperity for the common man which has become the envy of the world. The people of God in this land have been blessed with the means of spreading the gospel to every part of the world. It is tragic that these material goods have engendered within many a greed for more and more "things" without a just sense of stewardship. With our blessings it should never be necessary for gospel preachers to go begging for brethren to help them go and evangelize some foreign field or some neglected part of this nation. Yet, this is often the case. While churches lavish their resources on cathedrals of pride, worry about the landscaping and their "image" before the world, doors of opportunity around the world are slowly closing, while eternity-bound souls are daily perishing.

We do not mean to dampen the spirit of patriotism throughout the land. We could well use some of the genuine variety. But we do think it time to remind our readers of certain divine truths which have a direct bearing upon the continued existence of this nation which has been so singularly blessed. (1) *No nation is indestructible.* Empires have flourished, placed their boot upon the necks of weaker powers, exacted tribute, deported slaves, and built their monuments of pride to their own military genius. In Old Testament days there was a succession of empires arising out of the fertile crescent and gradually shifting to the west. The early Babylonian Empire was vast. But it fell to the

Assyrian power, one of the most cruel and cunning of the ancient kingdoms. The northern kingdom of Israel fell victim to its force. This domain was supplanted by the Neo-Babylonian Empire of Nebuchadnezzar. From the Persian Gulf to Egypt and into Asia Minor, the strength of this rule was felt, with the kingdom of Judah falling beneath its grinding wheels. The Medo-Persian Empire gathered its strength and conquered the city of Babylon with scarcely a struggle during the night of Belshazzar's drunken feast. Neither the vastness of that empire, the size and fortifications of the city of Babylon itself, nor the multitude of its armies could forestall the conquest. Upon the ruins of Persia, the kingdom of Alexander the Great arose. The Greek Empire was to flourish for a time and then bow to the rising power of Rome. On through history we could go, speaking of the various powers of Europe, all of whom had their day of glory, simply to retire to the dusty pages of history books. We have seen the forays of Napoleon. But he had a date with Waterloo and so have all despots. Modern history has paraded before us the likes of Mussolini, Hitler and others of like ilk. They are gone and the world is left with a few stark reminders of their vengeance upon the earth.

The average age of the major civilizations of earth has been two hundred years. All of these had their armies, weapons, administrative geniuses, vast fortifications around their principle cities. But they all had their weaknesses—pride, indulgence, sensuality, dissipation, a lowering of moral values and a loss even of the will to resist. "There is no king saved by the multitude of an host: a mighty man is not delivered by much strength. Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy; to deliver their soul from death, and to keep alive in famine. Our soul waiteth for the Lord: he is our help and our shield" (Psa. 33:16-20).

(2) *Righteousness/preserves a nation.* When those who rule a nation and the bulk of its citizens decide to call evil good, and good evil, then that nation cannot endure. "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter" (Isa. 5:20). Should it not concern us all to see divorce, abortion, lying, stealing, swearing and fornication called "good"? When presidents and their wives, senators, judges and even the leading voices in religious circles give their endorsement to Situation Ethics, that is exactly the kind of thing they are approving. We therefore expose ourselves to the "woe" of the preceding passage from Isaiah. Do you want to help preserve our nation? You cannot do it by waving flags in parades, wearing bicentennial costumes, and making speeches which pay lip service to the guiding principles of our founding fathers, or standing quietly at attention while the band plays "The Star Spangled Banner" at a football game.

You cannot save it by joining the army, navy or air force, or by beating drums for your favorite politician. Here is the divine principle: 'Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people' (Prov. 14:34). Do you believe that? Then let the light of your godly influence shine. Let your righteous life be as salt to season and preserve what it touches. Read and ponder Matthew 5:13-16. When even Christians hide their light under the bushel of materialistic pursuits and worldly ambitions and practices, then the hope for our peaceful continuance grows dimmer. God would have spared Sodom for ten righteous souls. They were not to be found and so Sodom perished for want of salt and light. Neither can we survive without it.

(3) *God rules in the kingdom of men.* When Daniel the prophet was called into the banquet hall on that epochal night in Babylon, to read the handwriting on the wall to the troubled king and his anxious guests, he said some things we would do well to consider now. How did the fortunes of nations result in Babylon's power? "The most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honor" (Dan. 5:18). Behind the scenes was the providential working of God. Babylon was to be a chastisement for the sins of Judah. Why did Nebuchadnezzar lose his sanity and his throne? "But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne . . . till he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that he appointeth over it whomsoever he will" (Dan. 5:20-21). Why was the kingdom then being ruled by Belshazzar about to fall? "And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this" (verse 22). Belshazzar had not acted according to his own knowledge, had set an example of dissipation before his lords, and had trifled with sacred things and insulted the God of heaven. "God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it" (verse 26). What finished that kingdom? Was it just the superior forces of the rising Persian power? No, "*God hath numbered . . . and finished it.*"

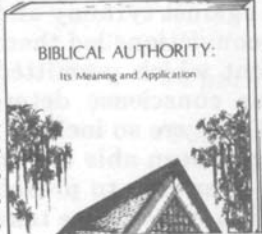
All during our bi-centennial year we would do well to remember the sobering words of God by the prophet Jeremiah: "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; if it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them" (Jer. 18:10).

So then, "Let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream" (Amos 5:24). Therein is found our only hope for survival.

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## I MARVEL Galatians 1:6

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### DO YOU EVER THINK OF ME?

Many years ago there was a song that asked the question, "Do you ever think of Me?" In 1955 when I debated Morris Butler Book on the Mechanical Music question, Book remarked on how well the churches of Christ were united. At that time the "Christian" church was split into at least three groups. The brethren came from all over Florida and south Georgia to hold up my hands and it was a beautiful thing to experience.

Little did we know that those same forces which divided the "Christian" church were in just a few years to divide the church of the Lord. Brethren were called upon to decide for the all-sufficiency of the church or against it. Some changed their preaching and some changed their practice. Nothing was said about the support of human institutions in the New Testament, from the treasury of the church, and in the belief that they were never in the mind of God, I was forced by my conscience to stand against such support. I thought the silence of the scripture was enough to rule them out and still think so. By the grace of God, a number of brethren felt the same way about these matters and many churches were saved from what we considered a digression.

With the passing of the years we have largely lost all contact with these liberal brethren. When I read one of their publications I only recognize some of the older brethren for there is an entire generation I do not know. Today, there is scarcely a city of any size that does not have a conservative congregation, but this is not the point. The time for debate is over, at least as far as the liberals are concerned, and we have gone our separate ways. In the debates I had with G. K. Wallace and Guy Wood both of them only wanted to go so far and no further. Brother Wood finally said in the second debate and in the last speech, that he was opposed to giving the schools one dime from the church treasury, for he did not believe it to be scriptural. The church for which I now preach, Merritt Island, Florida, has a box number for a mailing address and we get all kinds of mail. The liberal element is in trouble on every hand. For example, in the state of Florida and in the city of Gainesville, the 39th Avenue church has withdrawn fellowship from the Crossroads church of the city, supposedly, over speaking in

tongues, etc. The church of Christ in Griffin, Georgia together with the "Christian" church in Morrow and the Christian Evangelistic Association (whatever that is) has started a group in McDonough, Georgia to be known as Christ's Church. Speaking in tongues has become an issue in many places. One hundred years of debating the sects who practice such things have never fought for the truth. If just some of the things Ira Rice reports in his paper are true the liberals are in a mess.

I have no intention of implying that we do not have our problems. Some of the brethren went too far and became hobby riders. An indifferent world has made it hard for us to make any progress. The liberals have the "bus ministry" as an answer for this indifference but deep down in their hearts they know that when they quit hauling the children they will stop coming. We are made to wonder what happened to the "city wide meeting" and the big campaigns. After the division the brethren who did not agree with us, were going to set the world on fire. I believe that a great majority of them were sincere and really thought it could be done. But alas, it was the same old "Christian church" story all over again. Instead of preaching more gospel they preached less. Instead of starting more congregations they consolidated several churches to make one big church.

History has a way of repeating itself, and the history of the restoration is no different. The church is rent asunder in our day, even as it was in the days of our fathers. Many good brethren who wanted the support of the Orphan Home and the Herald of Truth, thought the drift would stop there. That was all they wanted the church to support and teach. Little did they ever dream that once the word of the Lord was disregarded, all these other things would happen. I know it is too late now for me or anyone else to say, "I told you so." They let down the gates and the ultra-liberals are the result. In many places the church is the church of the New Testament in name only. They turned their backs on the principles for which we had always stood. We would not be human however, if we did not remember the words of the old song, and by changing the singular *me* to the plural us, ask the question, DO YOU EVER THINK OF US?



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## Things Most Certainly Believed

Julian R. Snell

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### KINGDOM BORDERLAND

The fact that one may be near to, yet not in the kingdom of God is most challenging. To be in the fringe areas, in the borderland, is to be without, excluded from the blessings and privileges of citizenship.

A scribe came to Jesus and asked the question, "What is the first commandment of all?" Jesus' reply prompted profession on the part of the scribe of having kept the commandments. The conversation closes with this assessment of the man by Jesus, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God" (Mk. 12:28-34).

The setting for this conversation is Tuesday before Jesus was crucified on Friday. Everything in the record of Matthew 21:18 through 28:16 occurred on that day. During this period the discussion of chapter 24 relative to the destruction of the temple and the second coming of Christ occurs.

The question of this scribe appears to be characteristic of the continuing effort to try Jesus. However, in this particular scribe there is an obvious quality absent in others. "Thou art not far" must mean the scribe was almost fit for discipleship. In relation to the kingdom, then in preparation, he was in the "fringe area", the "borderland". But for him something was lacking to make the transition complete. What is true of this scribe is true of many today. What a tragedy. Fact is, some in the kingdom, are just barely, having stopped so near the border their true relationship is hard to establish.

Consideration of the kingdom of God requires a proper conception of its spiritual nature. The Pharisees on one occasion demanded when the kingdom of God should come and Jesus answered, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or lo there! for behold, the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:20-21). "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Romans 14:17). Understanding the nature of the kingdom eliminates numerous problems which arise respecting the mission of the church, the church and kingdom being one and the same. The kingdom being spiritual is not embellished by the material nor is its mission and purpose in the world physical.

Needful to the point of this study is the establishment of "borderland". There are at least three degrees of moral and spiritual distance from the kingdom. "Not far", in Jesus' assessment of the scribe, implies degrees: far, farther, farthest. Sin separates from God. "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you that he will not hear" (Isa. 59:2). It would seem to follow that the more one sins the farther he removes himself from God. The spiritual state described as "reprobate concerning the faith" (2 Tim. 3:8) develops as one continues his move away from God.

This scribe was closer to God and the kingdom than some others. Various passages point up degrees of distance from God. On another occasion, similar to our study in that Jesus is being questioned and tried, He replied by quoting an Old Testament prophecy recorded in Isaiah 29:13, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips: but their heart is far from me" (Mt. 15:8). This statement complements the conclusion that indeed there are different degrees expressed, here, "far from me".

That borderland residents are better than hinterland residents is a fact recognized by most. We prefer for a neighbor one who is a moral non-Christian to a drunkard, though neither one is in the kingdom of God. God also recognizes the difference between those near and far as is indicated by the "few" and "many" stripes (Luke 12:47-48).

There are others, to whom we are introduced in scripture, who are not far. "There came one running" to Jesus and inquired "What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" After reviewing certain requirements of the law to have the man claim compliance, Jesus said, "One thing thou lackest" (Mark 10:21). Although they were secret disciples who withheld their influence, Joseph and Nicodemus must be recognized as nearer to the kingdom than most of the Jews of Jesus' day. Agrippa would appear to have been brought to the borderland of the kingdom as a result of Paul's preaching. His reaction is expressed in "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian" (Acts 26:28). Borderland does in fact exist in relation to the kingdom of God.

What does it mean to be in the borderland? This man greatly differed from others of Jesus' day. He was unlike the Pharisee with his formalism, his inconsistency and at times hypocrisy which provoked Jesus to frequently rebuke him. Matthew 23 is devoted entirely to the condemnation of these. He was also quite different from the arrogant Sadducees, who might classify as the liberal and skeptic of that day as he said "there is no resurrection" (Mt. 22:23).

Borderland for this man meant he **had** certain admirable qualities not common in others. He had some knowledge of the Word of God and had disciplined his life by it. Indeed, with all, knowledge is the first step in coming to the kingdom. "No **man**

can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets and they shall be all taught of God" (John 6:44-45). Jesus challenges, "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me" (Mt. 11:29).

Here is a man with a discerning mind, possessed of keen insight into the Word of God. He had the ability to distinguish between real love and ceremony. That he is a cut above most of his breed seems evident in his understanding of the proper attitude toward both God and man. "And to love him with all the heart, and with all the soul and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, is more than all whole burnt offering and sacrifices" (Mk. 12:33). Real love finds expression in submission to God. Outward ceremony does not always reflect a proper attitude and condition of heart. The rebuke of Saul by Samuel should impress this. "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1 Sam. 15:22).

This scribe had the courage to confess the truth. "Well, Master, thou hast said the truth:" (Mk. 12:32). Many of Jesus' day did not have this courage. Some of the rulers recognized the truth but would not confess Him. "Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue" (Jn. 12:42). One who will confess truth is to be admitted by all. Our own day and time cries out for such courage.

Borderland is a fact for many people today in relation to the kingdom. How near some people are to the kingdom and yet, still so far. Generally speaking, these have good habits, a good attitude and disposition toward the truth. Coming all the way is not so much a matter of giving up as it is giving in. Often the borderland resident has a good knowledge of the scriptures, even better sometimes than citizens of the kingdom. He will give assent to the truth, even argue and defend it, resolving to one day become a Christian. The only thing that separates such from the kingdom may be attachment to religion of parents, or opinion of a friend, or perhaps love of money and devotion to the things of this life. Whatever, if one thing keeps one from giving his whole heart to God in submission to His will he is just a borderland resident.

What a tragedy this is. In life it is a difficult matter to convince the borderland resident of his position. He is satisfied with his nearness. Often he is heard to say, "I'm better than some in the kingdom." Or perhaps he argues, "I have more good in me than bad." All men, however, need to realize: if not in the kingdom, then out; if not forgiven, then still guilty; if not saved, then still lost. There is no middle ground in our relationship to the Lord. "He that is not with me is against me; and he

that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad" (Mt. 12:30).

In some circumstances, a miss may be as good as a mile, but not so with heaven. To miss heaven by a fraction is to miss it altogether. To nearly make it is not enough. Only the faithful citizen of the kingdom of God has the hope of heaven. Borderland residents have nothing. Where are you? In the kingdom or just outside? Fully committed or just barely?

## INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

Shelby C. Smith

The church was established in the year 30 A.D. in the city of Jerusalem, and from there, thousands of independent congregations sprang into existence over the then known world in less than fifty years. Instrumental music was left out of the work and worship of the early church.

It should be remembered that the Jews were used to instruments in their worship as well as the heathen; but now there is a new system, which though composed of people who were used to the harp and pipe, now sing without instrumental accompaniment. How do you account for such a radical change? The church of Christ moved on for more than 500 years without even a squeak from mechanical instruments of music in their worship.

Then came a series of departures from the teaching of Christ and the apostles which brought a change in the church. Its government was corrupted, and the clergy was formed about 606 A.D. The then reigning Pope Vitalian I, introduced into the worship mechanical instruments of music. However, the Greek Church, known as the Eastern Church, composed of conservatives on this issue, did not have the instruments of music in their worship and until within the last fifty years congregations of that church sang without the instrument here in the United States.

If instrumental music is of no consequence and is permissible by the God of Heaven, how do you account for all congregations not using it for more than 500 years. Do you not believe that the worship of the church, under the direct supervision of the apostles was acceptable to Christ?

Do you further believe that since the churches under the direct supervision of the Holy Spirit guiding the apostles, did not use instruments of music in the worship, it is evident that no words by the apostles could be interpreted to mean that singing could be accompanied by the use of musical instruments in church worship.

Since the apostles were guided by the Holy Spirit to write the New Testament, we must conclude that there is no authority for the use of instruments in the worship. And since the apostles were guided into

all truth by the Holy Spirit (John 16:13), and since we find no authority for its use in the New Testament, we must accept the conclusion: instrumental music in the worship is no part of the truth.

John wrote, "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son" (2 Jno. 9). Therefore, when people introduce instrumental music in the worship of the church, they have not God. The Holy Spirit never instructed them to use it, therefore the curse of heaven rests upon them (Gal. 1:9).

### MUSIC AUTHORIZED BY CHRIST

"Wherefore be ye not foolish but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be ye not drunken with wine, wherein is riot, but be filled with the Spirit: speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord. Giving thanks always for all things in the name of the Lord Jesus subjecting yourselves one to another in the fear of Christ" (Eph. 5:17-21).

"Let the words of Christ dwell in you richly; in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with songs and hymns and spiritual songs singing with grace in your hearts unto the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him" (Col. 3:16,17).

"Therefore will I give praise unto thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name" (Psa. 18:49; Rom. 15:9). This has reference to singing in the church among the Gentiles. "I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the congregation I will sing thy praise" (Heb. 2:12). "Is any cheerful? let him sing praise" (James 5:13).

So we find we are to sing to one another and sing unto God. "Make melody with your heart to the Lord, singing with grace in your hearts unto the Lord," and sing only spiritual songs.

We should notice that the New Testament, by implication rules out jazz singing, and all songs and hymns except those of a spiritual nature. Also all unscriptural songs are to be discarded just as all unscriptural sermons.

Many times brethren who use denominational song books, sing unscriptural, jazzy songs. Therefore it becomes necessary for us to protect the pew as well as the pulpit from false doctrine. It would do little good for the preacher to preach against the false doctrine of salvation by faith only, then the congregation sing: "We are saved by faith only." Certainly, denominationalists can write scriptural songs, but many of their songs are unscriptural. It is our business to cull out such songs, if we want purity in our worship.

Many songs teach the doctrine of Premillennialism, but some have discovered the danger of their use and have discarded them. The premillennial doctrine is so subtil, that it may bob

up in the middle of a song, which is otherwise scriptural.

Some one said: "That group in the church of Christ is opposed to the second coming of Christ, and have culled out of their books all songs that mention the second coming." Members of the church of Christ everyone, believe in the personal second coming of Christ. There has not been one song culled out of any book, because it taught the second coming of Christ. No friend, we only cull out the songs that teach false doctrine.

Every song which teaches the truth whether it is concerning the birth of Christ, His life on earth, His death, His burial, His resurrection, His ascension, His atonement for sins, His sonship, or His second coming, we gladly sing from the pew.

Be it remembered that Jesus did not establish His church to be a sort of entertaining club. It is the duty and privilege of Christians to lift our voices heavenward in song, from the perfect God-made instrument, the HEART. Those who sing for money or show, or sincerely, aided by the organ are not pleasing to the Almighty God.

18112 Regina Ave.  
Torrance, California 90504

EXPOSITION:  
TEXT and  
CONTEXT

Weldon E. Wannock

1021 Welford Drive  
Xenia, Ohio 45385



### THE LETTER TO PERGAMOS (Rev. 2:12-17)

You will observe that *Pergamos* is found in some translations, while *Pergamum* is used in others. Pergamos is the feminine form while Pergamum is the neuter form. Both names were used in the ancient world, although Pergamum was the most common.

#### Satan's Seat

Satan dwelled at Pergamos. Jesus said his seat was there. The word "seat" is a translation of the word "thronos." This word "thronos" is used in Matt. 19:28 to refer to the throne of a judge. In Luke 1:32 it is used in reference to the throne of a king. Thus, it depicts great power and authority. Satan, therefore, exercised tremendous power at Pergamos. What there was about Pergamos to cause Jesus to classify it as "Satan's seat" cannot definitely be determined. Several explanations have been given. Perhaps the answer is found in one of these, or at least, in the combination of some or all of them.

(1) Some have suggested that the altar of Zeus was Satan's throne. It resembled a throne as one viewed it, perched near the top of the conical hill on



which was the acropolis. The altar was one of the seven wonders of the world. It was 90 feet square and 40 feet high (one authority), with the most impressive and exquisite sculpture of ancient art.

(2) Another view is that the temple of Aesculapius was Satan's throne. Aesculapius was the god of healing. His emblem was a snake. Multitudes of sick people, rich and poor, came from all over the world to receive the healing power of Aesculapios. Harmless snakes slithered back and forth in the courts of the temple. If a sufferer was touched by one of these snakes as he slept in the sanctuary at night, he believed that he was touched by the healing presence of this god.

(3) Some contend that all the pagan altars, shrines and temples of the city may have been in the mind of Christ when he called it "Satan's seat." In addition to Zeus and Aesculapius, there were Athena (Minerva) and Dionysius (Bacchus). Athena was the god of wisdom in art and in war. Dionysius was the god of wine and drama. Zeus was the head of all the gods.

(4) The last view, which I think is more favorable, is that "Satan's seat" was the emperor-worship at Pergamos. This city was the provincial center of emperor-worship. Barclay tells us that the organization of emperor-worship was like a presbytery or diocese. Pergamos was therefore the headquarters for worship of the Roman emperor in that area. Summers writes, "It was the chief city of the province, and here was located the 'concilia' which had in charge the matters of state religion and incense offering before the image of the emperor." "

The Roman Empire was a polyglot of many peoples—many languages, races and religions. To unify the Empire, the worship of the emperor was inaugurated. Through the emperor a national spirit could be realized. He became the personalization of everything Rome stood for, and was eventually made a god. Whereas emperor-worship had been voluntary, it now was mandatory. Loyalty to Caesar was demonstrated by coming to the temple yearly and burning a pinch of incense and saying, "Lord Caesar." Christians could not do this. Their Lord was Christ. Hence, they were persecuted.

In the midst of this hostile environment, the Pergamene Christians lived. Jesus said he knew where "thou dwellest." The word Jesus chose for dwell is "katoikeo." It means a permanent abode or resident. The Lord is saying in essence, "I know where you live and that you have to stay there. Although you are endangered and threatened, you must remain and face the trials. There is no place to flee." Christians cannot always choose an easy and convenient locality to live for Christ. Some places are difficult, with great sacrifice necessary. Thank God for those who live faithfully for the Lord in the hard places.

### Commendations

Jesus praises the church for its fidelity under trying conditions (v. 13). He mentions Antipas as

his faithful martyr. Wallace states that Antipas was "a symbolic designation and representative for martyrdom —It therefore stood for all who would become victims of martyrdom in the persecutions to follow." <sup>2</sup> My persuasion is that Antipas was a real person who lived at Pergamos. The name means "one who is against." He must have diligently fought against the false cults and erroneous doctrines of his day. He refused to stay quiet on unpopular issues, contrary to the practice of many of the professed Christians. He lost his life but gained his soul. Notice the two things Jesus says of the church:

(1) Thou holdest fast my name. The name apparently stands for the person of Jesus. They did not relinquish their loyalty to Christ by confessing allegiance to another, that is, to Caesar. The test was between Lord Caesar and Lord Christ. If they would only confess Caesar as Lord, there would be freedom from persecution, but to confess Jesus as Lord in deference to Caesar meant great tribulation. Christians at Pergamos did the latter and Jesus commended their faithfulness.

(2) Hast not denied my faith. When trials intensified, there were those who would not disavow or disclaim the truth of the gospel. There had been an outbreak of persecution, wherein Antipas was killed and yet in the midst of this, they stood up for the gospel of Christ. It is easy to preach the truth under favorable conditions, but when the going gets rough, it takes a dedicated Christian to persevere.

### Condemnation

After Jesus praised them for their devotion to him and his faith, he turns to criticize those who hold the doctrine of Balaam and the doctrine of the Nicolaitans (vs. 14-15). MacDonald says, "The meaning is not that this was a second and distinct class of seducers, but 'so also hast thou them who seek to do the same evil work among you Balaam did of old, the Nicolaitans.' " <sup>3</sup> Lenski and Barclay concur in this, while some others maintain they were two different groups. I am inclined to think both names refer to one group of heretics.

Balaam, by his counsel to Balak (v. 14; cf. Num. 31:16), led the way for the Israelites to stumble by their eating things sacrificed to idols and committing fornication. Balaam's interest was material gain at the price of spiritual compromise (cf. Num. 22:1-25:9). There were those in the church at Pergamos who were doing the same thing. They were likely encouraging Christians to go ahead and join the pagan trade-guilds, attend the heathen feasts to idols and commit fornication with the temple priestesses in honor to the gods, and no harm will be done. After all, an idol is nothing and, too, you cannot know sin unless you are thoroughly acquainted with it.

The life-style in the ancient world was to honor idols—live immorally. Fornication was a matter of indifference in the Gentile world. Demosthenes wrote, "We have prostitutes for the sake of

pleasure. We have concubines for the sake of daily cohabitation. We have wives for the purpose of having children legitimately and of having a faithful guardian of our household affairs."<sup>4</sup> Paul heads his catalog of sin with fornication (Gal. 5:19-21; 1 Cor. 6:9-10). To go along with the crowd meant debauchery. This was what was being advocated at Pergamos. This was the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes. Jesus said, "I hate it" (v. 15). The church is to be pure (Eph. 5:26-27), separated from the world (2 Cor. 6:14-7:1).

### Correction

There was a moral laxity in the church at Pergamos toward purity of doctrine. The doctrine of the Nicolaitanes was allowed to creep into the body of Christ when brethren become slack and dilatory in their efforts to keep it out. We are warned again and again about false teachers, with their false doctrines, who will invade the church and defile it from within.

Jesus told those at Pergamos to "Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth" (v. 16). In other words, Jesus is saying that they change their tolerant attitude toward this permissive element and take disciplinary measures against it, or else I will come and take punitive action myself.

What action Jesus would specifically take is not indicated. There is disagreement over what is meant by Jesus' fighting against them with the sword of his mouth. This sword is described as a sharp sword with two edges (v. 12). Such symbol shows the great power of Christ and depicts his righteous judgment.

Wallace offers some excellent comments on Jesus' warnings of his coming in judgment on some of the churches. "In the counsels to the declining and backsliding churches there are such phrases as 'I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of its place'; and 'I will come to thee quickly and fight against them'; and, 'I will come as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee'—these are the warnings of the Lord's coming in the events of judgment."<sup>6</sup> Hendriksen writes, "We do not believe that this refers to a merely verbal condemnation. The verbal condemnation is contained in this epistle. It signifies destruction."<sup>6</sup>

There is a great lesson here today to those who are soft toward sin, such as adulterous relationships, drinking, immodest dress, dancing, etc. Too, brethren who tolerate those who would lead the church into digression by way of institutionalism and centralization of power in one eldership, need to take a little "peek" at this epistle to Pergamos.

### Challenge

Those who overcome are offered two things: (1) the hidden manna and (2) a white stone in which is written a new name. The manna is an allusion to the Old Testament event where God miraculously fed Israel in the wilderness with manna (Ex. 16:4-36). As God sustained his people of old with food for

the physical body, he sustains them now with spiritual nourishment.

As to the meaning of the white stone, various interpretations have been offered. We are told that among the ancients that a white stone signified many things. Summers writes:

(1) The white stone was given to a man who had been tried and justly acquitted.

(2) The white stone was given to a man who was freed from slavery and made a citizen of the province.

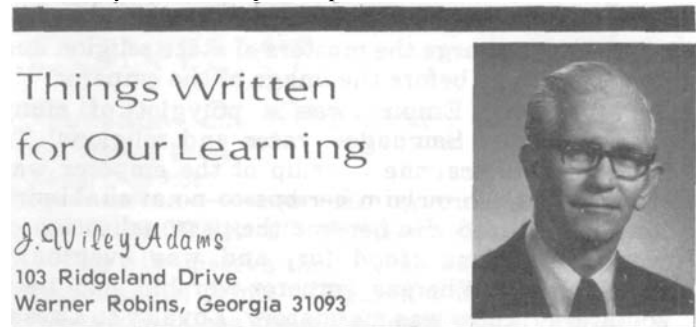
(3) The white stone was given to the winner of a race.

(4) The white stone was given to a warrior returning from battle with victory over the enemy.<sup>7</sup>

Which one, if any, Jesus might have meant, we do not know. The Christians at Pergamos knew what he meant and it served as an incentive to them to overcome. The new name is evidently Christ.

### Footnotes

1. Ray Summers, *op. cit.*, p. 114.
2. Foy E. Wallace, *The Book of Revelation*, (Nashville: Foy E. Wallace Jr. Publication, 1966), pp. 92-93.
3. James M. Macdonald, *The Life and Writings of St. John*, (New York: Scribner, Armstrong & Co., 1877), p. 186.
4. Quoted from W. A. Criswell, *op. cit.*, p. 115.
5. Foy E. Wallace, *op. cit.*, p. 40.
6. William Hendriksen, *op. cit.*, p. 83.
7. Ray Summers, *op. cit.*, p. 116.



In our first article on the moral issue, the conduct of Joseph regarding personal purity was considered. Let us now consider the behavior pattern of Samson, an entirely different kind of man.

### A Nazarite and Deliverer

In Judges 13 there are set forth some special circumstances concerning Samson. Israel was under the rule of the Philistines because they "did evil in the sight of the Lord" (V. 1). As seems to be the case in so many instances God did not seek to deliver Israel in any ordinary way. Even the birth of Samson was highly unlikely since his mother was barren (V. 2). She was visited by an angel of the Lord who informed her that she was to bear a son who would be "a Nazarite unto God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines." A Nazarite was a man especially consecrated in some particular thing unto God. The characteristic of a Nazarite was the unshaven head.

If men in that day wore long hair as many do today, what would have made the Nazarite stand out in the crowd? Also God had to tell Samson's folks not to cut his hair. The inference is plain that ordinarily they would have done so. Even with long hair Samson did not look like a bum for his hair was neatly arranged in seven locks. This is a far cry from the filthy, tangled, stringy mess you see on the heads of some supposed boys of today.

Samson, then, was consecrated by the Lord "from the womb to the day of his death" for the purpose of beginning "to deliver Israel" from the Philistines (V. 5). So Samson was born of an unnamed woman and her husband Manoah under most unique circumstances. As he grew the "Lord blessed him" (V. 24) and "the spirit of the Lord began to move him at times" (V. 25).

In Judges 15, with Philistines throughout the land, Samson fell in love with one of their girls and desired his parents to "get her for me to wife." There is certainly nothing unnatural about his falling in love, even with a Philistine woman but God had some strict laws about intermarriage with non-Israelites. His parents tried to reason with him to take a wife from "among the daughters of thy brethren" but Samson was very headlong. "Get her for me," he said.

Thus, a woman of Timnath, a Philistine, became the wife of Samson at a marriage feast given by Samson "for so used the young men to do" (14:10). Samson, though a physically strong man, revealed a decided lack of strength in matters pertaining to passion. Still, up to this point he seeks fulfillment in marriage. This much can be said for him. However, very soon through trickery and fear, his father-in-law gives her to Samson's friend to be his wife (14:20). Thus his marriage was annulled unlawfully. He later on tried to reclaim her but to no avail. Her father seeks to give him her younger sister instead. But Samson will not have it so. Adding to his first recorded show of unheard of strength in the rending of a roaring lion, he now seeks revenge on the Philistines such as they have not seen before in the setting on fire of their fields by three hundred foxes with firebrands attached to their tails. The Philistines in turn, after learning why Samson had done this burned Samson's wife and her father with fire. Samson retaliated with even further slaughter of the Philistines (15:8). Yielding to his brethren in allowing them to turn him over to the Philistines bound with cords, the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him and he broke loose and slew a thousand men with the jawbone of an ass.

Disappointed and thwarted in his first love affair and marriage, Samson now seeks fulfillment by turning to harlots. Two such women are mentioned in chapter 16, namely a woman at Gaza who is not further identified and also a woman named Delilah in the valley of Sorek. Whether the beginning of sex life is honorable or dishonorable, it seeks to continue since it is an ever recurring biological urge. Since Samson's wife was dead why did he not now heed

the previous advice of his parents and take a wife from among Israel? In the New Testament Paul by inspiration said, "But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn" (1 Cor. 7:9). There was an honorable means of his escaping fornication but Samson chose the outlet of immorality. So many follow this route to their own shame and degradation, wasting their seed and their strength on harlots, rather than to enter into honorable marriage which is "honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge" (Heb. 13:4).


Although God used this man to aid Israel in His overall scheme of things, let no one decide that God approved of his loose living. Samson came to an untimely death instigated by his life of dissipation although at the last his hair grew out and at Samson's request God strengthened him once more and he, with a mighty tug pulled down the temple of the heathen god, Dagon, not only on the head of the blinded Samson but on all the Philistines present. In Judges 16:30 it is recorded that with this tragic end to a mighty man that "he slew at his death . . . more than they which he slew in his life."

When we think of Samson we must call him the strong, weak man. He was strong in physical strength and courage but weak in morality. Brethren, do we have some of these around in spiritual Israel today?

**TO STUTTER—OR NOT  
TO STUTTER**

*J. J. Smith*

3433 Studebaker Rd.  
Long Beach, CA 90808



In the Los Angeles area which consists of about 12 million people, every kind of religious cult that can be imagined is here. One of the churches, called the Rainbow Revival Church, located at 890 Crenshaw in Los Angeles, sent out an instruction sheet a number of years ago giving instructions as to how one may receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Listed below is the sum and substance of the instruction.

#### **Words Of Praise To Receive The Holy Ghost**

Jesus who baptized 120 believers with the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost 10 days after He ascended to heaven, is still baptizing Christians with the Holy Ghost today, Acts 2:1-4.

Usually Jesus baptizes believers with the Holy Ghost while they are praising the Lord, and their words change from words of praise to unknown tongues, which is proof that they have received the Holy Ghost.

We suggest these words of praise to use while

seeking the Baptism. To try to say words of praise too perfectly hinders the Holy Ghost from speaking in His Heavenly languages thru you. **SAY THE WORDS OUT LOUD!**

As you praise God, do NOT try to stop stammering. In fact the more you get the words of praise mixed up, the easier it is for the Holy Ghost to take control of your tongue and speak in unknown tongues thru you. Isa. 28:11: "For with stammering lips and another tongue will I speak to this people."

### To Start Seeking

Say the words of Praise in a paragraph below over and over very rapidly for 2 or 3 minutes, then go to the next paragraph, repeating the words of Praise in each paragraph about the same length of time.

After you have repeated the words in all of the paragraphs, you may start at the beginning, and use these words of praise over and over.

1. GLORY TO GOD, HALLELUJAH  
GLORY TO GOD HALLELUJAH  
GLORY TO
2. PRAISE PRECIOUS JESUS, PRINCE  
OF PEACE, PRAISE PRECIOUS  
JESUS
3. I LOVE YOU JESUS, I LOVE YOU  
JESUS, I LOVE YOU JESUS,
4. JESUS SAVIOUR SAVE SINFUL  
SOULS, SANCTIFY SAINTS TO  
SERVE THEE
5. PRAISE GOD THE FATHER, GOD  
THE SON, AND GOD THE HOLY  
GHOST,
6. I BESEECH BLESSED BAPTIZER  
BESTOW BOUNTIFUL BAP-  
TISMAL BLESSINGS
7. GLORY TO JESUS GLORY TO  
JESUS GLORY  
TO JESUS GLORY TO
8. WHILE WHOLEHEARTEDLY  
WORSHIPPING, WILLING  
WAITING, JESUS BAPTIZE ME  
WITH THE HOLY GHOST. WHILE  
WHOLEHEARTEDLY WOR-  
SHIPPING
9. GLORY TO GOD, GRACIOUS  
GENEROUS GIVER OF GOOD  
GIFTS. GLORY TO

Now brethren, I wonder if Peter and the rest of the apostles had this list in Acts 2 while they were waiting in the upper room for the Holy Spirit? Do you reckon that they were practicing all that time? Of course, the above is IGNORANCE GONE TO SEED.

But a very remarkable thing happened soon after I received this list. I was in Pampa, Texas in a meeting and watching a religious program from Amarillo. They had a Catholic nun on the program who claimed to have been baptized with the Holy Spirit. Her "testimony" was that she had not been able to speak well because she DID stutter. But,

when she received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, SHE QUIT STUTTERING. So, to stutter or not to stutter—that is the question. I hope that we all understand that those who were baptized with the Holy Spirit in the days of the apostles were given languages that could be understood as the Bible reveals in Acts 2:8-11; and they were not the kind of gibberish that would be produced by one who practiced according to the "Rainbow Revival formula."

(Editor's note: With the January issue J. T. Smith will write regularly under a new column heading which will give him sufficient latitude to deal with a variety of subject matter and which well suits his style of approach. We recently spent some time together and tried to arrive at a heading we thought appropriate. I was forced to reject his first choice which was "Editor"! His column will bear the title "Using Great Plainness of Speech." He has the talent to get to the heart of any question with forthright and simple terms easily understood by all. Watch for this column.)

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## THE NEWS LETTER REPORTS

"... They rehearsed all that God had done with them..."—Acts 14:27

**LARRY R. DEVORE**, Box 86, Roseville, Ohio 43777 - Since my last report in the June issue of *SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES*, two have been baptized here at Roseville. Also, Clarence Jadwin was appointed a deacon September 7. I preached at Corning, Ohio on September 14 and a young lady was restored there. Ellis Webb held our meeting in October.

**DORRIS V. RADER**, 729 Westside Dr., Tullahoma, Tennessee 37388 - I was in a September meeting with the church in Campbellsville, Kentucky where I preached four and a half years in the early part of the 1960's. David J. Riggs is doing a good work there as the regular preacher. They had 5 baptisms just prior to the meeting and we had 2 baptisms during the meeting.

**GALE CUMMINGS**, 3101 N. 43rd Ave., Phoenix, Arizona 85031 - The Maryvale church has recently appointed two new elders and seven new deacons. The elders are Tom Baker, Gale Cummings and Dale Lovelady.

**R. A. GILBERTSEN**, Rt. 1, Box 332-A, Bell, Florida 32619 - A NEW CONGREGATION known as Eastside Church of Christ is now meeting in Hamilton, Alabama. It is a sound church in a community that has a large, institutional congregation. For further information, contact Edsel Cagle, Rt. 3, Box 326, Hamilton, Alabama 35570.

**ALMON WILLIAMS**, Florida College, Temple Terrace, Florida 33617 - I have the following bound volumes which I would consider selling: TRUTH MAGAZINE volumes 4, 5, 7-9, 12-16; GOSPEL GUARDIAN Volumes 1, 10-23; PRECEPTOR Volumes 5-18; *SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES* Volumes 5-12. I might also be willing to sell my unbound issues of the BIBLE BANNER. I am open to offers on any or all of these.

**DONALD R. GIVENS**, P.O. Box 192, Haney, British Columbia, Canada - We moved to this section of western Canada last June and practically started from "scratch" with six members. There are now nine members and attendance has reached a high of 33. A former Catholic, turned Jehovah's Witness was recently baptized. Others are near obedience. My fellow worker, W. T. McCuiston will be leaving Canada next summer to return to Texas. He has done a fine work and will be sorely missed. Many more preachers are needed in this area of western Canada. Many days I teach two and sometimes three home Bible studies. We need more help! We rent facilities in which to meet, which are quite expensive, and house rent is "out of sight." Living costs are very high. But the public is receptive to the gospel and the church is so unknown. Will you not move to the Canadian harvest field and help us? My phone number is (604) 467-3625. Come and visit us.

### DEATH

**L. L. APPLGATE** was called home on June 23. The writer honored a years-ago-made promise and spoke at the funeral service in Chipley, Florida. I never knew the man when he and his wife were not working for the Lord. At 71, he called me to come and help establish a church in Vernon, Florida. At 75, they wrote offering to take two homeless girls into their home. They had already taken in an elderly woman whom no one else cared for, and kept her and loved her until she died. In his 80's he went and worked with the church in Okeechobee, Florida. At the age of 80 when he and his wife visited our home, they walked through the neighborhood meeting people and passing out religious tracts. He never wanted to quit, but death had the final say. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; for their works follow with them" (Rev. 14:13).

—Jefferson David Tant

### DEBATE

**ARTHUR M. OGDEN**, P.O. Box 502, Burnside, Kentucky 42519 - I am scheduled to debate J. W. Holcomb in the National Guard Armory in Somerset, Kentucky on Dec. 29, 30 and Jan. 1 and 2. The subject for discussion is "Women Teachers." The first two nights J. W. Holcomb will affirm that in the class arrangement, it is a violation of the scriptures for women to be appointed teachers

of any of those classes. The last two nights I will affirm that in the class arrangement, it is scriptural for women to be teachers of classes of other women and children, with Holcomb denying. There are many congregations in this section of Kentucky and many of them are bothered with this issue. We have been able to peaceably co-exist with good fellowship, but in the past couple of years the good will has, been destroyed by those who wish to bind their error on the consciences of others. We feel this discussion is needed and will do a lot of good. Interest in the discussion is already running high and large crowds are expected.

**WILLIAM C. SEXTON**, 2219 S. Glenn, Wichita, Kansas 67213 - The Westside church is now meeting at 3500 S. Meridian, a good location, easy to find. Exit off of 235 at Meridian South and we are the first building north on Meridian. We have recently seen one person baptized and four others restored and identified. Any contact in this city or area you would like for us to make, call me at (316) 943-3332.

### INSTANT RELIGION

It's a world of convenience,  
I'm sure you agree.  
Just visit your grocer,  
And you will see.

Pre-packaged, pre-cooked,  
Pre-sliced and pre-fixed,  
Pre-measured, pre-tested,  
Pre-wrapped and pre-mixed

There's T.V. dinners,  
And Shake-and-Bake,  
There's instant coffee,  
And juice concentrate.  
Saves time and work,  
To the housewife's bliss.

Yes, the good ol' days,  
Were never like this.

But too many people,  
Want religion this way,  
Pre-packaged and wrapped,  
In a neat bouquet.

One hour on Sunday,  
So effortlessly,  
Like frozen dinners,  
Served instantly.

With little preparation,  
Just to-and-fro,  
They treat the Lords day,  
Like Stop-and-Go.

They rush right back,  
Like a homing pigeon,  
To many are looking,  
For instant religion.

Dody Gibson  
10-11-75

### IN THE NEWS THIS MONTH

BAPTISMS	823
RESTORATIONS	236

(Taken from bulletins and papers received by the editor)