

GOSPEL GUIDE

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

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Christ in Our Home

THE FIRST PART of the second chapter of Mark tells Us about Christ entering into a home in Capernaum. “And it was noised that he was in the house. And straightway many were gathered together, inso-much that there was no room to receive them and he preached the word to them.”

As we look at this passage of scripture, we can see the effect of having Christ in one’s home:

1. People will know that he is there. When Christ was in the home in Capernaum, it was “noised” that he was there. Later he went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, “and entered into a house, and would have no man know it: but he could not be hid.” (Mark 7:24). When Christ is in a home today, and all the members of that home are governed by his great principles of conduct, the people of the neighborhood will know, for it will be “noised” abroad.

2. People will be attracted to that home. In the passage which we are considering, people were attracted to the home where Christ was. The same will be true today. Parents will be glad for their children to go play there. Grown-ups will want to enjoy pleasant, wholesome visits there.

3. Opportunity will be presented there to teach the word. When Christ was in the home in Capernaum, and the people gathered in, “he preached the word unto them.” We knew of a lady, who, when children would come to her home to play with her children, would tell them Bible stories. The youngsters developed such an intense interest in the word of God that some of them, when they grew up, became preachers of the gospel.

4. The home where Christ is will be a blessing to the community. While Jesus was in this home, a man sick of the palsy was brought to him, and he was healed. We cannot perform miracles today as did Christ, but the home today where Christ is will be a blessing to the community in that it will be made up of righteous people who will be a good example to all others, and who will “go about doing good” and being of service in the community.

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CHRIST IN OUR HOME

But when is Christ in one's home?

1. When the Bible is there, and is used, when it is studied, and taught, and laid up in the hearts of both parents and children alike. 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). Christ is to be found in the Bible from beginning to end. "In the beginning God (plural in the Hebrew) created the heaven and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). "And God said, Let us make man in our image" (Genesis 1:26). The plural pronouns "us" and "our" show that God was not alone in the creation. John tells us, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made" (John 1:1-3). In the fourteenth verse of the chapter John identifies the Word. "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and

truth." The Word, then, was Christ. As Christ is to be found in the beginning of God's revelation to man, so is he to be found in the last of God's revealed will. The word of God ends with, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all Amen" (Revelation 22:22).

Throughout the word of God, both in the Old Testament and in the New, Christ is to be found, for the scriptures bear witness of him. Christ said, "They testify of me." Christ is in the home, then, when the word of God is there, and people study it, meditate upon it day and night, and lay it up in their hearts—and obey it.

2. When love between husband and wife is there. There is enough truth in the following passage to close all the divorce courts in the land. "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Ephesians 5:22-25). Following these rules husband and wife would be bound together by the strongest ties of love and devotion. Christ could well dwell in that home, and, as the marriage ceremony says, he could be "the head of the house, the silent listener to every conversation, the unseen guest at every meal."

3. When love between parents and children is there. In the same Ephesian passage Paul gives instruction to both parents and children. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and moth-

er; which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:1-4). Today there is appalling need for these great principles to be applied in the home. Too many children have not had the benefit of parental love and discipline—two factors absolutely necessary for the proper development of every child. Parents have not faced up to the responsibility which they voluntarily took upon themselves when they brought children into the world. They have become too busy, or they have concerned themselves with too many other things, to have time left for the training of the children. As a result, undisciplined children, without seeing much in their parents to elicit honor and obedience, grow up with a rebellious spirit toward authority in the home, and subsequently in the school and in society.

We might ask ourselves some questions. Is it "noised" that Christ is in our home? Is our home recognized in the community as a place where Christ is to be found? Are good people drawn to our home? Do people who are bereaved, or in need, come to our home for comfort and help? Is our family trying to teach others and spread the kingdom in our community?

Every home should be a place where Christ is to be found, and from which the gospel may radiate on and on. When Jesus entered into a home in Capernaum, "it was noised that he was in the house. And straightway many were gathered together... and he preached the word to them" (Mark 2:1,2). — BN

The Church at Philippi

MUCH HAS BEEN WRITTEN about some of the churches in the New Testament. One of the churches of the New Testament about which little has been written, by comparison, is the church at Philippi. Yet, there was a church at Philippi. (Philippians 4:15). The letter to the Philippians was sent to this church. This is an interesting church to study.

The Beginning

How did the church at Philippi begin? This church began as a result of a call (Acts 16:8,9). Of course, this was a miraculous call. Even though such calls today are not miraculous, there is a constant call such as this one today. Loyal churches hear these calls nearly every week. It is a shame that more of us cannot see the fields white unto harvest. We sing about the call which comes ringing over the restless wave. Let us heed these calls.

The church at Philippi began with the preaching of the gospel by those who heard that call (Acts 16:12,13). Lydia and her household heard and obeyed the preaching which was done by these who heard the call. (Acts 16:14.) A little later, the jailer heard and obeyed the same message (Acts 16:30-33). These people formed a church in the city of Philippi (Philippians 4:15). In the same way, saved people, meeting, worshipping, and working together form a church to this very day.

The Church As Found In The Book Of Philippians

View this church at Philippi as it is found in the book of Philippians. This must have been an outstanding church, as the apostle said he thanked God upon every remembrance of them (Philippians 1:3). I, personally, do not know of any church like that. This church was a soul winning church providing Paul's support when no other church helped (Philippians 4:17-21). This church had been diligent in such things from the very beginning. (Phil. 1:5.) This church, also, had an open heart for poor saints. (2 Corinthians 8:1-5). There is no other church in the New Testament concerning which such warm, endearing things are said relative to their care for people in need. This is a church to encourage us to keep on keeping on. Paul spoke of them like this: "Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown ..." (Philippians 4:1).

The Needs Of The Philippian Church

As strange as it may seem, the Philippian church still had need of some things. All churches, no matter how faithful, stand in need. The Philippian church needed to be admonished relative to getting along with each other (Philippians 4:1,2). There is never a time but that Christians need to be reminded to do right. Thus it is no surprise to learn that the Philippian church was admonished to let their behavior be becoming (Philippians 1:27). A common need among Christians is a reminder to pray. Paul reminded the Philippians in a very gentle way about this. He told them of how he prayed for them (Philippians 1:9-11). With so much good having been said about this church, it is no surprise to find that they needed to be told to be humble (Philippians 2:4-11.) Knowing that people are products of their thinking, the apostle made an especially touching appeal to the way they thought and to the things they thought about (Philippians 4: 8,9). Furthermore, the apostle told them about the need to be content. (Philippians 4:6,11). He cited himself as an example in this, saying that he had learned to be content with what he had, whether that was little or much.

There is not a congregation of the Lord's people in existence anywhere, no matter how faithful and diligent they are, but who need this admonition. — *Curtis E. Flatt*

NADAB AND ABIHU

"Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. So fire went out from the LORD and devoured them, and they died before the LORD" (Leviticus 10:1,2). These two sons of Aaron, the high priest, offered a strange, or profane fire, not according to the authorized instruction. With all the specific instruction they had received, and the warning not to deviate from it, why would they ignore God's instruction?

The answer may be found in the same chapter of Leviticus. Immediately after the sin of his two sons God spoke to Aaron. "Do not drink wine or intoxicating drink, you, nor your sons with you, when you go into the tabernacle of meeting, lest you die. It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations, that you may distinguish between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean" (Leviticus 10:9,10). Consider Isaiah 28:7: "But they also have erred through wine ... The priest and the prophet have erred through intoxicating drink" ... They err in vision, they stumble in judgment."

Some Soul-Searching Questions of the Savior

THAT MEN ASK QUESTIONS which are of no importance is recognized by the Lord when He warns, "... but foolish and unlearned questions avoid ..." (2 Timothy 2:23). In fact, more than being unprofitable, such questions may "gender strife." But this is not true of the questions of the Lord; and He frequently used questions in His efforts to teach men. His every question is of eternal importance and is worthy of our serious consideration. This is especially true of some of His questions which, more than being important, are soul-searching! Do you dare give sincere attention to them? (or maybe we should ask, do you dare NOT to? inasmuch as they have to do with your eternal destiny!)

"BUT WHO SAY YE THAT I AM?" (Matthew 16:15). To say we live in a time of skepticism is putting it mildly. Surveys show that a major portion of the "clergy" deny the virgin birth of Jesus. They thus conclude that at best He was just another "good man," and not the "only begotten Son of God," as He, as well as other inspired men, affirmed. The apostle Paul assures us that He was "declared (proven) to be the Son of God with power.., by the resurrection from the dead" (Romans 1:4). But then the liberal "clergy" must also deny the resurrection, which would mean "our faith is vain"! (1 Corinthians 15:17).

Regardless of what others have said and do say about Jesus of Nazareth, He is asking YOU, "But who say ye that I am?" He wants you to con-

fess before men, as did the Ethiopian, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 8:37). In return, He has promised to confess you before the Father in heaven (Matthew 10:32). A failure to confess such faith in Him will bring Him to DENY you before God! (v. 33).

Surely, the undeniable evidence (in the Scriptures) proves Him to be the Son of God and the Savior of men. Do you agree?

Then there is His question which probes the sincerity of professed followers: "WHY CALL YE ME LORD, LORD, AND DO NOT THE THINGS WHICH I SAY?" (Luke 6:46). To call one "Lord" is to give at least lip service to his authority. But to acknowledge one's authority, while failing to submit to the same is hypocrisy! Do you call Him "Lord"? Are

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you submissive to His authority? Have you obeyed from the heart the gospel of Christ, as had the Romans to whom Paul wrote? (Romans 6:1-18). Many call Him “Lord” while insisting that one of his commandments is “not essential to salvation”! They acknowledge that baptism is a commandment of the Lord, but insist that one can be saved without being baptized; and that in spite of the fact that the Lord says, “He that believeth AND IS BAPTIZED shall be saved” (Mk. 16:16). A number of passages of inspired scripture show that baptism is just as surely a prerequisite to remission of alien sins as are faith, repentance, and even the blood of Christ (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Ephesians 1:7; Galatians 3:27; Romans 6:3-4). Do YOU call Him “Lord”? Are you doing what He demands of you?

Then, one of the most applicable questions to men in general of our time, “WHAT SHALL IT PROFIT A MAN, IF HE SHALL GAIN THE WHOLE WORLD, AND LOSE HIS OWN SOUL?” (Matthew 16: 26). It seems that more and more, even professed followers of

Christ, are primarily concerned with material gain, rather than spiritual values. Paul warns, “We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out” (1 Timothy 6:7).

Another question asked by the Savior, or a continuation of this same question (Matthew 16:26) is, “OR WHAT SHALL A MAN GIVE IN EXCHANGE FOR HIS SOUL?” When you come before Him to be judged (Matthew 25:31ff; 2 Corinthians 5:10), what will you give in exchange for your soul? A life of faithfulness in His service is the only thing that will avail anything then! This will, of course, not earn salvation, but it is what He requires of those who would be saved by His grace.

Which is of greatest concern to you: material gain, or spiritual values? To use another of the Savior’s soul-searching questions, “LOVEST THOU ME MORE THAN THESE?” (John 21:15). Unless we come to love Him more than any and every other thing in this world, we cannot be saved! Do you?

As suggested above, “Everyone of us must give account of himself to God” (Romans 14:12).

He who would now be your Savior shall then be your JUDGE (Acts 17:31). You will stand before Him to give an account of the deeds done in your body. To borrow a question He asked of the two blind men (Matthew 20:32), “WHAT WILL YE THAT I SHALL DO UNTO YOU?” Just what do you wish Him to do with you then? As shown in the judgment scene in Matthew 25, He will say to you (and me) either “depart,” which will mean “everlasting punishment,” or “come ye blessed of my Father,” granting you “life everlasting.” (v. 46). Just which shall it be for you? “What will ye that (He) shall do unto you” then? What He shall do with you then will be determined by WHAT YOU DO WITH HIM NOW, in this life.

He has provided salvation for you, in His death on the cross, and He stands pleading, “Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest ...” (Matthew 11:28). He is the “author of eternal salvation to all them that OBEY Him” (Hebrews 5:8f). Your obedience, from the heart, to His will now will bring Him to grant you the “crown of righteousness” then.

— Charles G. Maples, Sr.

The Role of Jesus

DURING THE EARLY PART of the Lord’s work on the earth, multitudes were beginning to follow him that would later drop out or go back and walk no more with him.

As the masses followed Jesus, the disciples of John the Baptist became somewhat jealous, it seems, and came to John wondering about the situation. “Rabbi, he that was

with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him.” The reply of John is extremely significant, for he was

speaking what God had given him by the Spirit to say. The explanation of John as to Jesus’ place or role in the plan of God should attract our attention so that we might always give to Jesus the same place and importance that the heavenly Father gave him. Let us then notice the answer of John in John 8:27-36.

1. John affirmed that Jesus’ right to make, baptize, and lead dis-

“THE BAPTISM OF JOHN—WHERE WAS IT FROM? FROM HEAVEN OR FROM MEN?”

(Matthew 21:25)

This was the question Christ asked the chief priests and the elders of the Jews. Facing a dilemma, they did not give a forthright answer (Matthew 21:27).

Is the baptism we practice today from heaven or from men? If it is from heaven, it will be found plainly in God's word. If it is conceived in the willful mind of men, it will be contrary to God's word. "Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" 1 Corinthians 1:20).

The great commission: "And He (Christ) said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. *He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned*'" (Mark 16:15,16). Man inserts a "not." "He who believes and is **not** baptized will be saved." Satan brought about man's first sin by inserting a "not" into God's word. God told Adam and Eve that if they ate the forbidden fruit they would die. Satan said, "You will **not** surely die" (Genesis 3:1-4). Whose word was truth? (John 8:44).

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ciples was from heaven. John said that Jesus could receive nothing except it be given him from heaven; and, of course, he was pointing to Jesus' right to do what John's disciples were questioning. To say that Jesus' right or authority to do these things was from heaven is equivalent to saying that it is from God.

2. John's disciples bore witness that John was not the Messiah. The thought behind John's statement to his disciples was that their jealousy was ungrounded, because even they admitted that John was not Messiah. At the same time, John's use of the term Messiah in his statement affirming Jesus' role in God's plan implies that Jesus is that Messiah. If the implication is not present in the verse, then John's reference to Messiah in connection with Jesus makes little sense.

3. John was merely the friend of the bridegroom. When John said, "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom," he was probably speaking prospectively of the Lord's followers, for the actual marriage had not taken place; and, yet, many had begun following, as evidenced by the jealousy they occasioned on the part of these disciples of John. In relation to Jesus the bridegroom, John was the friend who stands and listens for the reaction of the groom. The reference here is to the ancient custom of the friend standing outside the door to listen for the pleasure or displeasure of the groom when he sees the bride selected by the friend. John pictures himself as rejoicing in the following Jesus had obtained. John's mis-

sion from God was to prepare a following for Christ when he came to begin his work.

4. John's future was one of decreasing importance. Christ's was one of ascending importance. While his followers possibly wanted him to assume an increasingly important role, or at least to maintain his present level, John recognized that God's purpose was for him to give way to the Christ for whom he had been preparing men.

5. Christ, who is from above, is above all. John had come from the earth, whereas Jesus had come from heaven. John points in this verse to the absolute authority of Jesus as granted by God. Jesus was sent by God to be above all and to exercise dominion over all. God has put all things under his feet, according to Paul in 1 Corinthians, with the exception of God himself. The rule of Christ will continue until all has been mastered and subjected to the authority that he exercises.

6. Jesus speaks the words of God. "For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure." John said that Jesus speaks the words of God. These are words given him by the Spirit of God, whom God gave to Jesus entirely, not partially. According to the affirmation found here, Jesus has the unquestioned right to speak in the stead of God: He has been sent for this very purpose.

7. The consequences of believing and disobeying Jesus are grave indeed. To attach any significance whatsoever to either response is to declare that Jesus has every right referred to in the foregoing verses,

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but for John to suspend everlasting life and the wrath of God on the scale of human response to Jesus the son of God is the same as saying that faith in Christ is indispensable. The two responses of men are

given in verse thirty-six—belief and disobedience. The American Standard Version is correct in rendering “obeyeth not.” The contrast between the two makes it plain that believing means obeying and failing to obey results from failing to believe.

Let us give Jesus his rightful place, his God-given place as outlined in this passage. Let us believe on him and obey him, for he was sent by God and given authority over all; he speaks the words of God; and failing to believe on him means the wrath of God. — *Bobby Graham*

Buy the Truth and Sell It Not

ONE OF THE MOST important attitudes one can have in striving to go to heaven is that of intense zeal for the truth of God. Too often, people settle on something far less than the truth.

Remember, a counterfeit, though it may look relatively genuine, is nevertheless worthless. Likewise, we cannot enjoy the benefits of truth just by getting pretty close. We must take our position firmly and foursquare on the truth. “Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32).

There are many among us who, like Pilate, would ask, “What is truth?” (John 18:38). Many do not believe in absolute truth. The Bible, however, is absolute, unchanging truth. “Forever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven” (Psalm 119:89). The belief that there is absolute truth is fundamental to one who desires to “buy the truth and sell it not” (Proverbs 23:23).

One Can Be Wrong

It is a fact that anyone can mistakenly be wrong. Paul, when speaking of his past manner of life, before his conversion, said, “I have lived before God in all good conscience

until this day” (Acts 23:1). Yet he was before a “persecutor, and a blasphemous, and injurious” (1 Timothy 1:13). How could he have lived in all good conscience when he had been so wrong? The answer is simple. He thought he was right. “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Proverbs 16:25). The fact that we can be wrong means that it does not behoove us to close our minds to further investigation. Jeremiah said, “Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (Jeremiah 6:16).

Faith vs. Opinion

Naturally, study brings us to certain conclusions. All of us live by certain principles. But upon what do our conclusions rest? All too often they rest upon mere opinion. Realize that if something is a matter of faith, then God must have

said something about it. We cannot know the words of eternal life by opinions. One man’s opinion is just as good as another man’s; but no man’s opinion is worthy to be compared to God’s word. You would not want to risk crossing the ice over a river merely because somebody thinks you can. Neither should we risk trying to go to heaven by the opinions of men. The difference between an opinion and conviction is that an opinion is usually a spur-of-the-moment conclusion someone comes up with based upon skimpy premises, if any. A conviction is a conclusion based upon evidence which has been thoroughly studied and meditated upon. God has given us a wonderful book. It furnishes a man with doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness, that he may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work (2 Timothy 3:16,17). The Bible is our evidence. It is the truth. When believed, it becomes subjective faith. The Bible did not come from men, so there need be no question about its reliability. It was given unto men though, and designed so they could understand it when they read it (Ephesians 3:3-5). This is not

WHY DID GOD GIVE A GOOD LAND TO THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL?

1. *It was not because of the righteousness of the children of Israel. "It is not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart that you go in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD your God drives them out from before you...Therefore understand that the LORD your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness, for you are a stiff-necked people. Remember! Do not forget how you provoked the LORD your God to wrath in the wilderness. From the day that you departed from the land of Egypt until you came to this place, you have been rebellious against the LORD. Also in Horeb you provoked the LORD to wrath, so that the LORD was angry enough with you to have destroyed you" (Deuteronomy 9:5-8).*

2. *It was to "fulfill the word which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" (Deuteronomy 9:5). Though many years passed before the children of Israel possessed the land, God always keeps His promises (Joshua 21:43-45).*

SELL IT NOT

to say that all the Bible is simple to understand. There are difficult portions of it that demand much study. The matters of conversion to God and everyday living are simple and easy to understand. What many find difficult about such matters is that the reader is expecting something difficult to understand when actually it is very simple to understand.

Feelings a Poor Standard

Do not base your conviction upon some peculiar feeling you might have. Feelings are a poor standard of truth. We have already mentioned Paul. We might mention Jacob also who believed with all his heart that his son Joseph was dead, but that did not make it true. Remember, God has given us revelation, facts. Our convictions must rest upon these facts or else we will find ourselves upon shifting sand.

Conscience Not a Reliable Guide

Neither is conscience a reliable guide in determining whether your convictions are sound or not. The conscience is very pliable to begin with. Our conscience is usually formed at a tender age. At that time it may be trained to approve good or evil. When we reach maturity our conscience alters and becomes almost unchangeable. From then on it tells us only whether we have done as we learned to do or not. Changing the conscience then is a slow, difficult project. If your conscience were trained correctly, well and good. If it were trained incorrectly, then it will approve even when you do things that are really wrong. "Let your conscience be your guide" is therefore poor advice.

This brings us back again to the fact that we must ultimately make our stand upon the word of God. Everything is to be judged by it.

— Bob Waldron

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