

***GOD PAID THE HIGHEST PRICE FOR US***

by Danny Tunnell

A lady described an experience she had 68 years ago. She was a little girl, 8 years of age, and she watched a movie on television that portrayed the life of Jesus. She said, “I was so deeply convinced that Jesus died on the cross for me. I desperately wanted Him to know His death was worthwhile; if for no one else, it was worthwhile for me.”

Viewing the crucifixion of Jesus through the innocence of a child! “The Lord looks on the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7). “Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8).

John the baptizer saw Jesus coming and said, “Behold the Lamb of God, Who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). We have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace (Ephesians 1:7). We have peace through His blood (Colossians 1:20). Without the shedding of Jesus’ blood there is no remission of sins (Hebrews 9:22). Jesus loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood. To Him be the glory (Revelation 1:5,6). Some came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 7:14).

Not only did the Lamb shed His blood and give His life, and take

that blood to the mercy seat on high and make eternal redemption for us; but beyond that, to this very day He continues to make intercession for us through it.

The word “intercession” as it is used in Hebrews 7:25 is not prayers. It is a legal term that means “on behalf of.”

Jesus is interceding for us while Satan (the accuser) is accusing us, pointing out our sins and frailties before God (Revelation 12:10; Job 1:6-12).

Jesus did not go to heaven after His earthly ministry and “take a break” from His role as Shepherd to His people (John 10:11). Jesus said, “Father receive them for My sake.” Because of Jesus, God receives us as His children.

God was willing to pay the highest price that has ever been paid for anything, for us.

All the silver, gold, and platinum from a billion planets could not save a single soul (1 Peter 1:18,19). The only thing valuable enough to pay for our souls, to redeem us from our sin and death is the spotless blood of the Lamb of God.

We may overcome Satan by the

blood of the Lamb (Revelation 12:11). There is victory in the blood, blessing in the blood, we’re cleansed by the blood, and we are made righteous by the blood.

Still, to some people it is not clear or logical why the blood of Jesus is so important. To them it may even be repulsive or offensive. They don’t want to talk about it. They really just don’t get it.

But a little 8 year old girl got it. Rusty Goodman got it when he wrote, “Who am I that a King would bleed and die for.” Stuart Hine got it when he wrote, “And when I think, that God, His son not sparing, sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in; That on the cross, my burden gladly bearing, He bled and died to take away my sin.” Stuart Hembler got it when he wrote, “Every drop of blood bought me a million years.”

A. E. Hoffman asked, “Have you been to Jesus for the cleansing power? Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?” The shed blood of Christ - as the Lamb of God - is the only perfect sacrifice that can cleanse the soul from sin.

— Miami, OK

***ECONOMIC INDICATORS***

By David Deffenbaugh

Economic and financial specialists talk about “economic indicators” that tell us whether things are going to get better or worse. Did you know that Jesus also talked about investing and economic indicators? Really. Jesus warned about falling stock markets and failing corporations. No, not in exactly those words. Instead, He spoke about thieves, moths and rust (Matthew 6:19-21). Those were the threats to financial investments in His day just like corporation executives and panic-driven stock markets can have a devastating effect on mutual funds and 401K’s today.

Jesus said that a much better, much safer investment than treasures on earth are treasures in heaven. Just exactly how does one invest in heaven. What’s the ticker symbol on the New

York Stock Exchange? HEAV? Let’s just say this is a unique investment opportunity. There’s not another like it. A stock broker won’t be able to tell you about it either.

The Bible, though, explains it quite clearly: “. . . give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven” (Matthew 19:21). “Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, not to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come” (1 Timothy 6:17-19).

Using one’s earthly treasure to care for those in need and to do good is how treasures are laid up in heaven. Is that really a good investment? Let’s

talk about return on investment. How about worth that exceeds all the world’s wealth combined? (Matthew 16:26). How about a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory? (2 Corinthians 4:17).

This also serves as an economic indicator. It is the location of our treasure that identifies our heart’s home (Matthew 6:21). We may say or claim or wish that our heart is in the right place, but one sure-fire way to find out is to see where our treasure is going. Our heart will follow our treasure.

How’s that for an economic indicator?

— Paragould, AR

***Old Paths***

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***“ask for the old paths” (Jer. 6:16)***

***OF CHURCHES AND ZOOS***

by Dalton Key

Have you ever wondered just why it is,  
That some Christians act as they do;  
When usually kind and considerate saints,  
Behave as if beasts in a zoo?

You’ve seen it, I’m sure,  
you’ve witnessed the shame,  
The stomping, the snorting, the brays;  
When members who otherwise act as they should,  
Discover they can’t have their way.

And then in a way unbecoming their call,  
They fume and they fuss and they pout,  
’Til the whole church is injured  
and friendships are lost  
And the good name they’ve worn has worn out.

Dogs can be kenneled, bears can be caged,  
And kept from attacking at will;  
But selfish church members, with too-busy tongues,  
Unfettered, can spiritually kill.

Mean-spirited words and careless remarks,  
Can bring untold heartache to bear;  
Souls have been wounded and maimed, even lost,  
When ravaged by saints who should care.

The spirit of Jesus is what we all need,  
When dealing with life’s little hurts;  
With His mind as ours, His footsteps our own,  
Let’s always behave as His church!

“For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another” (Galatians 5:15).

***NOT UP FOR DEBATE***

by Dalton Key

The search for what’s true too often begins,  
With untruth we already hold;  
And building from there, with others who share  
The same lies as are ours, we grow bold  
To claim facts as fiction and falsehoods as true,  
Confusing the right with the wrong.  
And dismissing the truth, no matter the proof,  
We keep singing the same worn out song.

Better to start with our slates truly clean,  
With hearts fully open and pure;  
Only then can we see reality,  
And build on a bedrock secure.  
God’s truth is the truth, like it or not,  
And it’s time we all saw it this way;  
When life here is done and Judgment begun,  
The truth won’t be up for debate.

“Buy the truth, and do not sell it,  
Also wisdom and instruction  
and understanding” (Proverbs 23:23).

“And you shall know the truth, and  
the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32).

“The entirety of Your word is truth,  
And every one of Your righteous  
judgments endures forever” (Psalm 119:160).

WHEN TRADITIONS  
BECOME TRAGIC

By Chris McCurley

Through the years, churches have split or have died where they sat because they could not distinguish between tradition and command. They invalidated the scriptures that speak of love, grace, mercy, and compassion in favor of clinging to their time-honored traditions. They broke God’s law to keep human law. Whether it be the KJV only controversy, or stained glass windows, or a steeple, or a cross displayed somewhere in the building, or a piece of furniture that has to have, “This Do In Remembrance of Me,” etched across it.

It sounds silly, but it’s tragic. Traditions become tragic when they become our god. And they become tragic when we’re willing to destroy our brother or sister over them. That was the great crime of the Pharisees. Their allegiance to their traditions had blinded them to the needs of the people. Remember Matthew 23:23, 24: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe the mint and dill and Cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others. You blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!”

Justice, mercy, and faithfulness are people-related. Tithing the mint and dill and cumin is not. The Pharisees were so meticulous that they would tithe the single plants from their garden, but were cruel, arrogant, and unjust toward others.

That spirit is not dead. Unfortunately, there are those in the church who wear the right clothes, they put their check in the offering plate each week, they attend both times on Sunday, yet they are rude to the waitress at lunch. They are a pompous jerk at work. They act like a fool at the basketball game as they yell and scream at the refs and the coach. They have all the outward actions of religion on Sunday, yet their actions during the week are completely irreligious. The externals mean nothing if the heart isn’t right.

No matter how valid our traditions may seem, they are completely worthless if they ignore the greater virtues.

— Dickson, TN

“But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace” (James 3:17,18).

EDITORIAL . . .

NOT AN EITHER/OR PROPOSITION

By Dalton Key

The world (and sadly, the church along with it in many cases) is fast becoming a hostile workplace. Animas and vitriol are replacing reasonableness and civility.

According to Scripture, our Christian maturity is demonstrated, at least in part, by our willingness to speak the truth in love. We show ourselves as godly grownups, not merely by speaking truth, but by doing so “in love,” which results in our growing up “in all things into Him who is the head - Christ” (Ephesians 4:14,15).

Knowledge may know what to say, but wisdom knows whether, when, and how to say it. There’s a big difference between winning the argument and winning the man.

As someone once said, “If to correct you must humiliate, you don’t know how to teach.”

Our Lord was a walking, talking demonstration of “truth in love.” He never refused to speak with someone He disagreed with. He listened. He waited to hear the question before giving His answer. He never got into shouting matches with His enemies. He never started or spread ugly, unfounded rumors about others, even those who were actively working against Him. He never attempted to silence His critics by means of mean-spirited barbs, baseless accusations, or snarky jabs of sarcasm.

Yes, if you have any doubt what speaking the truth in love looks like, take a good, hard look at Jesus!

The words of David Lipscomb are especially relevant: “Never stir up prejudice in the people. That will prevent their seeing the truth with impartiality and fairness. It does them wrong and defeats the end in view. There is a very great danger in making ourselves sectarians while opposing sectarians. Present the truth in as kind and gentle, yet as earnest, spirit as possible. Never make fun of any teacher regardless of the ridiculousness of his teaching. Never question the honesty of any preacher. Never attack the man, but show from the scriptures how the doctrine that man is preaching cannot be sustained. Every faithful preacher, from the day of Pentecost until today, has used the same approach. Don’t be radical in an ugly sense. Be balanced in your preaching.”

Remember this: “Truth in love” has never been an either/or proposition.



THE EMPTY TOMB

by Milton Smith

Jesus enemies went to the “nth” degree to guard that tomb and make it secure, yet it was found vacated early that Sunday morning. But also the shroud was left behind inside the tomb. Robbers illegally entering that sepulcher to steal away the body would have been in a very big hurry to leave. So, why would they have taken the time to remove the shroud from the body? If Jesus himself did not remove this shroud, the reason for it being left behind remains a mystery. We are also told that the headband was rolled up and placed precisely and neatly by itself; it was not hastily removed and thrown to the ground but neatly folded. Whoever removed this headband was in no hurry.

Yet, if the tomb was opened and vacated but Jesus was never seen again, the claim of resurrection would have been less credible. But hundreds of people claimed to have seen the risen Christ. Some even testified that they ate and drank with him after He

rose from the dead. Jesus own apostles were persecuted and imprisoned (most were executed) for their claims, yet they never recanted nor repudiated what they had seen. The very existence of Christianity nearly 2000 years later - with those magnificent memorials such as the Lord’s Supper and the Lord’s Day - cannot be brushed aside as irrelevant. All the facts mentioned above demand explanation. Only the resurrection of Jesus from that tomb agrees with every fact. I have always stood secure in my personal, life-changing decision to follow the One who obviously rose from the tomb.

— Tulsa, OK

Kill the Messenger!

by Joe Slater

battle and ultimate demise. Many other reprobate rulers followed in their footsteps. Herod Antipas murdered John the Immerser for rebuking his adulterous marriage. The Sanhedrin murdered Jesus for exposing their hypocritical lawlessness. In all cases the evildoers thought killing the messenger would solve their problem; but it never did!

To my knowledge my life has never been seriously threatened for speaking the truth. More than one has been plenty angry with me, but not to the degree of trying to kill me! However, the concept of blaming the messenger is alive and well. Let’s remember that the message is God’s; the faithful messenger has no control over it, nor will being angry with the messenger cause the message to change.

— Justin, TX

“Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?” (Galatians 4:16).

“And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed” (John 3:19,20).

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