

# GOSPEL GUIDE

UNDERSTANDEST THOU WHAT THOU READEST?  
 HOW CAN I, EXCEPT SOME MAN SHOULD GUIDE ME? (ACTS 8:30,31)

## *In This Issue:*

Crossing the Jordan • 1

New Patches on Old Garments • 3

The Unreliable Nature of Supposing • 4

The Greatness of the New Testament Church • 4

"God Did Not Spare" • 6

The Shepherd and the Lost Sheep • 7

The Things the Lord Knows • 8



## Crossing the Jordan

**"AND IT CAME TO PASS,** when the people removed from their tents, to pass over Jordan, and the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people; and as they that bare the ark were come unto Jordan, and the feet of the priests that bare the ark were dipped in the brim of the water, (for Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest,) that the waters which came down from above stood and rose up upon an heap very far from the city of Adam, that is beside Zaretan: and those that came down toward the sea of the plain, even the salt sea, failed, and were cut off: and the people passed over right against Jericho. And the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan." (Joshua 3:14-17).

I. As we observe the priests carrying the ark into the Jordan, we see *their faith in the word of God*. Sight would say that so great a multitude—with the old and the young, with their cattle and all their goods—could not easily cross the Jordan, for it was in flood

stage. Sometimes when obstacles seem insurmountable, and physical sight sees no way, it is far better to let faith lead. One crossing the Higher Alps might have to follow a path no broader than the mule's foothold. Far below, down a sheer precipice, the river might seem no

After 33 years of publication in printed form, GOSPEL GUIDE now appears in electronic form. It is an eight page publication designed to teach basic principles of the gospel of Christ.

Mail Address:  
305 Coffee Avenue NE  
Russellville, AL 35653 US

e-mail Address:  
Gospel-Guide@MyWay.com

web page:  
www.gospel-guide.org

Editor: Billy Norris

## CROSSING

wider than a silver thread. The rider, knowing that the slightest wrong touch might cause his steed to lose footing and throw them both to mangled destruction, might better close his eyes and trust the experienced animal to lead them safely along the treacherous path. So along life's pathway one need not trust to his own limited sight but through faith in God's word follow the guidance of the all-wise and almighty God.

Reason would say that the waters could not be rolled back, for this would be contrary to nature, and such had never happened before in the history of the world. But faith upon the part of the children of Israel led them to march to the very brink of the river. Many years before they had failed to enter the promised land because of a lack of faith, but now they were going on into the rolling Jordan when it seemed contrary to all human wisdom and experience. When they did what God told them to do, He took care of every need. When the

feet of the priests were dipped in the "brim" of the water, the water below flowed on down into the Dead Sea, and the waters above stood and rose up into a great heap, so that the children of Israel could march across on dry ground.

God had given the people sufficient reason for faith in his word. He had been with them to deliver them from Egyptian bondage. He had worked great wonders in sustaining them in the wilderness. He had always blessed them when they did his will. As we look to the word of God today, we see that he has given abundant reason for all men to believe implicitly in his word, and in all things to do exactly what he says.

II. As we observe the priests carrying the ark into the Jordan, we also see *their obedience to the word of God*. Faith and obedience are inseparable. Faith is demonstrated in obedience. "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, *obeyed*; and he went out, not knowing whither he went" (Hebrews 11:8). Today we hear much about salvation by faith, and indeed salvation is impossible without faith (Hebrews 11:6). But the faith that men make essential to salvation is far different from the faith that God requires. The faith that men preach is a faith that fails short of obedience—of doing what God requires men to do in order to be saved. Men may preach, "Believe; put your trust in the Lord, wherever you are, and then and there, at that moment you will be saved." This is an oversimplification of God's great plan of salvation.

The Lord commands repentance, confession of one's faith in Christ, and baptism, as well as faith—and in demonstration of faith—in order to be saved (Luke 13:3; Matthew 10:32, 33; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38). Faith that falls short of meeting these requirements is not saving faith, for it fails to do what God tells us to do in order that we may obtain the remission of our sins.

III. As we observe the priests carrying the ark into the Jordan, we see *their great influence for good* because of their faith and obedience. If these men, the leaders of Israel, had trembled or delayed, no doubt the people of Israel would have been seized with panic and would not have marched into the overflowing stream. As a general rule people live as close to God as their leaders, and no closer. In Moses Joshua, and Caleb Israel had leadership that brought them into the promised land. Without such faithful, courageous, dedicated men Israel would have perished in the wilderness. A congregation of God's people usually serves in proportion to the faith and obedience of its leaders. When a congregation is doing little or nothing to carry out the great commission of Christ, it is usually because the leadership does not truly realize the great evangelistic responsibility of the church. When a congregation is engaging in all kinds of activities for which there is no authority in the scriptures, and in which the church in the first century did not engage, it is usually because the leadership is promoting these unauthorized practices, or else is giving way through lack of strong conviction,

## CROSSING

to an element within the congregation that is promoting them.

IV. As we observe the priests carrying the ark into the Jordan, we see *the truthfulness and power of God's word*. God made a promise to the children of Israel: "And it shall come to pass, as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests that bear the ark of the Lord, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of Jordan, that the waters of Jordan shall be cut off from the waters that come down from above; and they shall stand upon an heap" (Joshua 3:13). As always, God kept his promise. As soon as the feet of the priests dipped in the brim of the

waters, those toward the salt sea flowed on and failed, while those above stood and rose up upon a heap. We can always have complete confidence in the word of God. When he speaks, his word is true. "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17). When He speaks, He means what He says. "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. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry" (1 Samuel 15:22,23). In matters of religious practice men are always coming up with new and brilliant

ideas, but wherever they make departures from God's word, they are ultimately doomed to failure. God's word has stood, and will continue to stand, the test of time. "Every word of God is tried: he is a shield unto them that take refuge in him. *Add thou not to his words; lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar*" (Proverbs 30:5,6 ASV).

In life ever so often there will be Jordans to cross, temptations to overcome, work to be done in the Lord's service. If we make the crossing successfully into the promised land, it will be through faith in, and obedience to, God's word. And in doing so, we will exert an influence that will help others make that successful crossing. — BN

# New Patches on Old Garments

**IN LUKE 5:36-39 WE FIND** a short parable having to do with the *correctness of things*. This instruction is also found in the books of Matthew and Mark, but Luke tells us this is a parable.

This teaching was provoked by a question regarding the fasting of John's disciples and the lack of fasting on the part of Christ's disciples. Jesus explained this by showing that John's disciples had reason to fast but that his disciples had no reason to so do. Thus, it was not *correct* for his disciples to fast.

Jesus then proceeded to give a parable on the *correctness of things*. One of his illustrations had to do with the handling of wine. Wine bottles were made of skin. The wine would ferment and expand. This

would stretch the skins. If new wine was put into old skins the expansion of the new wine would burst them. This was not the *correct* thing to do. Then, Jesus illustrated the correctness of things with putting new patches on old garments. To patch an old garment with a new patch which had not been pre-shrunk would make the garment pucker and tear, and thus ruin the garment. This was not the *correct* way.

Surely, we can see a lesson in this having to do with the correct way of using the gospel.

### Don't Patch With Traditions

First of all, let us be careful not to patch the gospel with our traditions. It is just as *incorrect* to do this as it is to put new patches on old garments. This makes the gospel noneffective. "Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition" (Matthew 15:6.) It is a terrible thing to make the gospel of none effect, as this gospel is the means of salvation (Romans 1:16).

Furthermore, patching the gospel with traditions perverts or changes the gospel. The gospel is no longer the same even as the old garment is no longer the same when it is patched with a new patch. "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of

## THE UNRELIABLE NATURE OF SUPPOSING

"When they had finished the days, as they returned, the Boy Jesus lingered behind in Jerusalem. And Joseph and His mother did not know it; but *supposing* Him to have been in the company, they went a day's journey, and sought Him among their relatives and acquaintances" (Luke 2:43,44). The parents of Jesus supposed he was somewhere in their company when they left Jerusalem. "Supposing" led them to the wrong conclusion.

On the Day of Pentecost some mocked when Peter spoke, *supposing* that the apostles were drunk (Acts 2:15). The mockers were wrong in their supposition. The apostles were speaking as the Holy Spirit gave them utterance in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.

The enemies of Paul in Jerusalem sought to kill him for they *supposed* he had desecrated the temple by bringing Gentiles into it. Their supposition was completely wrong (Acts 21:29).

If we base our religion on what we suppose to be right, rather than the word of God, we are placing our eternal destiny in jeopardy. Too often supposition is far from the truth, while God's word is the truth (John 17:17).

## NEW PATCHES

Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:6-8). It is an awful thing to patch the gospel with traditions, as this makes us to be accursed.

### Don't Patch With The Law

Further, let us be careful lest we patch the gospel with the law of Moses. It is just as *incorrect* to do this as it is to put new patches on an old garment. The law of Moses ended, together with whatever it permitted or required, relative to fasting, mechanical instruments of music in worship, burning candles, Sabbath day worship, and so many other things with which many people have been prone to patch the gospel (Colossians 2:14; Romans 7:1-4; Ephesians 2:14-16). Christ gave a new law (Galatians 6:2; Hebrews 7:12; 10:9,10). In this law is found many things which were also in the law of Moses, but they are bind-

ing upon us because Christ commanded them—not because they were in the Mosaic law. It is just as *incorrect* to add parts of the law of Moses to the gospel as it is to put new patches on old garments. This perverts the gospel and makes the one so doing to be accursed (Galatians 1:8,9).

### Don't Patch With Opinions

Then let us be careful not to patch the gospel with our opinions. It is just as *incorrect* to do this as it is to put new patches on old garments. This will make even our worship to be vain and of no profit. "But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrine the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:9). What a meaningless effort men make when they patch the gospel with their opinions.

### The Correct Thing

The *correct thing* is to hear, understand, believe, and follow that which was written, the gospel (1 Corinthians 4:3). The *correct thing* is to do this, neither adding nor subtracting (Revelation 22:17,18). Without any doubt, this is the *correct thing*!

— Curtis E. Flatt

# The Greatness of the New Testament Church

**IT IS NOT AT ALL UNCOMMON** to hear men say the church is not essential. When they say this they indicate either a disbelief in what the Bible says about the church, or they misunderstand what it says.

## GREATNESS

Certainly churches founded by men are not essential, but this is not true of the church founded by Christ. The Lord's church, as revealed in the New Testament, is the greatest, the grandest, and the most important relationship in the world. To deny its essentiality is to cast reflection upon God who designed the church, upon God's Son who died for it, and upon the Holy Spirit who revealed it to men. There are a number of reasons why the Lord's church is great.

1. *The nature of the church's existence is great.* The church was planned by God from eternity. The establishment of the church involved the revelation of "the manifold wisdom of God" which Paul declared to be "according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Ephesians 3:10,11). The builder of the church was Jesus Christ. To Peter the Lord said, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church" (Matthew 16:18). In keeping with God's plan, Christ built the church upon a tried and sure foundation. Isaiah foretold it, saying, "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste" (Isaiah 28:16). That stone is Christ. It was laid in Spiritual Jerusalem, the church (Hebrews 12:22,23). It was laid after it was tried, i.e., after His death, burial, and resurrection. And not only was the church planned by God, built by Christ, and built upon a tried and sure foundation, the deity of Jesus Christ; but the church was

purchased by the blood of Christ (Acts 20:28). Every person saved by the blood of Christ is a member of it (Ephesians 5:25-27.) Moreover, Christ is the head of the church (Ephesians 1:22,23). It is governed and guided by His word, the seed of the kingdom, by which its existence is perpetuated (Luke 8:11; 1 Peter 1:22,23). Thus, the nature of the church's existence is great.

2. *The mission the church performs in the world is great.* The mission of the Lord's church is the salvation of man from sin. The church itself is composed of the saved (Ephesians 5:23). Those purchased by the blood of Christ are its members. The work of the church is the salvation of men through the gospel which it upholds in the world (1 Timothy 3:15). The church is charged with the mission of preaching the gospel of Christ to sinful men. But the work of salvation does not stop there. The church also endeavors to keep men in a saved relationship with Christ through spiritual encouragement, edification, and growth (Ephesians 4:15,16). When those who have come to know the Lord through obedience to the gospel stumble and fall, the church must seek their restoration (Galatians 6:1). There is no greater mission on earth than the salvation of men. This is the mission of the Lord's church. Surely this makes the church great.

3. *The name the church wears is great.* There is no name greater than the name of Christ. Peter said, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts

4:12). And Paul testifies, saying, "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name" (Philippians 2:9). No name that now is, or ever has been, or ever shall be is greater than the name of Christ. This is the name that is worn by those who belong to Christ. Christ called the church "my church" (Matthew 16:18). It is, therefore, Christ's church. Local congregations in New Testament times were not ashamed to be called "churches of Christ" (Romans 16:16). Individual members of the church were called Christians (Acts 11:26). They not only wore Christ's name, they also rejoiced to suffer for Christ in His name, as Christians (1 Peter 4:16). Nor was this an assumed name on the part of the church. They did not adopt it as expedient, nor as a matter of preference, nor because others forced it upon them. They wore Christ's name because it was God's will that they do so. The Holy Spirit revealed to the church the will of God in this matter. Inspired men rejoiced that they were counted worthy "to suffer shame for his name" (Acts 5:41). Would the Lord give so great a name to a body of people that is unimportant? Who would so contend?

4. *The blessings God bestows upon the church are great.* Christians, members of the church, are said to be complete in Christ (Colossians 2:10). The church is called the fulness of Christ. One must be in the Lord's church to be complete in Him (Ephesians 1:22,23). All the needs of man in the spiritual realm are freely and fully supplied in the church. Christ and the church are

## GREATNESS

### “GOD DID NOT SPARE”

“For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly;

When angels—heavenly beings—sinned, no provision was made for their redemption. God cast them down to the deepest abyss to be reserved for judgment.

When the world of Noah’s day reached such a depth of wickedness that every thought of the imagination of their heart was evil continually, God wiped them from the earth by the great flood. For them there is still the final and eternal judgment.

Because of the wickedness of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah God turned their city into ashes, and condemned them to destruction.

In His justice God must punish sinful man. In His mercy He offers him in the gospel access to the cleansing blood of Christ.

inseparably connected. To be in Christ and to be in His church are one and the same. Paul addressed the Colossian epistle to “the saints and faithful brethren in Christ” (Colossians 1:2). These saints in Christ had been called in one body which is the church (Colossians 3:15; 1:18). Whatever blessings are to be had “in Christ” are blessings that are obtained in the church which is His body (Ephesians 1:3). It is in the body of Christ, the church, that men are reconciled unto God (Ephesians 2:14-17). The church is composed of the saved (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 5:23). One must be in the church to be saved. Since there is no greater blessing than salvation in Christ, it follows that the church is the greatest body on earth.

5. *The destiny toward which the church moves is great.* The destiny of the Lord’s church is not related to material values. It pertains rather to heaven (1 Peter 1:3-5). The church is the only body of people on earth that will enjoy the blessings of heaven when this life is over. Of course not all members of the church will be saved eternally. Many will fall away and be lost. But the faithful have the promise of eternal reward. “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Revelation 2:10). This crown of life is promised all who love the appearing of Christ and who indicate this by fighting the good fight of faith, finishing the course set before them, and keeping the faith unto the end (2 Timothy 4:7,8). When Jesus comes the second time it will be to deliver the

kingdom, or church, up to the Father. “Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power” (1 Corinthians 15:24).

One cannot view the nature of the church, its mission, the name it wears, the blessings it contains, and the destiny toward which it moves without being impressed with the greatness of the church. To say the church is nonessential or unimportant to man’s redemption is to deny the clear teaching of the New Testament. The greatness of the church does not come from the people who are members of it and who enjoy its blessings, but rather from the great blessings that God in His infinite mercy bestows upon those who through gospel obedience become members thereof, and who through faithful and dedicated service have the hope of eternal life with God when this life is over. Membership in the Lord’s church is not restricted to any race or class. But “whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Revelation 22:17). — *Earl Kimbrough*

***... so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord ...***

***(Ephesians 3:10-11)***

# The Shepherd and the Lost Sheep

**“THEN DREW NEAR UNTO HIM** all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them. And he spake this parable unto them, saying, What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety nine just persons, which need no repentance” (Luke 15:1-7).

This is the first of three parables in this chapter, each of which expresses the Lord’s concern for the lost. In this article we shall restrict our remarks to this one—THE LOST SHEEP.

These parables were prompted by the attitude of the scribes and Pharisees (verses 1 and 2), an attitude which Jesus not only condemned in them, but would likewise condemn in us.

## The Shepherd Accused

First, we note that we should not despair when revilers come; and come they certainly shall! This is the “Chief Shepherd” whom they charge. In such passages as John 15:18 and 1 John 3:13 we are reminded that since the world hated Him, we can expect similar treatment. Instead of despair, when such comes, we are told to rejoice. “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my

sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.” (Matthew 5:11-12).

This is a bitter charge, so far as His accusers were concerned, but really a very high tribute—“This man receiveth sinners.” It is indeed, many times, an honor to be FALSELY accused for the cause of Christ.

Note that there was murmuring on earth, but rejoicing in heaven; such joy as should characterize us when sinners are privileged to hear His saving message.

Yes, He indeed “receiveth sinners”! It was for this purpose He came into the world. “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). He reminded another audience that it is “they that are sick” that “need a physician” (Luke 5:29-32). Yes, this “Great Physician, this “Good Shepherd,” receiveth “whosoever

er will.” “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” (Revelation 22:17).

## The Shepherd Heard

Now, consider the purpose for which the publicans and sinners gathered about Him — “for to hear him” (v. 1). How badly the scribes and Pharisees needed to have assembled for the same purpose; as Mary, who sat at Jesus’ feet (Luke 10:39); and as WE should come into every assembly. The eternal destiny of our souls depends upon our HEARING HIM. God Himself said, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him” (Matthew 17:5). Peter also exhorted, “For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you” (Acts 3:22). See also Hebrews 1:1,2; Acts 2:41; and Mark 13:37.

## The Shepherd, Our Refuge

Think for a moment about the Shepherd, the Savior. “The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want” (Psalm 23:1). This is the matchless Son of God. He who was “in the beginning with God” (John 1:2), but condescended to become flesh and dwell among men (John 1:14). Why should He concern Himself with us? “Because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19), and that “while we were yet sinners” (Romans 5:8). What “contradiction of sinners” He endured! (Hebrews 12:3). He taught on love, and was BUSY throughout His brief life demonstrat-

## TWO THINGS THE LORD KNOWS

The “Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment (2 Peter 2:9). The Lord knows everything (Psalm 139:1-6). The above quotation specifically calls our attention to two things the Lord knows.

First: *the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation.* The godly are delivered by the application of God’s word. Christ demonstrated the power of God’s word in His victory over the strongest temptations of Satan (Matthew 4:1-10). Noah and his family and Lot were delivered from the wickedness of their day because of their obedience to God’s word (2 Peter 2:5-7).

Second: the Lord knows how “to reserve the unjust *under punishment* for the day of judgment”(2 Peter 2:9 NKJ). This is also the thought of later translations. This would indicate that the unjust are under punishment even before the final judgment. The older King James Version says “to reserve the unjust *unto* the day of judgment *to be punished.*”

We may be sure—the Lord knows how to deliver the righteous and to condemn the wicked.

## SHEPHERD

ing it. He is not only “light to the floundering mariner,” not only a place of refuge in time of storm, but One who is ANXIOUS that the lost be found, and, through His servants, seeks them out to rescue them.

### The Shepherd Concerned

THE LOST? “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23). All are as “sheep gone astray” (1 Peter 2:25). “It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps “ (Jeremiah 10:23). We need the Shepherd to direct us. In Him only is salvation (Ephesians 1:7). Those who come to Him, through obedience to His commands, He will “in nowise cast out “ (John 6:37). He and the hosts of heaven will rejoice at the return of one single sinner! Surely, the Shepherd is concerned about the “ninety and nine,” but the lost sheep warrant special concern.

### The Shepherd’s Followers

We should conduct ourselves in such a manner that sinners will “draw nigh” to hear us proclaim Him and His salvation. We are not OF the world, but are IN the world to serve as leaven—as a saving influence. Several times even His disciples would have prevented His association with sinners. How often WE prevent, stand in the way of, sinners coming to HIM! Better that a millstone be hanged about our necks and be cast into the midst of the sea!

### The Shepherd’s Invitation

The anxiety of the “Good Shepherd” for the lost sheep is expressed in His invitation in Matthew 11:28, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” For each one who heeds this blessed invitation there is rejoicing in heaven, although it might bring reviling and murmuring among men. WHAT WILL YOUR RESPONSE BE?

— Charles G. Maples, Sr.

### Contact Information: