

“What Saith The Scriptures?”

Harrell Davidson

The Gospel Preceptor - January, 2020

“Will knowledge save?”

In chapter four of Hosea, God condemns Israel for her refusal to obey His Word. In verse 1 we note, “Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel: for the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land.” What a desolate condition!

This was a time when there is no truth. A time where the mercy of God is not accepted nor is the knowledge of His goodness respected. God says that the people have separated themselves by “swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery...” (cf. Hosea.4:2). In verse 6 the ancient prophet penned words of destruction due to the malady of the time. Hear him: “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.”

It is the case that the people of Hosea’s day had refused to acquire and live by knowledge of the Word of God. They never thought of the penalty for their neglect in all likelihood. They were going along to get along and practicing the same sins as the people about them while God had commanded them to be separate or different from those nations around them, but this seems to have never entered their thought process. They wanted to be like the nations about them when they desired a king. God granted them their wish, but their desire led to great suffering and turmoil.

As Hosea writes, God is rejecting His priests and His people. He even forgets their children. A calamity exists in the land that does not respect and know God. We are taught in the Scriptures that eternal life is to “know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3). It is rather obvious that there is trouble in our land this day in the year of our Lord, 2018. Unless we come to a knowledge of God, man will be lost. We remember a classic passage in Judges 2:10 that address situations like this. “And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel.” The first generation out of Egyptian bondage perished in the wilderness.

The second generation is the one that Judges is addressing who were faithful. The third generation was lost because they did not know the Lord. They served Balaam while forsaking the Lord. Are we talking about an antiquated condition? *No!* A thousand times *No!* We are describing present day America. We are talking about a time when God is respected less and less. There is lying, swearing, killing, stealing,

adultery and the list goes on and on. Filth and turmoil fill our news programs while the Bible is closed on the shelf and most of all closed to our hearts. Jesus said, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39).

Knowledge alone will not save. It must be applied to the heart of man. The condition of our time is such that we had better **wake up, open up, and read up** if we want to **go up** to heaven someday. All one has to do is read the front page of the newspaper and we see Hosea all over again.

The Gospel Preceptor - February, 2020

The question this month is: **"If we have guardian angels protecting us and also protecting us from bad angels, why does God allow harm to come to us?"**

Thanks so much for this question that was sent originally to our editor, Jerry Brewer. Of course, the question assumes that there are angels today for which assumption there is no proof. The study is longer than we have editorial room to cite every case that we could use in investigation.

The history of *angel* or *angels* starts in Genesis 16:7 with this phrase "And the angel of the LORD..." There almost 200 such passages and almost 100 times that these words are used in the Holy Text of God's eternal Word. Concurrent with the phrase the "angel of the Lord" is the "angel of God."

Adam Clarke correctly comments on these passages this way:

That Jesus Christ, in a body suited to the dignity of his nature, frequently appeared to the patriarchs, has been already intimated. That the person mentioned here was greater than any created being is sufficiently evident from the following particulars: 1. From his promising to perform what God alone could do, and foretelling what God alone could know; "I will multiply thy seed exceedingly," &c., Ge 16:10; "Thou art with child, and shalt bear a son," &c., Ge 16:11; "He will be a wild man," &c., Ge 16:12. All this shows a prescience which is proper to God alone.

In reference to Hagar in Genesis 16, she completely understood that this was something only God could and would do, for she said, "And she called the name of the LORD that spake unto her, Thou God seest me: for she said, Have I also here looked after him that seeth me" (Gen. 16:13).

The fundamental meaning of the word angel is "messenger". *Angel* is found over 90 times in the Old Testament and almost every time the angel is described as "an angel of the Lord, angel of God" or "Mine angel" in reference to either God or the Lord. It was an angel of the Lord that spoke to Balaam that both the donkey and Balaam saw. "Angels" in the plural sense is used 19 times in the Old testament and again, staying with the context, they were angels of the Lord or of God.

In the New Testament, Matthew 1:20, we find this terminology: "But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost". On and on these expressions are used wherein

an angel of the Lord appeared in a burning bush (cf. Exod. 3:1-10, Acts 7: 30), opened prison doors (cf. Acts 5:19), an angel smote and commanded (cf. Acts 12:7, 8), and an angel of God stood by Paul (cf. Acts 27:23). All these things are not meant to be exclusive but rather a digest of the usage of and descriptions of angels' work in Bible times.

We do not know the names of all the angels. They were servants—messengers—of God assigned a task to carry out, like a message to be delivered, like giving instructions etc. Angels were made free moral agents in that they could choose to obey the Lord or not. Some left their first estate and fell away from God through their wish to not serve God faithfully (Jude 1:6; 2 Pet. 2:4).

On 2 Peter 2:4 where Peter wrote: “For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment,” Albert Barnes commented this way:

The apostle now proceeds to the proof of the proposition that these persons would be punished. It is to be remembered that they had been, or were even then, professing Christians, though they had really, if not in form, apostatized from the faith, (2 Pet. 2:20-22;) and a part of the proofs, therefore, are derived from the cases of those who had apostatized from the service of God. He appeals, therefore, to the case of the angels that had revolted. Neither their former rank, their dignity, nor their holiness, saved them from being thrust down to hell; and if God punished them so severely, then false teachers could not hope to escape. The apostle, by the angels here, refers undoubtedly to a revolt in heaven—an event referred to in Jude 1:6, and everywhere implied in the Scriptures. When that occurred, however—why they revolted, or what was the number of the apostates—we have not the slightest information, and on these points conjecture would be useless. In the supposition that it occurred, there is no improbability; for there is nothing more absurd in the belief that angels have revolted than that men have; and if there are evil angels, as there is no more reason to doubt than that there are evil men, it is morally certain that they must have fallen at some period from a state of holiness, for it cannot be believed that God made them wicked.

From all the evidence in God's Holy Word, angels were used in various ways before all of revelation—the revealing of the Bible was complete, and there is no evidence that they were used after its completion. There is nothing new to be revealed. God's Word saves today through the gospel (Rom. 1:16) that comes about through preaching by individuals—not angels. No angel never told one what to do to be saved even the Lord Himself did not tell anyone what to do to be saved such as Saul of Tarsus who was told where to find a preacher (cf. Acts 8).

All these things prove that angels today are no more than a folly in the fervent imagination of the mind of man. What need would we have that the Bible does not address? Please think about this!

We do learn from the evidence herein presented that if angels—messengers of God could fall, then surely man can also (Gal. 5:4; 2 Pet. 2:4). Many religious groups

believe that one cannot fall from grace or from the faith regardless of what sins one commits and that argument would put us above the angelic host of the Almighty God!

We neither have bad or good guardian angels today. There is no scriptural evidence of such. For a moment think about a terrible accident. If we have guardian angels today, did that angel go to sleep and let us have the accident? Or, did a bad angel take charge and cause the accident? Either notion is foolish to say the least and without Scriptural support. Things sometimes happen by the choice that we or others around us make like a drunken driver can take someone's life by the choice he made to drink alcohol or take dope. Bad things happen but that is not put before us by angels but by choices that we or others make.

Finally, listen to the Hebrews writer: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds" (Heb 1:1-2) and Jesus is so far above the angels of God for angels of God were commanded to worship the Lord (Heb. 1: 4-6). There are no guardian angels today either good or bad. Thanks for the question.

The Gospel Preceptor - March, 2020

Our question for this month comes from a reader in Missouri: **"Would I be correct in assuming that a great number of Christians in the first century possessed spiritual gifts? (1 Cor. 1:7, the prophecy of Joel Acts 2:17-21)."**

One would probably be correct in saying that many Christians possessed spiritual gifts in the first century church. Spiritual gifts were only accomplished through the laying on of an apostles' hands. A good text to emphasize this is found in the following: "Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost" (Acts 8:17). This is the record when those in Samaria had heard the preaching of Philip the evangelist, one of those selected in Acts 6 to minister to the Grecian widows who were being neglected in their daily needs. Peter and John—apostles—were sent for the purpose of laying their hands on them to enable them to have the gift of the Holy Spirit.

There are some misunderstandings regarding these spiritual gifts. Paul said in First Corinthians 12:8-10,

For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another *divers* kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues.

The misunderstanding here is that many say that there were only nine spiritual gifts. While nine were enumerated here, there were others. If we have counted correctly, there were about 15 or 16 different gifts. We must use all accounts of such gifts and not limit ourselves to one or two passages.

A second misunderstanding is that every Christian received a spiritual gift. There is an interesting statement in Acts 2:39 where, in part, Peter said, [E]ven as many as the Lord our God shall call." This is interesting because of the meaning of the word "call."

It comes from the Greek word *proskaleo* and is used only in the middle voice. One might ask what this means. First, it signifies that only those called would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Within the framework of all of those who obeyed the Gospel, only those called would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, from within the larger group that obeyed the Gospel, a smaller group would receive the gift as the Lord saw fit.

The spiritual gifts were given so that the church in any location could function scripturally. The church in Samaria is a good example of this. When Peter and John had laid their hands on sufficient individuals to enable the church to function properly, it is interesting that Samaria no longer needed Philip, Peter, and John. Why? They had been given spiritual gifts so they could carry on their own worship. The Bible student should ever keep this in mind.

Yes, many received spiritual gifts, but this side of eternity no one will ever know how many. Spiritual gifts were no longer needed when the Word was completely revealed and confirmed. Since revelation and confirmation occurred in the first century, we have no spiritual gifts today, nor do we have the need for them.

Thank you for the question.

The Gospel Preceptor - April, 2020

I need your view on this idea that is being taught by a very influential brother in Ghana.

According to the brother, all the churches in one country or city or town were under just one eldership. (Titus 1:5). His argument is that, the churches in the apostolic age were persecuted churches, which met in homes. And so when Paul wrote to for example, the church in Ephesus, he wrote to just one eldership which oversaw all the house churches in the city and it was all these house churches combined which are called “the church of Ephesus” (Rev.2:1) and not just one local church like is always taught.

Thanks for your question. The teaching you allude to is false to the core. Elders were/are appointed over the local congregation and in no case in New Testament times was an eldership ordained over two or more congregations. Look at this verse, “And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed” (Acts 14:23).

Does the phrase “every church” not mean **every**? If it means exactly what it says then a congregation that met in a house or home had its own elders. We know that there were those churches that met in houses. “Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellowlabourer, And to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellowsoldier, and to the church in thy house” (Philm 1:1,2). Also speaking of Priscilla and Aquila Paul wrote, “Likewise greet the church that is in their house....” (Rom. 16:5). And there were perhaps others also that met in houses.

This does not suggest that all congregations met in the home of some members. The fact is that we do not know where some met, we know that they met and where the church met there were elders over that local congregation and not over a conglomerate

of congregations as is evidently being taught by the false teacher there in Ghana.

Moreover, when Paul called from Miletus for the elders at Ephesus to come to meet him (cf. Acts 20:17) did he expect all the elders from Asia Minor to meet there or only the elders from the church at Ephesus? The point is that the elders at Ephesus had no authority over those who met in the house Philemon or of Priscilla and Aquila or any other congregation etc.

The congregation where we work was supporting a preacher in a certain location and they meet under a shade tree. The last account that we had of them there were about 25 members. That congregation was not under nor over another other congregation regardless of the meeting place. That being the case why would Paul instruct Titus to: “For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee” (Titus 1:5). He did that because the Holy Spirit Inspired him to appoint elders in **every church** (Acts 14:23). How many cities did Paul include? **Every city!**

Paul and Barnabus met with the elders of the church in Jerusalem with the other apostles, not Jerusalem and the surrounding area congregations over which the elders at Jerusalem were overseers (cf. Acts 15:1-5) Finally, for the most part, the epistles were written to various congregations because each one for the most part had different problems that needed addressing. There is no Inspired record of one eldership being over more than one congregation. Again, we need to apply Colossians 3:17, “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.” Authority is totally lacking in this matter.

The Gospel Preceptor - May, 2020

Is it Scriptural to Partake of the Lord’ Supper Outside of the “Corporate” Assembly Worship?

This question comes about, but is not a new thought at all, due to the pandemic that is scattered in almost every county of the world. Many of their arguments have been sent to me for consideration and all have used First Corinthians 11 to make one or more one of their arguments. Scriptures taken out of their context becomes a pretext. The following is taken from *Davidson’s Notes on the New Testament the Book of First Corinthians*:

“In studying Scriptures, we need to study within the context. What is the condition? They were disorderly! Disorder was based upon a failure to understand an underlying and important principle. I am confident that this is based upon the liberty that we have already been talking about. Some thought that they were free due to the liberty that belongs to Christians and did not have to abide by customs at that time and verse 16 talks about customs. For instance, there were things in Colosse and in Galatia that were peculiar to them. Neither of them had this problem but had other conditions. This needs to be kept in mind as we study any book of the Bible. There was a general problem that Paul was dealing with in Corinth and this has a bearing on what he says in this chapter. He first discusses the covering which we will not discuss in this piece.

Beginning in verse 17 he comes to a discussion of one thing that involves two other

things. Remember that in the beginning of the book he discussed the division that took place in Corinth. This has been in the background even in chapter 10 and 11. It was in the discussion of eating meats in chapter 8 and his personal liberties in chapter 9. Now, this comes out again. It comes out in that it is expressed in a certain way—the way they were eating. There are two meals involved in 1 Corinthians 11. There is what is known as the love feast. Second Peter 2:13 and Jude verse 12 speaks of this meal. Thus, it has apostolic approval as far as the meal is concerned, but not the abuse that had come to bear upon it. This was a meal where Christians gathered, the rich brought so they could share with the poor. This needs to be kept in mind if we are going to understand the situation in chapter 11. The wording in the passage shows two meals. One was a demonstration of the care one for another especially the rich for the poor. Sometimes it was called a feast of charity that showed the nature of it. In Acts 2 the early church had all things in common. This enabled those who had plenty to share with those who had need. Out of this is what selling property in Acts chapter 4 is about. Later on, this practice was stopped. The second was the Lord's Supper that was to be separated from this meal.

Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse. For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it (1 Cor. 11:17-18).

They were coming together not for the better, but the worst. Verse 18 shows why. There was division in Corinth and this is the first problem that he dealt with. The division in Corinth was being manifest in the love feast. Instead of eating together, sharing one with another, a party spirit had raised its head and some would eat and leave the others out. I think the language is clear to distinguish between this meal and the Lord's Supper.

“For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you” (1 Cor. 11:19). Division tests people. It did then and it does now. Whenever division occurs the real test comes to our faith in the Bible, our will to do what is right in what we stand for and the attitudes that the Gospel has molded into our lives. There evidently were false teaches and 2 Corinthians will show this—those who even believed that Paul was a false apostle. This will be manifested (made known) and those false teachers exposed. We need to realize that in the church none of us is perfect. We do not want to practice sin and we need to deal with this in the proper way and manner. We must be careful how we deal with this. He had pointed out that they were puffed up.

“When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper” (1 Cor. 11:20). A better rendering would be “it is impossible to eat the Lord's Supper. Note verse 21: “For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken.” Underscore the phrase **his own supper**. That identifies this supper as being distinct from the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper is never referred to as *his own supper*, speaking of Christians. It is the Lord's Supper and not ours. It is clear that there is a difference in the two under consideration and we need to keep this distinction clear. “His own supper” obviously refers to the feast of

charity. This was their own supper that they were eating. The Lord's Supper would not supply the need for hunger. You could not take the unleavened bread and make a meal out of it and be full. However, here is a meal that was intended to meet the needs of hunger to all who needed it especially the poor. I do not doubt that the word drunken is literal and means exactly that. Remember that they are influenced by paganism.

“What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not” (1 Cor. 11:22). “Have houses to eat and drink in.” Eat what? This love feast! Why do I know that this is the case? “Or despise ye the church of God?” He did not say ye despise the Lord's Supper or the Lord. Why? **“Shame them that have not.”** Who was this? This was the poor. Why would he say this relative to the Lord's Supper? It is obvious that this is the love feast, a common meal and there was a problem in eating it. What was the problem? Verse 18 says that it was division among them. How were these divisions being manifested? There would be a group, due to the divided condition of the church, that would eat the common meal and would not share it with others. Instead of it being a love feast that was shared with everyone, they were being divided, and this was a denial of the unity for the church. Therefore, instead of the love feast being as it should have been, showing care and concern for one another, it had become the means of showing the divided condition in the church at Corinth.

Now let us do some supposing! Suppose that when we have a fellowship meal, we have a Sunday breakfast or brunch prior to our services. And, suppose that we have some parties here in the church—some groups that are alienated or separated one from another. Suppose that over here is party number one. They come and sit over there somewhere because they do not want to have fellowship with others. They eat and leave everyone else out. Party number two comes along and they eat their breakfast and the two groups have not had fellowship with each other.

Now, this preceded the Lord's Supper in Corinth and that is the reason why he now introduces the Lord's Supper because it denies the very situation that existed in the common meal with the division in the common meal or else why would he say that some had and others had not? The division in the church was being exhibited in this meal. Out of that he introduces the matter of the Lord's Supper. There may have been some who were confusing it and mixing it with a common meal. I do not believe that this is the prime thrust of what he is talking about. The prime thrust is a denial that the Lord's Table could be preserved under the conditions that existed there. The division that existed there made it impossible for them to partake of the Lord's Supper. How in the world could they set their minds where they ought to be with such a divided condition? You see the utter impossibility of such. Attitudes must be right in order to partake of the Lord's Supper.

It is a picture of, a symbol of, the unity of the Lord's church. Where division exists, it is impossible to partake the Supper. I have known of brethren who were alienated from each other who would sit in the same building, partake of the Supper, and go out two different doors not speaking to each other thinking that they were alright. Had they understood the situation at Corinth they would have realized that this was impossible and they could not do it. Thus, he is introducing the Supper to show that we are to be

one. Now, you know why he said in verse 18 there was division among them. They had their little groups here and there and could not sit at the Lord's Table. How could they come out of these groups and gather around the Lord's Table that says unity, love, care and concern? Now he will show how, in that condition, they could not partake of the Lord's Supper.

For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body (1 Cor. 11-23-29).

What does it mean in discerning the Lord's Body? Go back to chapter 10 where this was first introduced. Read verses 16-17. The very bread itself looking to the body of Christ that was given or symbolic of the body that Christ gave "*discerning the body*" (ASV). To properly partake of the body that was broken for sin which alienates, divides, and creates sins and schisms. To see that is to also see the unity of the church. The failure to see the relationship between the Lord's Supper and unity is to miss some of the fundamental teaching of the Scriptures. When we sit around a common table it is an indication of a common aim, a common goal, a common care, a common Lord and a common desire to serve. There are some things about the Lord's Supper in this chapter that we have failed, by and large, to emphasize, as we ought.

I have 8 things that we ought to remember in observing the Lord's Supper. (1) It commemorates Calvary. What do I mean by this? The atonement—how that Christ died for our sins! It means that through what took place on Calvary we are made as one with God, reconciled with God and made friends with God because sin alienates. Being one with God we are made one with another. A recognition that without Calvary I am lost. (2) It is a communion. This has to do with a common sharing. This means fellowship or partakers with. Paul said in chapter 10 that we are partakers of this one body. It is a common sharing that we have in Christ and this tells us that we are united. Why then in Corinth could there be division? (3) It is a reminder of a new covenant. Notice that Christ said, "this cup is the New Testament in my blood." It tells us that the Law of Moses has been abolished.

The word *new* comes from a Greek word that means "new in kind and quality." It is a covenant of kind and quality that was dedicated by a better blood. Moses' law was dedicated by the blood of animals, but not this covenant. (4) It demands concentration. Let a man examine himself. The mind is to concentrate on what this is about. Why examine self? What about my attitudes? Have I been guilty of causing division? How have I lived? Have I lived a penitent life? Do I keep my mind on what all

this is about? If the Corinthians had concentrated on what the Lord's Supper was all about, they would not have had the division. (5) It is reminder of care one for another. The Lord's Supper tells us of God and Christ's love for us. While telling us this, it is a reminder that we are to love one another like Deity loved us. This means care for! How could they ignore the poor if they had understood that the Lord's Supper was a reminder that God cares and as such we ought to care. We must not ignore the fact that there is a benevolent attitude in it. (6) Contention, which is division, is to be avoided. When we partake of the Supper we ought to ask, "Am I contentious and have a divisive spirit?" If so then I need to repent of that. We cannot be contentious and divisive and partake of the Supper with God's approval. We would not have factions if we realized that we are all one and we cannot be contentious and be one in Christ. We cannot eat and drink worthily with this kind of spirit. I must examine my heart. (7) We have a common aim and common goal. Our very being around the Lord's Table should suggest that we are all living for the same purpose—a common cause. We are committed to the Lord and all that the Table signifies. Do we think that we have hand in hand and heart in heart; that we are all working for a common cause? (8) There is the common expectation that He is coming again. To partake of the Supper is to say that I believe with all my heart that He is coming back. All these things are involved partaking of the Lord's Supper. It is not just a ritual that we go through—it has meaning and purpose.

"For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep" (1 Cor. 11:30). I challenge you, find me a child of God that partakes of the Lord's Supper, keeping in mind the principles that we have just talked about, and show me a weak Christian! You will not find one! When the Supper means this to us it puts conviction in the soul. It indicates what life is all about. It shows why we are here and where our priorities are. Thus, we can see that at Corinth they were not partaking properly, and you see the condition of the church thus far in this letter. All of these things would have brought about unity.

"For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged" (1 Cor. 11:31). Listen to what he is saying and make the application.

"But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world" (1 Cor. 11:32). Therefore, the purpose of it is to learn from it.

"Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another" (1 Cor. 11:33). Put this back up here in what was taking place in the beginning of this study starting in verse 17. They were not waiting for the other, but rather had a party spirit. That spirit had invaded the church in Corinth and they did not want to eat with each other.

"And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come" (1 Cor. 11:34). In other words, if you are that hungry eat before you come. In reference to the common meal eat something before you come so you will not be desirous to eat before everyone else does, or, in your little party or little group. Now, what have we had? The common meal, the love feast and then the Lord's Supper! The primary thought of what he had to

say was due to the divided condition that they had in Corinth. He is showing them that they could not be a part of the division and partake of the Lord's Supper."

We began hearing the term "corporate worship" several years ago among the liberal element. The position in this framework is that some are taking the position that there is only one thing that is done as worship inside "corporate worship" meaning the assembly and that all other acts of worship are personal or private. They take the position that our giving **only** is "corporate", and that it is not given to the Lord but to the "church."

How can one be in any more error? Is not the church the Lord's church? He said "I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18) and it is referred to as that through the Scripture or as "My kingdom" indicating that the ownership is the Lord's and His only. The position is further postulated that every **other** act is **personal**.

The participants in the discussion are in serious error because when they assemble on the Lord's Day **all** phases of our worship **are personal**. By that we mean that while all participate it is thus on a personal basis. For instance, if one does not sing and make melody in the heart (cf. Eph. 5:19) he does not violate all others participating. One may not take the supper properly but this in no way compromises the worship of all others as some believe. Carry this on through each avenue of worship and see the point.

Another believes and postulates that there is "no Scriptural not one" justification for partaking of the supper outside the assembly and tries to force First Corinthians out of context. Thus, they argue, that if the "whole church" is not come together the supper cannot be partaken of Scripturally. We are surprised a little that the brethren did not think of, maybe purposefully, of Jesus statement in Matt.18:20, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

Staying with the context of Matt 18:20 and using the phrase "in my name" is the key. I think also of Col 3:17 "by the authority of" also. It is the case that when two or three come together in the name of the Lord He is present with them if they violate no other Scripture. The argument is lame also for when Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper it was not in the midst of the church. The argument that one cannot partake of the Lord's Supper unless the whole church comes together in "corporate worship" is very biased and anti and his argument is false on the face of it. For instance, there is a prisoner—a Christian—who wishes to worship. We (one or more) go and engage in all avenues of worship with him. Is this not acceptable? It is also the case, like Corinth, that brethren can assemble unscripturally and that being the case the Lord is not with them. May we sing and make melody in our hearts outside the assembly, or pray? We bow our heads to give thanks as well as nightly prayers and not one of these is in the assembly.

Think of this, if the entire (whole) church must be assembled in order for us to worship we would probably never have another worship for there a seldom a time that "**every**" member is present.

During the pandemic, my wife and I get dressed for worship and we offer our worship to God which is the very best that can be done with the situation we have health wise, but we look forward to the assembling with the saints as soon as possible.

It is strange to me that this argument centers around only the Lord's Supper as if the

supper was the only act of worship that we are to engage in. Are we ready for one to announce before the Supper that “we come to this part of our worship and it were not for this none of us would be here?”

Finally, get your dictionary and look up the meaning of the word “corporate” and you will see that is not something that would refer to the church notwithstanding those that would try to force it on us.

The Gospel Preceptor - June, 2020

Our question this month is given in quotes below.

“Is it authorized for a local congregation to take money from its treasury and give to government to run a social policy or program like free education”?

We are thankful for all questions and especially those that are based upon the authority of God’s Word. Many years ago, when questioning a congregation about building their multi-purpose building (gymnasium), this author asked, “where is the authority for it?” and was told by the preacher then, “No one asks that old question anymore”. This points to a very sad state of affairs in our land. No human being has the authority to override God’s authority in any matter be it elder, preacher or whomsoever it may be. Therefore, we must continually ask for authority for the things we practice and do or say. The Scriptures admonish us: “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him” (Col. 3:17).

Christians recognize the place of government in the affairs of our lives and we also understand that government, both local and national, is authorized by God and was created by God. Civil government seems to have been set in motion (order) at the dividing of the nations in Genesis 11. Paul also wrote in Rom 13 these inspired words, “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God” (V. 1).

He further shows that for conscience we should obey the laws of the land and in verse 6 Paul shows that we pay “tribute” (taxes) to support those who make laws as well as those who enforce the laws. However, in making laws, man sometimes makes laws that are not Scriptural thus not ordained by God or not in keeping with His divine will such as abortion and many others. In any case any law/laws that violates God’s law must not be kept by the citizens.

This is only a primer regarding these matters but is meant to establish that government is ordered by God but not all government regulations are ordained by God. His Word must be the authority that we use in all matters of this kind. If man’s law conflicts with God’s law we must refuse to obey that particular law.

God has three divine institutions in this order, the home, government and the church. Some duties and responsibilities belong to each of these. There are things that the home can do that the government or the church cannot do. For instance, it is not the government’s responsibility to demand how parents are to rear their children nor can the government instruct the church on how it is to function. Citizens (members) of the

church and citizens of the country are dual citizens. These are fundamental to the question this month and the proper answer.

Neither the government or the church is responsible for recreation. This is a function of the home and it is not shared by either of the other institutions. If it was the government's responsibility then it would demand the kind of recreation we engage in making the rules and regulations regarding such. This is obviously not the government's responsibility. It is sad that many churches have entered in the entertainment business for which there is no authority in God's Word. They are lacking in scriptural authority.

Education is also a product, and responsibility, of the home. No where in God's Holy Word is the church admonished either by direct command or approved example to sponsor secular education of any kind. If the government demanded education it will instruct us to the type and kind and perhaps an entrance into socialism.

There are many things that the home can do that are not authorized for the church or government to participate in.

There are equally many things that the church is authorized to do that no other institution is authorized to do.

There are likewise things that the government is authorized to do that neither the church or the home does. Church members are authorized to participate in law making if they so desire and are authorized by command to keep civil law as long as it does not interfere with God's laws.

Always ask for authority for what the church practices preaches or teaches. Search the Scriptures (John 5:39; Acts 17:11). In doing so there is no authority for the church to take one cent of the Lord's money to support government education. This is clearly part of the responsibility of the home.

The Gospel Preceptor - July, 2020

Our question this month is: **“Which coming of the Son of Man is being referred to in Matthew 10:23”?**

We appreciate the questions that readers send us from time to time. Each is a challenge to us to do the very best that we can in answering them.

There are many opinions among religious leaders regarding this passage. Matthew 10 is the sending out of the apostles and they are mentioned in verses 2-4. The apostles were restricted in going out in that they were not to go to the Gentiles or any Samaritan city (v. 5) but commanded to go to the “lost sheep of the house of Israel” – Jews (v. 6).

Verse 6, I believe, is the key to a better understanding of verse 23 questioned above. Why not go to those places and specifically go the Israelites? The answer may be found in verse 23, but we continue to probe. The “lost sheep” are those who had lost their way thus they once met the approval of God or else they could not have lost their way. This by itself proves that once saved always saved is a false doctrine as well as one cannot fall from grace. These had fallen and were said at this juncture to be lost.

Remember that the apostles were to go to the “lost sheep of the house of Israel” so they were in cities where Jews lived. Jesus said that He was sending them as sheep going amidst wolves (v. 16). They would be brought before the councils of men at different places and at times beaten—scourged (vv. 17-18). They did not need an attorney or have to study what and when to say a thing for it would be given them in that hour, and it would not be themselves speaking but the Spirit that spoke through them (vv. 19-20).

Now, we come to verse 23, “But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come”. Which coming is this speaking of?

“The coming of the Son of man” has a fixed doctrinal sense that is not His coming in His kingdom in Acts 2 in my judgment. Nor is this a reference to His coming in the resurrection. He would later tell the apostles that now you see Me and then you won’t, speaking of His resurrection and return to heaven. This has to do with a specific time that had been told of old by the prophets and later quoted by Jesus in Matt. 24: 15 which is part of Daniel 9:23,25,27; 11:31; 12:1. See also Mark 13:14 and read Luke 21:20 that speaks almost the same but a little differently. “And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh”. Though this is also a reference to the same event as told by Christ in Matt. 10:23.

From the time that the verses on Matthew were spoken till the Lord came in judgment against Jerusalem was a little over thirty (30) years. The apostles would not have the time to go to every city hamlet or village in all Israel till this judgment would come.

It is also true that some of those living at that time would see the kingdom come with power (cf. Mark 9:1, Luke 9:27). Others would see the coming of the kingdom—Gentiles grafted in but the destruction of the Jewish economy—nationality—would be a deadly blow to the Jews who rejected the prophets as well as Christ. The Jews wanted to hold on to the law of Moses going about teaching Gentiles that they also must be circumcised, etc.

Remember that God came in judgment against the Jews—Babylonian captivity. They had rejected the counsel of God. They, as a nation, also rejected Christ. They were warned time and time again.

It would do no injustice to this Scripture for it to refer to the coming of the kingdom—the church, but in my judgment, this is not the thrust of the passage under consideration.

Thanks for your question and your study of the Book Divine.

The Gospel Preceptor - August, 2020

The question this month is, “**What did Christ mean when he said the kingdom is being taken by force**” (Matt. 11:12)?

Thanks for your interesting question. Our Lord had referenced John the Baptist when He made this statement and the fact that all Jerusalem and Judaea went out to be baptized by John confessing their sins (cf. Matt. 3:5-6).

Mark’s record says, “And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of

Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins". When one considers all of the region mentioned this was a phenomenal event—occasion. We do not take literally that “all” means that every person went and was baptized by John in the Jordan river. As sure as there were many prophecies regarding the coming of Christ into this world by the virgin birth, there were also many prophecies regarding the one that would introduce Christ to the world.

Jesus had mentioned John’s greatness in the preceding verses and pointed out that though John was great those who would enter the kingdom were greater than John. Thus, to enter the kingdom was/is the greatest blessing known to mankind. Had it not been for the suffering Servant—Christ, there would have never been a kingdom and John was the first person in the New Testament era that had that awesome responsibility of introducing Him (cf. Matt. 11: 7-12).

Jesus had finished giving His disciples charges in sending them out and turned His attention to this matter. He did not mean that an army or such was taking the kingdom but that there was so much anticipation regarding it that some was trying to force themselves into it.

J.W. McGarvey wrote in the *Fourfold Gospel*,

Jesus here pictures the kingdom of heaven as a besieged city. The city is shut up, but the enemies which surround it storm its walls and try to force an entrance--an apt illustration which many fail to comprehend. The gates of Christ's kingdom were not opened until the day of Pentecost (Ac 2:22-36), but men hearing it was about to be opened sought to enter prematurely, not by the gates which God would open when Simon Peter used the keys (Mt 16:19), but by such breaches as they themselves sought to make in the walls. Examples of this violence will be seen in the following instances: Joh 6:15; Mt 20:21; Lu 19:11,36-38; 22:24-30; Ac 1:1-6:15. The people were full of pre-conceived ideas with regard to the kingdom, and each one sought to hasten and enjoy its pleasures as one who impatiently seizes upon a bud and seeks with his fingers to force it to bloom. The context shows that John the Baptist was even then seeking to force the kingdom.

This is the correct concept we think. Thanks for your question.

The Gospel Preceptor - September, 2020

What did Paul mean in Romans 11:26 when he wrote, “And so all Israel shall be saved...”?

Thanks for your interesting question. Interesting because you are seeking the truth and because the religious world in general does not know the meaning. Next, it is interesting because of the recent agreement between Israel and a couple of other nations which, to many, began a situation where they think the anti-Christ has now come.

It is also true, as we will show, that religious people want to believe that every Jew will be saved when Christ comes to set up His kingdom and reign on His throne in Jerusalem. Some believe that Queen Elizabeth is reigning on that throne, keeping it

warm for Christ at His coming, as some will say, to reign a thousand years before the end of time comes. Now I know that “keeping it warm” are my words and not theirs, but equal about the same and how the Queen has it only temporarily—till Christ comes.

Paul wrote these words, “And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob”. We will answer the part of the question sent to us for this issue of the paper.

We now give proof of what great religious writers say about this verse.

And so all Israel shall be saved--To understand this great statement, as some still do, merely of such a gradual inbringing of individual Jews, that there shall at length remain none in unbelief, is to do manifest violence both to it and to the whole context. It can only mean the ultimate ingathering of Israel as a nation, in contrast with the present “remnant.” (So THOLUCK, MEYER, DE WETTE, PHILIPPI, ALFORD, HODGE). Three confirmations of this now follow; two from the prophets, and a third from the Abrahamic covenant itself... (*Jamesion-Faucett-Brown Commentary on Romans*).

All Israel. All the Jews. It was a maxim among the Jews, that “every Israelite should have part in the future age.” (Grotius.) The apostle applies that maxim to his own purpose; and declares the sense in which it would be true. He does not mean to say that every Jew of every age would be saved; for he had proved that a large portion of them would be, in his time, rejected and lost. But the time would come when, as a people, they would be recovered; when the nation would turn to God; and when it could be said of them, that, as a nation, they were restored to the Divine favour. It is not clear that he means that even then every individual of them would be saved, but the body of them; the great mass of the nation would be. Nor is it said when this would be. This is one of the things which “the Father hath put in his own power,” Ac 1:7. He has given us the assurance that it shall be done to encourage us in our efforts to save them; and he has concealed the time when it shall be, lest we should relax our efforts, or feel that no exertions were needed to accomplish what must take place at a fixed time.

Shall be saved. Shall be recovered from their rejection; be restored to the Divine favour; become followers of the Messiah, and thus be saved as all other Christians are (*Albert Barnes, New Testament Commentary*).

“And so all Israel shall be saved] - Shall be brought into the way of salvation, by acknowledging the Messiah; for the word certainly does not mean eternal glory; for no man can conceive that a time will ever come in which every Jew then living, shall be taken to the kingdom of glory. The term saved, as applied to the Israelites in different parts of the Scripture, signifies no more than their being gathered out of the nations of the world, separated to God, and possessed of the high privilege of being his peculiar people. And we know that this is the meaning of the term, by finding it applied to the body of the Israelites when this alone was the sum of their state.

“As it is written] - The apostle supports what he advances on this head by a quotation from Scripture, which, in the main, is taken from Isa 59:20: The Deliverer shall come out of Zion, and turn away ungodliness from Jacob. Now this cannot be understood of the manifestation of Christ among the Jews; or of the multitudes which were converted before, at, and for some time after, the day of pentecost; for these times were all past when the apostle wrote this epistle, which was probably about the 57th or 58th year of our Lord; and, as no remarkable conversion of that people has since taken place, therefore the fulfilment of this prophecy is yet to take place. In what manner Christ is to come out of Zion, and in what way or by what means he is to turn away transgression from Jacob, we cannot tell; and to attempt to conjecture, when the time, occasion, means, &c., are all in mystery, would be more than reprehensible” (*Adam Clarke’s Commentary*).

Men that I studied under in so-called Christian colleges, some of renown, taught us “context,” “context,” context.” The late brother Guy N. Woods said at least yearly in the Open Forum that a “passage taken out its context was only a pretext.” All these notable men, Dixon, Bales, and R. Turner, Sr. held that same view of the Scriptures and it has proven itself right or correct every time. Therefore, let’s look at the context of Romans 11 since it does **not** teach what the so-called scholars aver that it does.

Paul was not teaching that every Jew had become a castaway—fallen. Had he done so, he himself would be lost since he was also a Jew among them all of some repute (cf. vs. 1). God had not—and does not—cast away those that lived under other covenants. The patriarchs were not called Jews of note. Those will be judged by the law they lived under. I am not going to be judged as a law breaker in Mexico because I do not live in there and, thus, not subject to their law but I will be judged by the law in America (cf. Rom. 13). If I go to Mexico I will be subject to their laws. Therefore, some religionist has Paul saying something that he did not say anywhere in Holy Writ.

The people who God “foreknew” in verse 2 is simply talking about those who were obedient to the law they lived under in their lifetime. Neither is Paul talking about Jews who had obeyed the saving Gospel of the New Testament. If that were the case not one single apostle would be saved, for they were all Jews.

The fact remains that those in the New Testament era rejected Christ, His church, Kingship, and His Lordship over all mankind. To the Jews in Jesus day, He betrayed God and especially the Law of Moses. Here is what Roman 11 is teaching and what happened to the Jews; “When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life” (Acts 11:18). Those words were said of the household of Cornelius by the apostle Peter. The Jews as a whole believed that they were better than anyone else and were very jealous of the Gentiles and thought the Word of God was too good for such lowly people—not fit subjects of God’s love, mercy, grace and pardon.

The Jews were provoked to anger or jealousy when Paul and Barnabas were in Antioch of Pisidia and had already experienced the hardness of the hearts of the Jews Of that, Luke wrote,

But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake

against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles (Acts 13: 45,46 in particular verse 46).

Thus, by Inspiration, Paul tells exactly what happened among the Jewish people in general but **not all—every Jew**.

While the Jews wanted to hang onto Abraham as their father, they forgot that it was said of him, “And in thy seed shall **all** the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice” (Gen. 22:18). They chose to ignore that the apostles were told to go into **all** the world (Mark 16:15) to **every** creature, to **every** nation (Matt. 28:19) and preach the Gospel to **all** mankind. This, of course, meant Gentiles as well as Jews (all emph. HDD).

Paul is demonstrating that through the downfall of the Jews, the Gospel was then preached where it had never gone before and that is to the Gentile people. As already seen, the Jews were filled with envy, blasphemed, meaning to speak against the Lord and the Word of truth, and all it represents. The Lord did not force this on their preconceived hearts for they misunderstood the meaning of the Law of Moses whose design was to lead man to the Gospel of Christ—the new covenant—the spiritual kingdom the church (cf. Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:1-11) and the law removed—fulfilled (Col. 2:14).

You see, they wanted a king on a throne in Jerusalem and that was not the purpose of the Gospel of Christ. He would be/is a spiritual King over a spiritual kingdom—the church. Thus, they wanted exactly what some want to today, and that is a king sitting on a throne in Jerusalem for a thousand years. They were so adamant about this that Jesus foretold the destruction of Jerusalem in Matt. 24, Mark. 13, Luke 17, etc.

Paul used the grafting process to teach that the Jews could be grafted back in to the real tree if they would come back to the truth that they deserted. Please remember that Romans was written some twenty odd years after the church was established in Jerusalem in Acts 2. Undoubtedly, some of them had obeyed the Gospel but turned away in bitterness to the truth. They, in order to be saved, would have to confess their sins and pray for forgiveness (1 John 1:7-10). And this is the grafting that Paul is speaking of here in Romans 11.

So, we see that not every Jew turned away. Not every Jew will be saved unless they obey the truth. All of Israel, or any other people, will be saved if they are baptized into Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38) and live a faithful life (1 Cor. 15:58). They are the only saved ones regardless of race or nation.

The Gospel Preceptor - October, 2020

EDITOR'S NOTE: As no question was submitted to brother Davidson this month, he is taking a sabbatical. Since he is the author of *Over the Vast Horizon*, the biography of Guy N. Woods, it is fitting that we consider brother Woods' answer to a question from the Freed-Hardeman College Lectures Open Forum in the 1970s.

Question: Did the witch of Endor actually call up Samuel from the dead, or did she deceive Saul by trickery? (1 Sam. 28:1-25).

Neither. Yet, Samuel undoubtedly came forth from the spirit world and conversed with Saul on that occasion. Saul, king of Israel, out of favor with God and man, having forsaken God and having been by Him forsaken, seeks help from a source he earlier would have regarded with the greatest contempt: a woman with “a familiar spirit”—a witch. The depths of his despair are indicated in the fact that by his own direction many who practiced the art of witchcraft and similar deceptive matters had been put to death because of their influence over the people; and now, with no one on earth to turn to, he remembers the godly Samuel whose wisdom he had disregarded in life, and longs for advice from him! And to obtain it, he seeks assistance from a witch.

What amazing irony there is in this. He who had expelled all he could find from the land, or caused them to be killed, now consults one of them for help he could get neither from God nor man. Moreover, there is also strange irony in the fact that he longs for one more chance to listen to the words of his friend and advisor of happier days. How often, in this life, is this situation found. It is truly one of the tragedies of life that the advice and counsel of the good and great is valued by many often when it is no longer available.

The woman did her usual incantation, common to such seances, and Samuel appeared. That it was a real appearance and not an apparition accomplished by trickery by the woman, is clear from the fact that she had not expected Samuel to appear, and she was therefore wholly unprepared for what occurred. It is clear from the narrative that Saul had more faith in her ability to call up Samuel than she did! Samuel actually appeared; this appearance was neither by the powers of the woman nor the agency of the devil; it was a real occurrence designed to rebuke both the woman and Saul.

Positive and irresistible proof of the genuineness of the miracle, for such it was, is to be seen in the message which Samuel delivered to Saul on the occasion: “Jehovah will deliver Israel also with thee into the hands of the Philistines; and tomorrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me...” (1 Sam. 28:19). In addition to chronicling the loss of the kingdom to Saul, Samuel made two predictions: (1) the Philistines would triumph in battle over Israel; (2) Saul and his sons would die on the morrow following this interview. These details neither the woman, neither Satan, nor his agents, could have known, and must therefore have been delivered by inspiration. Thus, Samuel did actually come up before king Saul, not by witchery, but by divine interposition, and the account may therefore be regarded as an actual description of what occurred on that day.

The Gospel Preceptor - November, 2020

The question this month comes from some brethren who are interested in and offered the following situation in which they are engaged. I have omitted all names of the congregation and another institution they named for this study. I appreciate so much the question.

Question: A congregation received an inheritance from some stock in a popular large company. They turned to stock over to an investment firm for future use. Some time went by and the congregation sold the preachers house which was no longer needed and applied these funds also to the same mutual funds. Today the congregation is applying these funds for daily or weekly expenses. Is this scriptural?

Nowhere in the Scriptures is a congregation granted the opportunity to own or be in a business venture. We must function by the authority of the Scriptures (Col. 3:17) both in word or deed—what we say and what we do.

The Lord's church is commanded to come together on the first day of the week. Not forsaking such (Heb.10:25) for the purpose of worship (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2 etc). This is a direct command. "Not forsaking the assembly" implies a place to assemble. This could be any place that elders and/or brethren decide but they cannot breach the command to assemble under normal circumstance except sickness etc. We know of a congregation that meets under two giant shade trees. This is most certainly Scriptural. It is a known place where brethren can assemble to worship according to the commands of the Bible. Their climate is suited for such but not all are.

There are brethren who rent a place to worship and this too fulfills the inference—implication—to assemble to worship. We are not discussing whether renting is better than owning property. One congregation rented a Masonic hall for worship but they were not Free Masons. This may not be the best but it was what they could, and did, do. In that case, the building was later donated to that congregation and they made rulings in the deed that Masons could no longer meet there. Surely no one would think that the church could not receive such a gift. It actually belonged to a family that was letting the Masons meet there also but not at the same time.

There are other brethren who meet in someone's home. That also is Scriptural (cf. Rom. 16:3-5; 1 Cor. 16:9). In every imaginable situation a place to assemble is implied. This finally gets down to one central question: Is it scriptural for a congregation own and maintain property?

It is inferred that a congregation may own property to fulfill the command to assemble just like the command to sing and make melody in the heart (Eph. 5:19) implies some standard such as a book of songs to sing from or song pages so all could be using the book or pages to sing the same song. It would be disorderly for a hundred or five people to be singing different songs at the same time.

In owning property, as well as other things mentioned, the church should have an expense. This involves the business side of a congregation. While the church is not a business, it involves itself necessarily to pay for utilities, insurance, janitors, preachers, and the list goes on and on. The larger the congregation the more involved in these

matters they become. Very small congregations have the same expenses but not as much. Every congregation we know of has a treasurer. His function to the congregation is to pay all bills and be ready to give an accounting of same when needed. These funds come from free will offerings (1 Cor. 16:1-2).

It was from a free will offering that some individual or individuals saw fit to leave a contribution of some shares of a stock company for the church to have the proceeds to function as they see fit. When they sold the house those funds were not needed at the time so these were also invested in the same body of mutual funds to have these as needed.

Let's now apply the principle given in Matthew 25:14-30. This is the record of parables that Jesus was giving in view of judgment. One man was given five talents another two talents and the last servant one talent. A talent is a value of money or monetary use that amounted to from sixteen to eighteen hundred dollars per talent. These talents were given according to each one's ability (v. 15). The Lord, having given these talents, went into a far country. Remember that Jesus is teaching about judgment to come.

The five talent man and two talent man both doubled the investment that was given them. Out of fear, the one talent man dug a hole in the earth and hid his sixteen hundred dollars and presented it to the Lord when he came back for those then to give an accounting of their use of the talents given.

The Lord said to the one talent man, "Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury" (Matt. 25:27). Notice the words "exchangers" and the word "usury." The exchangers in our day could very well be the investment institutions such as banks and other ways of investing that which belongs to the Lord. Usury is interest on the principal. Remember that there would be no talent to use unless the Lord provided such (cf. Hag.2:8; Psa. 50:10).

Most all agree that a congregation may have certificates of deposit if such sum is not needed in the short term. Can, or may, these instruments rise or fall in value from one time to the next? Of course, they do or can. Mutual funds do the same. They rise and fall as time goes by but like certificates of deposit the brethren have invested these for protection of said funds for future use as needed.

Let's revisit the matter of owning a building for a moment. May property fluctuate in value as time passes by? Sure, and it does. In the last several months, during this awful pandemic, property—dwellings in particular—have increased on the average of 17 percent. However, 40 years ago when interest rates were 16 to 20 percent property was almost useless in the short term. So, a congregation that owns property could see the same fluctuate according to the times in which we/they live. This is the natural ebb and flow of earthly possessions. They fluctuate from day to day, week to week, or year to year. Must the church cease to use what they have been given for the Lord's cause and to His glory by not keeping good saving—use—principles?

It is our view that neither the family who left said investments nor the church that has tried to use them faithfully has erred in any way. If this is incorrect, what scripture has been violated? Personally, I find none. Thanks for the question.

The Gospel Preceptor - December, 2020

Our question this month is:

How can a Christian reconcile the command to not be covetous and the exhortation to be content (1 Tim. 6:6-10) with seeking material progress in this life? Am I a covetous person, if I desire to own a house and a car in the future? Can I claim to be content with my lot if I desire to be promoted at my workplace? Does 1 Timothy 6:9 mean a Christian should not aim to be materially rich?

Thanks for the thoughtful question. The querist also suggested that this might be a “loaded question.” With the proper understanding of Scripture, we do not see it as loaded at all. One must remember that there is one main Author of Scripture and that is God who gave Words through the Holy Spirit to men who were inspired to write those words. Therefore, each word in the Bible must harmonize with every other word in the Bible.

That being the case please notice that Adam was to “dress it and to keep” the earth thus causing it to produce enough to sustain man and then mankind (cf. Gen. 2:15). Notice also that Noah was told after the flood to empty the ark “that they may breed abundantly in the earth, and be fruitful, and multiply upon the earth” (Gen. 8:17). The earth was barren it would need to advance to the point of producing food for man and beasts. Thus, not being satisfied with the status quo.

Abram and his nephew Lot went out as God commanded Abram. After some time, their herds and flocks increased till there was not enough in the land they were in to sustain them and there began to be tension between their herdsmen. No command was given to accept such and not grow the herds etc., but to expand by separating the flocks so there would be no strife between the herdsman of either—demonstrating the matter of continual growth.

The Book of Exodus demonstrates this same principle as the children of Israel wanted more with less agony and God heard their cry for help. On and on we could go giving these kinds of examples of how others increased—had more and worked for more and it did not turn God’s face against them. We must conclude that it is not prospering that God is opposed to, so it has to be something else that thus far we are missing.

Let us then be true to God and not contradict His divine Word. When something like this appears to have happened, we must look for an answer that will harmonize with God’s Word.

We cannot stress too much context, context, context. What is the context of 1 Timothy 6:1-10? Paul to Timothy addresses, in verse one, servants who are under bondage to a master. The word *servant* in verse one means bond slave thus a slave owned by his master. These were slaves who had obeyed the Gospel as verse two indicates but not all masters were Christians. Those not Christians were to be treated with great honor so that the servant’s life should not cause the master to blaspheme God which means to speak against. In this context they were to be satisfied with what they had—be content (vs. 6).

Timothy was told to teach these things to those whom he met and how that slaves who were Christians were to treat those who owned them with greater honor and not be angry because the master was a Christian also. Converted slaves must not despise their masters, because in the church they are equal. Rather, they must serve them better because they are beloved brethren, and partakers of the benefit of their service. The opposition is between those Christian slaves under the yoke of heathens and those who have believing masters.

Notice the phrase *but rather* in verse two also. The masters were beloved by God so the slaves should treat them honorably in all things, and more so because they were children of God. The servants and the master in such cases were equal before God as brethren. The masters were friends of God like the servants were. “Partakers of the benefit” are the blessings that are imported through the Gospel.

Verses 3-5 is the teacher and what is and is not taught. False teachers were teaching error regarding masters and slaves for, or, to the gain of the false teacher. They consented not to wholesome words which were healthful or healing words for the soul and this was causing strife, railings -speaking against and evil surmising. The false teacher associated these things with gain for them and their hearers.

Look back at the phrase in verse three “and to the doctrine which is according to godliness.” The doctrine was the teachings of Christ, not **about** Christ but the doctrine **of** Christ which was/is wholesome. Then in verse 6 “supposing that gain is godliness” and from this error—false doctrine—they were told to turn away. The false teachers and their followers made gain over the teachings of Christ. They were even wrong in their suppositions.

So, in turning away from this error what should they consider-know-practice? Following Christ, practicing New Testament Christianity is the greatest value one can have. There is never peace in error, speaking against the Lord and His truth, teaching error thus making disciples to themselves. “A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked” (Psa. 37:16). “Better is little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble therewith” (Prov. 15:16). And consider the Lord’s promise in Hebrews 13: 5 that He would never forsake the faithful. Godliness is the source of the greatest gain.

We had nothing when we arrived or nothing when we leave this world. The necessities of life are furnished to those that love the Lord and obey His Word as we work with out hands the things that are good. God does nothing for us that we can do for ourselves.

Verse 9 shows us that if our hearts are set on riches only, we will be tempted to doing anything to get the wealth we desire. We have little to no time for the Lord or sense of right and wrong truth or error.

These passages under consideration do not teach that we can’t desire and work for better things as long as our motive is on serving God. May we remind all of the parable of the talents. The man with five and two doubled theirs by trading—making more of which the Lord approved but the man that did not use his was cast into outer darkness (cf. Matt. 25:14-30).

A caution to all readers, be careful what you want with all your heart for you shall surely get it. Have hearts set on God and prosper spiritually and physically so you will have to give to the Lord's cause.