

The Baptist CHALLENGE

a voice of independent Baptists

VOL. XXXX, No. 3

March 2002

WHOLE NO. 449

The Ten Virgins -- A Very Much Perverted Scripture

By Austin Fields

May it please the Holy Spirit to direct our thoughts as we discuss this teaching of the Kingdom of Heaven, which the Lord likens to ten virgins, who are separated into two groups of five wise and five foolish.

In the outset, I deem it necessary to discuss with

you the meaning of the Kingdom of Heaven. Unless we understand what this kingdom is, we can never come to a true understanding of the Lord's teachings concerning it.

There are many and varied interpretations as to its meaning. One interpre-

tation is that it refers to Israel. Others picture the ten virgins as representative of all mankind without exception; while others expressly interpret it to mean the realm of all the saved (regeneration) out of which one can fall because of sin in their lives; and others

interpret the kingdom to mean the Lord ruling through the Spirit in the church. I believe that the latter view is the correct one.

Brother, let us take up the starting point of the

(See **VIRGINS** on page 18)

Real Beauty and Strength

By Donald Wildmon

"Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth" (Psa. 71:9)

Ours is a youth-oriented age. We stress youth as beauty and strength, two of the things we covet the most. A tremendous amount of our time and effort and money is directed toward the "adults of tomorrow." And that, in it

(See **OLD** on page 24)

The Curse of Spiritualism

By Roy Mason

Spiritism in so far as it manifests itself in the form of a religion, is a religion of "spooks." In virtually every city there are "Spiritualist churches," and more often than not, such have for pastor, "The Reverend Mrs. So and So ..." Sometimes other groups who have no religious connections meet for seances. Lights are turned low, or turned out, and the "spirits" are invited to manifest themselves. Claims are made that table rappings

are heard — that objects are moved — that spirits materialize until they become visible — that mediums go into trances and utter words given them by spirit beings.

Is There Anything To Spiritism?

This question is often asked. In answer it may be said that most of the things connected with it is in the

(See **MASON** on page 16)

Vital Facts From The Bible

About forty men were engaged in the writing of the Bible, during a period of about 1,600 years — that is, from 1500 B.C. to A.D. 100.

These men wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:21). They wrote not in words of human wisdom, but in words divinely taught (1 Cor. 2:13).

The Bible contains 3,566,480 letters, 773,746

(See **VITAL** on page 17)

Quiz The Pastor -- #7**Did The Shroud of Turin Cover Jesus Christ?****By the late Nick Michalinos**

Question: I recently saw on television a shroud that is said to have covered the dead body of Jesus. Could this be true?

Answer: I've seen pictures, and have also read many articles concerning this shroud which has been called the Shroud of Turin. There is no doubt it is an old piece of material, and could be a shroud that was placed over a dead body, but I most sincerely deny this shroud could be a covering placed over the dead body of Jesus, and I want to show you why.

Bear in mind that the face and shape of a man's body is said to be outlined in the shroud. This fact alone, as we will show, does away with the idea this shroud could have been placed on the corpse of Jesus.

When Jesus died on the

cross, a disciple named Joseph, a rich man from Arimathaea, went to Pilate, and boldly asked for the body of Jesus (Mk. 15:43). When Pilate had made sure Jesus was surely dead, he consented and granted the corpse (of Jesus) to Joseph (Mk. 15:45). Joseph and another disciple named Nicodemus (Jn. 3:1; 7:50) then took away the body of Jesus down from the cross, and prepared the body for burial in a new tomb, which incidentally, belonged to Joseph (Jn. 19:39).

Now, notice how they prepared His body for burial. They had about 100 pounds of mixture of myrrh and aloes, plus clean linen clothes (Jn. 19:39). They took the linen clothe, and began to wrap or wind these linen cloths about His body, from under the arm-

pits down to his feet. And, as they did this, they added the spices (myrrh and aloes) into the folds of the cloth "as the manner (custom) of the Jews is to bury" (Jn. 19:40).

Can you imagine 100 pounds of spices being placed around His body, and how bulky this would be? What kind of a body outline would this make? Certainly not anything like the Shroud of Turin. The 100 pounds of spices were placed on the body, perhaps as they thought, through their unbelief, to keep the odors of a decaying body to a minimum.


Observe also there is absolutely no mention of a shroud being placed over His body. Linen cloths were around about His body (Mk. 15:46; Mt. 27:59; Lk. 23:53; Jn. 19:40). This is the way the Jews buried their dead.

Notice when God smote Ananias, the Jews "wound him up (in linen) and ... buried him (Acts 5:6). There was no need to cover Ananias' linen bound body with a shroud or sheet.

Also, in the burial process by the Jews, a cloth napkin was sometimes placed upon the face of the corpse to cover the look of death, as in the burial of Lazarus (Jn. 11:44). Such was the case when Jesus was buried (Jn. 20:7).

A cloth napkin was placed over His dear face. The Shroud of Turin is said to show the outlined features of a man's face, but the cloth napkin over the face of Jesus would re-

move any possibility of any outlined features showing up in His case.

As we all can plainly see, the scriptures once again refute the findings of those who constantly indulge in accumulating religious relics. There is simply no place in God's Word for a shroud being placed over the body of Jesus. Perhaps it is true in the imagination of men, but not as a scriptural fact. 

Islam Course Angers Parents**By Ellen Sorokin**

A course about Islam being taught at California public middle schools has come under fire after parents have learned that students wear Muslim robes, adopt Islamic names and stage make-believe pilgrimages to Mecca to learn about the faith.

In one case, students at a middle school in San Luis Obispo in Southern California pretended to be warriors fighting for Islam, an activity that, critics argue, does not belong in a public school classroom.

"We could never teach Christianity like this," said one parent who did not want to be identified because her son is a student at one of the schools.

As a result, one parent has filed a complaint against the San Luis Obispo school district, contending that the schools do not give as

(See **ISLAM** on page 23)

THE BAPTIST CHALLENGE**M. L. Moser, Editor**

**Pastor Emeritus
CENTRAL BAPTIST CHURCH
15600 Taylor Loop Rd.
Little Rock, Arkansas 72223
Email: mlmoser1@juno.com
Editor's Phone: (972) 617-6966**

Articles carrying the author's byline do not necessarily reflect the Editorial policy of the paper.

The Scriptures, and The First Baptist Church of Jerusalem

By W. Lee Rector

“He being dead yet speaketh.”

The Scriptures disclose three houses of witness; namely, the House of Seth, the House of Abraham, and the House of God.

1. The first to witness is the House of Seth (Gen. 4:25-26). Here, men began to call upon the name of the Lord. The witnesses are set forth in Gen. 5:1 to Gen. 8:22, and these witnessed during a period approximating two thousand years.

2. The second to witness is the House of Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3). Here, the Lord makes a covenant with Abram and promises to make His House of Witness a blessing unto all the families of the earth. In this house, He perpetuated the faith of the House of Seth and thus doing, He helps preserve the “seed of the woman,” (Gen. 3:15). He renews this covenant with Isaac and with Jacob, and identifies both redemption and Millennial truth in the covenant He makes with David (2 Sam. 7:4-17). He fulfills the redemption price provided in the Abrahamic covenant in the birth of the Virgin’s Son (Mt. 1:23; Lk. 2:7) and in His crucifixion (Mt. 27:35). And finally He will culminate the Kingly aspect of the Davidic covenant with the coming of

the Lord Jesus to reign over the kingdoms of this world (Mt. 25:31-34; Rev. 11:15).

3. And the third to witness is the Church of the Living God. The Lord Jesus Christ in person founded this House during His earthly ministry (Mk. 3:13-14; Lk. 6:12-13). The church differs from the other houses of witness. It is a local assembly (1 Cor. 1:2), and the body of the Lord Jesus (1 Cor. 12:27); and is by divine will composed of twice-born souls. The House of Seth and the House of Abraham were family affairs, not necessarily composed of born again souls, each preaching betimes the glorious Gospel of the Son of God, while the Church of the Living God knows no family lines and embraces the born again of both Jew and Gentile races in its work of carrying on.

The First Church, A Baptist Church

We assert here that the Jerusalem Church, founded by the Lord Jesus, was a local Baptist Church, the first of its kind in all the ages. Our claim here should surprise no one. Notwithstanding this fact, doubtless some will lift their eyebrows and scowl at our contention. Unless the Scriptures very definitely and very

positively so teach, a man would be foolish to enter such a claim. We here and now invite the reader to follow as we search the Scriptures to see what the divine One has to say about this matter.

In entering this claim, we invite the reader to follow as we trace the source of the name “Baptist,” and the divine identification of John as the Baptist, and the significance of the name.

The Source of the Name “Baptist”

When we seek out the source of the divine name “Baptist,” we do not find it stemming from the thought life of men during the ages. Its origin is not rooted in the experience of human beings. Its origin is rooted in the divine.

The Scriptures attest the Lord as being the author of the name. The Holy Spirit, the divine Chronicler of the Word, makes Matthew add the name “Baptist” to the name John (Mt. 3:1-2). The Lord confirms this act by recognizing John as the Baptist (Lk. 7:28). Thus the Lord is the source of the Baptist name.

The Identification of John as the Baptist

It is vitally important in this connection to remember that John did not come as John the Baptist, but came simply as John. Again we appeal “to the word and the testimony”:

1. In announcing the promised birth of John to Zacharias, the angel said, “Thou shalt call his name John” (Lk. 1:13).

2. At the birth of John, neighbors came in and called the babe “Zacharias,” but Elizabeth protested, saying, “Not so, but he shall be called John” (Lk. 1:59-60).

3. Then the neighbors appealed the question of the babe’s name to Zacharias, and he wrote, “His name is John” (Lk. 1:63).

Thus the angel, and Elizabeth, and Zacharias all testify that the babe was named “John.” Heaven further declares that his name was John. The Scriptures say, “There was a man sent from God whose name was John” (Jn. 1:6), and they also tells us that John preached as John in Bethabara beyond Jordan (Jn. 1:15-17, 29).

In the light of these Scriptures, we must know that he who came to be known as John the Baptist, was sent as John; was born as John; and was commissioned as John.

Now, why did the Lord add the name, the Baptist, to the name John? The name, the Baptist, was obviously added because of his message and his method of baptizing. He was Baptistic in these. To illustrate:

He preached Christ as “the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world” (Jn. 1:29, 34). This doctrine is basic because it

(See **RECTOR** on page 22)

When Christ Rose From the Grave

By Hershel Lee

It is probably the most general belief that Christ was crucified on good Friday and that He rose on Easter Sunday morning, but a close study of the following makes Christ's words in Matthew 12:40 full of meaning. "For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

I take this to mean just what it says — "three days and three nights." To get off to the right start let us consider the type of the Lamb of God in the lamb that was slain back in Egypt when the Lord's people were delivered from the hand of Pharaoh. In Exodus 12:2-6 we find the Lord instructing that a lamb be taken on the tenth day of the month (their first month) and that he be kept up until the fourteenth day of the same month on which day he would be killed in the evening. This made the fifteenth day of this month the Jewish passover which was kept by the Jews and was being kept when Christ was about to be crucified. "And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer" (Lk. 22:15). This had to be before the regular time of eating the passover because He was the one to be killed for the

passover this time. "This day came ye out in the month Abib" (Ex. 13:4), said to be our April. Then the passover was kept on April 15. John tells us: "then six days before the passover came to Bethany. ..." (Jn. 12:21). This was April 9th. "On the next day much people that came to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem" (Jn. 12:12). This next day that is mentioned must be Saturday, their Sabbath, for it was Christ's custom to go preach in the Temple. This day is the one that is now kept as Palm Sunday, but then, it was Saturday, April 10. Remember, the Lamb is to be gotten up on the tenth day of the month. Here He is in Jerusalem on April 10th. Now this is Saturday, so then last night, "six days before the passover," was Friday. This makes Christ be crucified on Wednesday, 14th, which day was the preparation day, the day for the Lamb to be killed (Jn. 19:31).

The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation day, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath day (for that sabbath day was an *high* day). This is the passover or an high sabbath — a yearly sabbath. The number of days in a year keep an annual date from falling on the same day of

the week so a weekly sabbath is not in question.

The Lord's body was taken off the cross after the ninth hour or 3:00 p.m. and 6 p.m. on Wednesday. He was out before daylight Sunday morning (Jn. 20:1). The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre.

Note the dates mentioned:


Friday, April 9th, Supper in Bethany.

Saturday, April 10th, Entry into Jerusalem.

Wednesday, April 14th, Crucifixion.

Saturday, April 17th, Resurrection.


With His followers 40 days, Acts 1:3.

Webster says Pentecost means 50 days after Christ's resurrection. Then Peter was preaching on Sunday, June 6th, when the Holy Spirit came. 

Convention Baptists And Roman Catholics Are Now Brethren

A former President of the American Baptist Convention, Herbert J. Gezrok is quoted in the **Watchman-Examiner** for October 8, 1959 as saying:

"Let us also say clearly and strongly, that as Protestant Christians, we should long and pray for a closer fellowship with our Roman Catholic brethren. All who love our Christ and try to

follow him are brothers in his name. Anyone who has close contact with Roman Catholics can observe how much deep and genuine devotion of Christ lives in their ranks. On this Reformation Sunday, and in the years to come, let us give our Protestant witness, unashamed and unafraid, in gratitude for what God has wrought, in deep repentance for our failures and shortcomings, yet in confidence of the future which belongs to freedom, knowing that for freedom, Christ has set us free." 

A Good Question

Now that the President has called us to pray;
Now that the Senate has called us to pray;
Now that the Congress has called us to pray;
Now that our Governor has called us to pray;
Now that the City Mayor has called us to pray;
Now that the liberal media and most other branches of our American society have called us to pray;
And now that our churches are assembling in special prayer;

"UMMMM"

Honorable Justices of the Supreme Court,
I have only one question:

Would it be okay To pray in our schools now?

Preaching Can Be Better

By Daniel Heitmeyer

Despite all changes in ways of life and thought, Sunday by Sunday preaching from the pulpit is still probably the most effective means of influencing the people's minds and characters. For preaching deals with the basic realities of morals and destiny, and at its best it has the authority that is inherent in true prophecy.

But on the whole, preaching today may be described as "slightly above mediocre." Some of it lacks the drive of conviction to carry it to its target. Some of it has the even-tempered correctness suitable for the "classic halls of learning," but sets no fires. Some of the sermon topics found on the church pages of Fridays' newspapers give the impression that preachers are playing at tiddledewinks when they should be manning the barricades. Much preaching lacks sinew and bone-structure. Often a sermon is a flow of words in which definite ideas are as scarce and elusive as trout in a fished-out stream. But, assuming their doctrinal soundness, there is nothing much wrong with modern preaching that more study and hard work would not cure.

It probably is too much to expect, that a sermon

will be profound, or of top literary quality, or that the preacher will be eloquent or that preaching will invariably stir up the emotions of a modern thrill-hardened congregation. Geniuses are few and far between. Real orators have always been scarcer than great poets or painters or musicians. We had best not expect the impossible. But we do have a right to expect that a preacher will take his calling seriously, and work hard to make the sermon worthy of its function as a vehicle of divine truth. He ought not to preach at all if he is not willing to try his best to do it well.

Many preachers need to be on guard against their own "easy facility" in speaking. A woman of sound judgment in such things said, without the least malice, of a speaker who appeared a number of times on a program, "He just sets his mouth going and then goes off and leaves it." It will be a great temptation for one who has such facility to skip hard labor in preparation. But, as a rule, if no labor is spent in preparation there will be no lasting effects.

It will be a great help to most preachers occasionally to have tapes of their sermons so that they can hear themselves. The speaker's voice generally does not sound like the speaker thinks it sounds. Hearing himself will enable a preacher to correct mannerisms, of which he may not have been aware. Per-

haps he will want to use sandpaper on his voice. Though delivery should be earnest, it should not be strident; though it be solemn. It need not be lachrymose; though it be high-wrought, it need not be "rhetorical." It can be familiar and colloquial without being vulgar; it can be positive without being dogmatic, authoritative without being arrogant. It was the Roman Cato, I believe, who defined eloquence as "an honest man talking." The preacher is not "speaking a piece;" he is prophesying, in the true sense of that word — speaking forth divine truth out of the experience of his own soul. When preaching is that it is more than an art or a "know-how;" it is a passion, and it will set off chain-reactions.

Effective preaching will have style. That is to say, it will have distinction after the pattern of the preacher's own personality, and therefore will be alive. One can grow utterly weary of the undistinguished tame sameness of sermons and addresses throughout programs that may go on for days. Of course in nearly all such programs there are too many sermons and addresses for human endurance. Any one will get so tired after the first dozen or so that his mind is lulled. But it is the sameness, the utter lack of style and distinction that so often makes sermon-hearing a bore rather than a thrill. Some otherwise good

preaching suffers from vitamin deficiency.

Real style in preaching bears the mint-marks of the mind that produced it. A sermon with style differs from other sermons by those subtle shades of variation that distinguish one person from another. The purpose of a sermon should be to get the truth from the mind of the preacher to the minds of the hearers with the least possible loss in transit. In general, that is neither good style nor good diction nor good rhetoric which calls attention to itself. A woman is not well dressed when the dress is so conspicuous that you do not notice the wearer. That is not good art in a picture which looks merely like an exercise in paint-slinging. That was a magnificent tribute to the preaching of Spurgeon, when a man who had gone to hear him preach was asked, "Well, what did you think of Spurgeon?" and he answered, "I didn't especially notice Spurgeon; but, O, what a wonderful Christ!"

One real test of a sermon is, does it make the hearers think and feel the truths that it expresses. Better that it make people feel like throwing things at the preacher than that it produces no reactions at all. That was a blighting criticism of a certain "eminent divine" when a man of affairs said, after hearing him preach, "I didn't quite get what he was talking about,

(See **BETTER** on page 17)

Defending The Faith

The writer of this epistle describes himself by his name, Jude; by his spiritual condition, a servant of Christ; and by his natural relation, a brother of James; and inscribes it to persons chosen of God, secured in Christ, and called by grace; whom he salutes and wishes a multiplication of mercy, peace, and love unto; and then points at the subject-matter of his epistle, the common salvation.

Occasion of the Epistle: The Apostasy — Verses 3-4.

Verse 4 contains the reason why the doctrine of faith should be contended for, because of false teachers, who are described as being then upon the spot; they were men given up to, in embracing and spreading errors and heresies; and their punishment is designed, even everlasting condemnation.

Historical Instances of Apostasy — Verses 5-7.

The people of Israel, who were the chosen people of God, a special people, above all others, and had peculiar privileges; these the Lord brought out of the land of Egypt, with a high hand, and a mighty arm, and saved them out of their bondage, and delivered them out of oppressions and afflictions; but he afterward destroyed them

that believed not; their carcasses fell in the wilderness by one judgment or another upon them; so that of all that came out of Egypt but two entered into the land of Canaan: this shows the evil nature of unbelief; and that God will not suffer sin to go unobserved in any way.

“And the angels which kept not their first estate,” or principality; that holy, honorable and happy condition, in which they were created; they became unwilling to be subject to God, and especially to the Son of God, who was to assume human nature, and in it be above them, which they could not bear. Their final punishment and destruction, are immutable and irreversible, and from which there is no freeing themselves. Unsaved men, devils and fallen angels will meet God at the great judgment. They are not their own lords, and cannot do as they would: they are under restraints, and in chains, and not to be feared, which must be a great mortification to their proud and malicious spirits.

“Even Sodom and Gomorrha,” etc.; this is a third instance of God’s vengeance on sinners; and which, like that of the Israelites, and of the angels, was after great favors had been enjoyed: these places were delightfully situated, and very fruitful, as the garden of God. But they in like manner giving themselves over to fornication, the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrha, stooping to

such detestable and unnatural sin, which, from these people, is called sodomy to this day; and which is an exceeding great sin, contrary to the light of nature and law of God, dishonorable to human nature, and scandalous to a nation and people, and commonly prevails where idolatry and infidelity flourishes.

Apostate Teachers Described Verses 8-19

“Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core.”

The way of Cain was the way of envy, for Cain envied the acceptance of his brother’s gift, and that notice which the Lord took of him; so these apostate teachers envied the gifts bestowed on Christ’s faithful ministers, and the success that attended their labors, and the honor that was put upon them by Christ, and that was given them by the churches. Moreover, the way of Cain was the way of hatred, and murder of his brother, which his envy led him to; so these men hated the brethren, persecuted them unto death, as well as were guilty of the murder of the souls of men, by their false doctrine; so they might expect Cain’s punishment, to be driven from the face of God; yea, to be bid to go as cursed into everlasting burnings.

Balaam’s error, which he himself was guilty of, was covetousness, or an immoderate love of money

(2 Pet. 2:15). “for the love of money is the root of all evil ...” (1 Tim. 6:10). The error which Balaam led others into, was both idolatry and adultery (Rev. 2:14); which these false teachers were both guilty of themselves, and taught others, and indulged them therein.

“And perished in the gainsaying of Core.” The same Korah (Num. 16:1). Now the gainsaying or contraction of these men was like Korah’s; as he was against Moses, the ruler of the people, to theirs was against magistracy, which was gainsaying God’s own ordinance and a contraction of that which is for the good of men; and generally speaking, men perish in their factions and rebellions against good and lawful magistrates: also, as Korah gainsayed Aaron, the priest of the Lord, so these men contradicted and opposed the ministers of Christ, whom they would have thrust out, in order to put in themselves, and whose persons they reviled, and contradicted their doctrines, which to do is of dangerous consequence; and they might be said to perish in his gainsaying, as a type and example of their destruction, which would be swift and sudden, as his was; and to denote the certainty of it.

True Believers Assured and Comforted Verses 20-25.

“But ye, beloved, build-
(See **DEFEND** on page 7)

Goes From Religious To Racy

In the beginning was the Web.

But left untended, one Web site became flesh-peddling because a Southern Baptist newspaper didn't renew its Internet address.

The former site of the *Indiana Baptist* newspaper has been taken over by adult entertainment, snatched up by an apparent cyber-squatter who buys old sites and converts them to X-rated content. The embarrassment to local leaders of the conservative denomination signals an emerging Internet-age problem — what can happen to a Web site you don't need anymore.

The Baptist site's purchase by a hard-to-track owner came in November, after the *Indiana Baptist* switched its Web location to www.scbi.org, the Internet home of the State Convention of Baptists in Indiana.

"We didn't want to pay for two domains, so we closed the account on the first," said Chip Bayer, director of communication for the state convention. "When we closed the account, boom, this is what happened."

Instead of links to Christian evangelism and missionary work, the site offers customers entry into the Bad Girls Club or a pay-per-view look at look at Puritan Sex.


Officials at the Southern Baptist headquarters, 900 N. High School Road,

warned about 300 agencies with a Web link to the Indy Baptist.

The site could be bought back, but a link indicates its new owner — unidentified through the easy anonymity of Internet communication — won't consider anything under \$550.

That's too far above the \$70 that state Baptists previously paid for its sites.

When the Indiana Baptist didn't renew its address, it was purchased on Nov. 19.

VeriSign's database search shows the site is now registered to "Allen Ginsberg," who lists a Russian home about 180 kilometers south of Moscow. "Ginsberg," likely no relation to the dead Beat poet of the '50s, has cropped up in other Internet trademark disputes, including one with the National Hockey League. — *The Indianapolis Star* 

DEFEND . . .

(Continued from page 6)

ing up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost."


We, as believers, should seek for an improvement; though first built on Christ and His doctrines by ministers; yet by the ministry of the Word and studying together the Word of God, and particularly by praying in the Holy Spirit.

"Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the


mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

Preserve yourselves by the love of God; against Satan's temptations, the snares of the world, and the lusts of the flesh; whenever Satan solicits to sin, and any snare is laid to draw into it, and the flesh attempts to be predominant, saints should betake themselves to the love of God, as to a strong hold and preservative against sin, and reason as Joseph did (Gen. 39:9).

"Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy."


Adam, in his state of innocence, could not keep himself from falling; nor could the angels, many of whom fell: therefore, much less can imperfect sinful men keep themselves, short of Christ; but this is a work Christ has been, and is, employed in, and He is every way qualified for it; He is able to do it, for He is the mighty God, the Creator and Upholder of all things; and as Mediator, He has all power in heaven and in earth. One day He will deliver every one that is saved by His blood to His Father without spot or wrinkle with exceeding joy. 

Invisible Church?

"The New Testament shows no distinction between a visible and an invisible church. The Christian community is as visible and as bodily as the individual Christian." 

Baptists Do Not Accept The Sacramental Character of Baptism and the Lord's Supper

Thomas Armitage (*History of the Baptists*, p. 153) says: "We use neither of them as a charm, or spiritual amulet to serve the ends of superstition in the supposition that the first can wash away sin, or that the other exerts any moral efficacy on the soul. All the waters of the sea cannot wash away a moral stain from man, nor can all the bread and wine brought from the harvest fields and vineyards of earth strengthen his immortal soul.

"We think that the Supper should only be celebrated when and where the purpose of its celebration can be properly served. Hence, we take the elements only when the local Church is met 'in one place' as a body, and shun the popish custom of carrying them to the room of the sick, as if they contained salvation, or some magical influence. Christ personally is the healing medicine of the afflicted Christian, and not bread and wine. We, therefore, hold that every idea of sacramental grace is a piece of superstition, to be sacredly discarded. Sacramentarianism is the third step in apostasy." 



Evolution Series Challenged by 100 Scientists. — The start of a seven-part series on evolution by PBS was greeted September 24 by 100 scientists challenging Darwinian evolution. The scientists, in a succinct statement coordinated by the Seattle-based Discovery Institute public policy center, said they are “skeptical of claims for the ability of random mutation and natural selection to account for the complexity of life.” — BP

City Rejects Zoning Policy for Churches. A California community has rejected its planning officials’ proposal to ban new churches. According to Christian legal group Pacific Justice Institute (PJI), the Indio City Council recently rejected the planning commissions’ recommendation to adopt a zoning policy that would have made it “practically infeasible for new churches to build.” The ... legal defense organization ... notified city officials that the ordinance would violate both the Constitution as well as the Religious Land Use and

World News Roundup

Institutionalized Persons Act of 2000. The federal law prohibits local governments from placing zoning burdens on religious institutions without a compelling reason. — CNS

Texas Governor Defends Prayer In School. — Governor Rick Perry said ... that he sees no problem with ignoring the U.S. Supreme Court ban on organized school prayer “at this very crisis movement in our history.” Mr. Perry defended a decision to have a Protestant minister open an East Texas middle school assembly with prayers. ... Organized school prayer has been outlawed by the Supreme Court since 1963. Last year, the court ruled in a Texas case that organized prayers before high school football games were unconstitutional. Mr. Perry told reporters ... that he is ready to make school prayer a campaign issue as he seeks election next year to a full four-term term as governor. “Why can’t we say a prayer at a football game or a patriotic event like we held at Palestine Middle School?” Mr. Perry asked. “I don’t understand the logic of that. I happen to think it was appropriate.” — Dallas Morning News.

Elton John Says He’s Lucky. — Honored for his efforts to help those living with AIDS and HIV, Elton John said he was fortunate not to have contracted the disease. “As a gay man, I’m very lucky not to be infected,” he told ITV News in London. Mr. John was interviewed after the U.K. Coalition of People Living with HIV and AIDS gave him its Hero Award on Wednesday. Mr. John said he decided to fight the disease in 1990. “It was a time in my life when I wasn’t behaving very well,” the musician said. “I looked like a 90-year-old man.” — Dallas Morning News.

Number of Americans With No Formal Religion Increasing. — Though the United States remains a strongly religious nation, the percentage of Americans saying they have no formal religious identity is growing, the authors of a recent survey have concluded. A national survey of U.S. religious affiliation suggests the existence of a “wide and possibly growing swath of secularism” in the American population. The American Religious Identification Survey 2001, released by the Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY), also sug-



gests that the proportion of Christians in the U.S. has dropped — from 86% in 1990, when the study was first conducted, to 77% in 2001. Another survey, conducted by the Washington-based Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life and released last month, confirmed part of Mayer’s contention. Egon Mayer was one of the co-authors of the study.

Hong Kong Man Jailed For Smuggling Bibles To China. — President Bush has asked the State Department to look into reports that the Chinese government has jailed a Hong Kong man for bringing Bibles to Christians in China. According to Fox News, the president is “deeply concerned” about the report, said State Department spokesman Richard Boucher, who added that diplomats in Beijing and Washington brought the issue to Bush’s attention after the man’s family notified the security bureau of his status. Li Guangqiang, 38, has been charged with “using a cult to undermine enforcement of the law,”

(See WNR on page 12)

La Voz Del Desierto

¿Qué Hay Detrás de Harry Potter?

Muchos creyentes piensan, y advierten, que los libros y la película de Harry Potter contienen enseñanzas del mundo del ocultismo que afectan negativamente a los niños.

Los cristianos están inquietos con el fenómeno de Harry Potter, y se han levantado numerosas voces críticas advirtiendo sobre la enseñanza y la iniciación a la brujería que contiene. Esta inquietud creciente coincide con el reciente estreno de una película sobre el primer libro de la serie de Harry Potter (que ha sido un éxito de popularidad). Con este artículo intentamos ofrecer más que una verdad única o dogmática, reflexiones, datos y puntos de vista que ayuden a tomar la mejor decisión sobre este tema.

I. El Fenómeno Potter Y Su Historia

Posiblemente ha sido la película más esperada del año. Se titula "Harry Potter la piedra del hechicero," y está basada en el primero de los libros para niños de J. K. Rowling, que ha supuesto la venta de más de 110 millones de ejemplares en 46 idiomas diferentes desde su publicación en 1997.

Algunos analistas de la industria del cine están convencidos de que generarán unos 125 millones de dólares, con lo que sobrepasaría al "Titanic" como el mayor éxito de taquilla de todos los tiempos. Para ello se basan en el número inaudito de ventas adelantadas de entradas para ver la película.

En los libros Harry Potter es un chico huérfano de 11 años que descubre que tiene poderes hechiceros. Sus padres también habían sido hechiceros, pero fueron asesinados por el malvado brujo Lord Voldemort. Harry vive con los Dursleys, los familiares que se hicieron cargo de él al quedar huérfano, y que lo tratan despóticamente. Tras enterarse de su herencia hechicera el jovencito decide matricularse en la escuela de hechicería y brujería Hogwarts, hecho que da inicio a la trama. Cada libro relata un nuevo año de la vida de Harry, y narra las experiencias que éste vive mientras estudia en la singular escuela, incluyendo los diferentes conflictos que tiene con sus enemigos. "Los libros se irán tornando cada vez más difíciles. Lo

siento, si los otros son más espantosos," así le expresó al periódico londinense The Times la autora, en cuanto a los próximos tres libros que sacará al mercado.

Ante la polémica, la propia autora, J. K. Rowling, ha declarado en diversas entrevistas, que nada más lejos de su intención que arrastrar a los niños a un mundo de lo oculto. "Mi mundo de magia es un mundo de imaginación. Pienso que es un mundo moral," comentó en una entrevista por internet y añadió, "Yo no creo en la clase de magia que aparece en mis libros."

Dos libros cristianos con perspectivas diferentes han aparecido este año para ayudar a los creyentes a entender desde un punto de vista cristiano la situación: "Harry Potter y la Biblia" de Richard Abanes y "¿Qué hace un cristiano con Harry Potter?" por Connie Neal.

II. Las Críticas a Harry Potter Y Sus Fundamentos

En Inglaterra, donde se creó y surgió el fenómeno de Harry Potter, una de las mayores y principales asociaciones pedagógicas del país emitió serias

advertencias en esta misma línea a padres y profesores. "El personaje principal de la película de Harry Potter conducirá a una generación entera de adolescentes y niños a descubrir e iniciarse en la brujería y la adivinación," ha afirmado Peter Smith, de la Asociación de Profesores y Oradores (...). Aunque es importante no supervalorar a este fenómeno, los riesgos son claros."

Ted Baehr, un experto cristiano de medios de comunicación ha denunciado que aunque los libros se dirijan a niños, muchos portales de internet que tratan positivamente la figura de Harry Potter conducen directamente a lugares oficiales de ocultismo. "La principal web de brujería en internet sostiene que un número increíble de niños se ha introducido en el movimiento de la brujería debido a los materiales y libros de Harry Potter," ha declarado Baehr, que es editor de "Movieguide."

III. "Harry Potter Y La Biblia"

Richard Abanes, una de las personas evangélicas

(Vea POT en la pág. 10)

POT . . .

(Viene de la página 9)

que más han profundizado en el personaje dice: “Aunque la historia es ficticia, Harry Potter muestra mundos paralelos teóricamente verdaderos que están relacionados con el ocultismo.” Abanes es presidente de la Christian Film and Television Commission y el autor de “Harry Potter y la Biblia: amenazá tras la magia.” “El libro presenta la astrología, los mediums, y la adivinación a los niños de una forma entretenida y atractiva. Y a los niños les gusta imitar,” añade.

“Rowling admite que ella ha estudiado brujería para hacer los libros más acertados” dice Abanes, “Ella también reconoce que la tercera parte del contenido de la hechicería que aparece en sus libros es material de las creencias ocultista que alguna vez se practicaron en Inglaterra. Lo que ella no menciona,” continúa Abanes, “es que gran parte del ocultismo de sus libros se origina en fuentes históricas que todavía juegan un papel en la bruja actual.”

¿Por qué la magia de la serie de Potter es peor que la presente en otros cuentos de hadas y obras fantásticas de literatura para niños? Muchos, como las “Crónicas de Narnia” o

“El Señor de los Anillos,” son aceptados por una mayoría de los cristianos. Y, de hecho, muchos entusiastas de Potter comparan sus libros con los de Tolkien. Sin embargo, según Abanes, existen importantes diferencias.

Abanes anota algunas otras diferencias importantes, principalmente en la manera en la que Tolkien trata la magia. “Tolkien aborrecía la palabra ‘magia’ pero tuvo que usarla porque no podía encontrar otra.” En “El Señor de los Anillos,” dice Abanes, la “magia” de Tolkien es más una extensión de la capacidad natural, como cantar o bailar, más bien que misticismo o brujería.

Abanes también afirma que C. S. Lewis en “Namia” y Tolkien en “la Tierra Media” usan mitología popular, expresando historias en una dimensión o un mundo ficticio, claramente alejados del real. Creando un nuevo mundo el autor puede crear entonces una nueva realidad con nuevas reglas que no tienen correlación con nuestra realidad. Es decir, se hace una distinción clara (especialmente para los niños) entre fantasía y realidad. En cambio, según Abanes, “El mundo de Harry es nuestro mundo real. Es un mundo mágico que simplemente es invis-

ible a quienes no creen en él y no lo practican.”

Otra cuestión es que libros como “El León, la Bruja y el Guardarropa” (de C.S. Lewis) usan el simbolismo estándar del bueno contra la maldad. Potter se escribe — por el contrario — en un relativismo en el que “el fin justifica los medios.” Este relativismo es evidente no sólo en el uso de magia, sino en que a veces los buenos “deben robar y engañar para superar la maldad con la maldad.” Abanes cree que estos ejemplos en el libro envían un mensaje a los niños de que “pueden ser magníficas personas aún haciendo el mal.”

IV. ¿Hay Magia “Buena” Y Magia “Mala”?

Otro aspecto a considerar es el concepto que tiene la gente de lo que es brujería, hechicería y magia. Según el diccionario Vox, brujería es la cosa realizada con un poder sobrenatural maligno. El Nuevo Diccionario ilustrado de la Biblia define la hechicería como la práctica que trata de influir en las personas y los hechos por medios “sobrenaturales” u ocultos. Magia es la ciencia oculta que pretende producir efectos con ayuda de seres sobrenaturales o de fuerzas secretas de la naturaleza, según el diccionario Everest. Este último término el mundo lo ha dividido en dos ramas: magia negra es la que se

utiliza para perjudicar a otras personas, magia blanca es la que algunos consideran “buena,” pues se dice que se utilizan los poderes sobrenaturales de una manera no egoísta para el beneficio de otros. Sin embargo, la Biblia no habla de una separación de blanca o negra, es un sólo término y *abominable para Dios*.

La hechicería, magia y brujería son actos en esencia sinónimos. Tienen denominadores comunes: son actos de sujeción a poderes ajenos al único Dios, se oponen a su Ley, están respaldados por poderes malignos. Un versículo como Levítico 19:31 no puede ser más y contundente: “*No os volváis a los médium ni a los espiritistas, no los busquéis para ser contaminados por ellos. Yo soy el Señor vuestro Dios.*” El médium es la persona que se considera dotada de las facultades paranormales que le permiten actuar de mediadora en la comunicación con los espíritus, y el espiritismo es la doctrina según la cual, tras la muerte, el espíritu pervive bajo una forma semimaterial, y a través de un médium, puede comunicarse con los vivos, según el diccionario Vox.

La curiosidad que produce leer historias como Harry Potter contamina la mente con ideas contrarias (Vea **POT** en el página 10)

Iglesia Bautista El Redentor
Central Lafayette #17, Arroyo, PR 00714
(787) 839-3669 y (787) 839-5792
Marcos A. Curet, Pastor

POT . . .

(Viene de la página 10)

a los principios de Dios, que pueden influenciar al lector, especialmente si es un niño de 9 años en adelante. Un niño de 10 años comentó: “Me gustan porque me enseñan todo lo que se relaciona a la magia; cómo la puedo usar para controlar a la gente y cómo vengarme de mis enemigos.” Asimismo cientos de adultos tienen la errónea idea de que la brujería los ayudará a resolver sus problemas rápidamente. Así, lo que está ocurriendo es que se está presentando una imagen positiva del ocultismo.

V. Resumen y Conclusiones

La sociedad una vez más le resta seriedad a la enseñanza de los valores de la Biblia, que desaconseja la iniciación y la práctica en el mundo del ocultismo, al que se presenta y acepta disfrazado bajo la cara de un niño de corazón noble, como es Harry Potter.

¿Cómo debemos afrontar las aventuras de Harry Potter? Tanto adultos como chicos tienen que entender que no todo lo que aparece ya sea en la televisión, cine, radio o prensa, son modelos ejemplares de valores morales; aunque a veces se presente como un entretenimiento “sano.” Tampoco podemos tomar actitudes pasivas que ceden

ante las situaciones que sabemos que no son de beneficio para los hijos. Todo se puede discutir en amor. Los padres tienen, por obligación, que velar todo material que está al alcance de sus hijos, esto incluye libros, música, programas televisivos, etc. Además, si no es bueno para los hijos, los padres deben dar ejemplo.

Por otro lado, los cristinos a menudo, no sabemos participar en los debates públicos adecuadamente. Muchos creyentes reenviaron un ridículo correo electrónico acusando falsamente a Rowling de pertenecer a una secta satánica. Otros han dividido a sus iglesias por motivo de sus libros. Una mujer entrevistada en la librería contó a un periodista, “En nuestra iglesia, un miembro que ha sido un buen amigo por muchos años me ha dicho que, por haber comprado Harry Potter a mis hijos, soy una mala cristiana y que dejará de hablarme.”

Baehr, que vio las 2 horas y media que dura el film, no recomienda la película, ya que piensa que “enaltece de forma excesiva al paganismo. Teológica y moralmente, el ocultismo y el paganismo de ‘Harry Potter,’ es detestable.” Sin embargo, Baehr prevé que muchos padres cristianos permitirán a sus niños ver “Harry Potter,” por lo que ha desarrollado una “guía del padre” con preguntas “claves” que los adultos pueden hacer a sus

hijos si ven la película de “Harry Potter.” El diálogo, llegado el caso, es fundamental.

Las preguntas de Baehr intentan mostrar que la magia esconde siempre al mal. La magia y el ocultismo, dice Baehr, en el fondo representan un deseo egoísta y malsano de reemplazar a Dios, rechazando los valores del Evangelio por un estilo de vida superficial y egoísta que finalmente conduce al ser humano a la infelicidad y dolor.” Baehr cree también que la película ofrece a los cristianos una oportunidad de respuesta explicando “los errores de concepto, psicológicos, morales y espirituales que contiene la película.”

Evidentemente no es recomendable que se lean los libros de Harry Potter, pese a lo cual muchos niños hablarán con sus amigos, o conocerán al personaje en cualquiera de las múltiples formas que inundará la sociedad para vender la “Harrymania.” Parece pues aconsejable hablar con nuestros hijos, explicarles lo que ocurre, y ayudarles a entender lo que tiene de malo y por qué, en esta historia que a ellos les parece emocionante y bonita. No podemos aislar a nuestros niños del mundo, sino ayudarles a entenderlo desde una perspectiva y valores cristianos. Es mucho más fácil imponer y prohibir, pero convencer y enseñar es a la larga la mejor forma.

Por último, siempre que surgen estas corrientes que

levantan “ampollas espirituales” surge la misma pregunta. ¿Y qué con los otros aspectos, mucho más importantes, como son el ejemplo positivo de los padres, el amor, el respeto mutuo, la dedicación a los hijos, el diálogo, la vida no centrada en el dinero y la comodidad, la renuncia de los padres por la educación global del niño?

¿Nos preocupa sólo luchar contra los errores espirituales del mundo que nos rodea, o estamos, por encima de todo, construyendo una sociedad mejor y ejemplar en nuestras familias e iglesias, como es nuestro principal deber? Se echa en falta la misma reacción que crea Harry Potter en contra de otros errores o pecados más graves, porque están dentro de las familias de los creyentes, afectando a nuestros hijos: la violencia familiar, el abandono de los hijos, la falta de lazos y diálogo a muchos niveles, la doble vida del cristiano con el hedonismo y la comodidad. El día que hagamos esto intensamente, es más probable que no sea tan importante luchar contra las corrientes y modas espirituales.

(Sacado del listado Bautista Independiente Fundamental Sigueme.com.ar).

Y Jehová será rey sobre toda la tierra. En aquel día Jehová será uno, y uno su nombre.

--Zacarías 9:8

WNR . . .

(Continued from page 8)

referring to the Hong Kong man's effort to supply Bibles to an underground Christian movement in mainland China. He is accused of taking 33,080 copies of the New Testament in April and May to the Shouters Sect, banned seven years ago as an "aberrant religious organization." Two members of the Shouters Sect, who made the initial request for the Bibles, were also indicted by the government, which could sentence the three to death if they are convicted. Fox reports that this is the second time in a week that the Chinese government jailed individuals on such charges — last week two members of an underground Protestant church were sentenced to death. In December, the leader of a banned Christian group, South China Church, was sentenced to death on charges he led a cult.

* * *

Wiccan Appointment as Prison Chaplain "Morally Dangerous"

The person hired last month as Wisconsin's newest prison chaplain was the Rev. Jami Witch, who changed her name from Welch, "because I am one" (a witch). A state representative from West Salem is leading a drive to yank funding for her \$32,500-a-year post, saying taxpayers shouldn't be forced to accept this

hocus pocus. Other lawmakers joined him, one calling Witch's appointment "morally dangerous," as reported in the Los Angeles Times. To her "witch" is simply a "religious" description, and she informs that her brand of magic involves focusing psychic energy on a worthy goal, using meditation, which, she said, is just another word for prayer and it can be used only for healing. She spoke of her feeling a "sacred duty" to help prisoners find a path to a better life. Her critics, however, don't trust her and have nightmares of her using her chaplain's post to "suck" criminals into the cult of bizarre ritual that Wicca represents to them, said the L.A. Times.

* * *

Court Upholds Homosexual Law.

— Vermont's Supreme Court has rejected a challenge to the civil unions law granting homosexual couples many of the rights and benefits of marriage, the Associated Press Reported. In a Dec. 26 order signed by all five justices, the court turned aside claims brought by taxpayers, legislators and town clerks. One claim asserted the law is invalid because 14 House members who supported it bet on the outcome of a preliminary House vote. Another argued the law is unconstitutional because it forces town clerks to violate their religious beliefs that homosexuality is wrong

by issuing licenses to gay couples. The court said it was up to the House to decide whether the legislators who placed the \$1 bets should have been disqualified. It did not rule directly on the claim that the law violates town clerks' religious beliefs. Also, the court said the law accommodates the town clerks' concerns by explicitly permitting them to appoint assistants to issue the licenses. The civil unions law, passed in 2000, gives homosexual couples the closest thing in America to marriage. No other state has such a law. — BP

* * *

More British Couples Choosing To Marry.

— Bucking a seven-year trend, the number of English couples choosing to marry rose almost two percent, according to the latest statistics released by the British government. The number of marriages increased from nearly 268,000 in 2000, the last year for which full statistics are available, up from less than 264,000 tallied in 1999. The last recorded rise in marriage came in 1992. The marriage rate in England is still significantly down from three decades ago, when more than 400,000 couples took their vows. Britons are still delaying marriage, with the average age rising to 34.8 years for men and 32.1 years for women. And religious ceremonies continue to decline, from more than

half of all marriages in 1990 to just 36 percent in 2000. — CNS

* * *

Abortion Amendments To Be Considered.

— Two abortion-related constitutional amendments are expected to be considered by the State Legislature of Minnesota, and either one could have an impact on elections across the state if placed on the ballot this fall. One bill (House File 657) would ask voters whether they want to ban the use of state money for abortion services unless authorized by the Legislature. The second (HF 54) would ban the use of public money for abortions and, possibly more consequential, would require that the U.S. Constitution — not the Minnesota Constitution — be applied in state abortion cases. — *Star Tribune*.

* * *

Teen Sues Over Letter To Editor.

— A Crosbyton (TX) High School student, who claims he must get approval from his superintendent before submitting letters to the community newspaper, has filed a lawsuit alleging infringement upon his constitutional rights. Justin Latimer is a 16-year-old high school sophomore in the Crosbyton Consolidated Independent School District. He claims in his lawsuit

(See WNR on page 13)

WNR . . .

(Continued from page 12)

that Supt. Larry Morris told him he could not write letters to the editor of the Crosby County News and Chronicle without Morris' permission or approval from the district's band director. Latimer wrote a letter in September after plans to play "Amazing Grace" at a football game were canceled. The song was to pay tribute to the victims of the Sept. 11 terror attacks. Latimer wrote a letter to the News and Chronicle, published on Sept. 21, stating his disappointment. "I am a member of the Crosbyton High School band and am deeply saddened by the fact that the band was not allowed to play 'Amazing Grace' in honor of those who died in the recent terrorist attacks against America. ..." his letter said. — CNS

* * *

Mayor Bans Satan From City. — "Be it known from this day forward that Satan, ruler of darkness, giver of evil, destroyer of what is good and just, is not now, nor ever again will be, a part of this town of Inglis. Satan is hereby declared powerless, no longer ruling over, nor influencing our citizens." Polly Bowser, a 36-year-old waitress and mother of three, said she has felt like a pariah ever since she took exception to Mayor Carolyn Risher's proclamation ban-

ning Satan from town. Over the past two months, the women have traded arguments in newspapers and on radio and television, with Bowser saying the declaration was a violation of the separation of church and state and Risher defending her right of expression, even if that means invoking the name of Jesus Christ. On Monday, the debate went to the Town Commission, which swiftly declared the proclamation the work of an individual, not a town official, because it was never authorized, despite being on town stationery. That appears to be enough to inoculate the town against a lawsuit by the American Civil Liberties Union, which took interest in the issue on Bowser's behalf. But it was clear few townspeople disagree with Risher, who is 61 and a lifelong resident of the Levy County community 90 miles north of St. Petersburg. This story began, appropriately, on Halloween. The mayor attended a cookout at Yankeetown Church of God and was inspired by Pastor Richard Moore, who called for a 40-day fast in the name of Jesus. When she returned home that night she felt a bolt of inspiration and, sitting at the kitchen table, began to write furiously.

* * *

Bush Administration Classifies Fetus as "Unborn Child." — The Bush

administration reclassified fetuses to the status of "unborn children," making them eligible for government health care. The decision gives low-income women access to prenatal care, but abortion rights advocates believe the decision could be a step closer to overturning the Supreme Court's Roe v. Wade decision that legalized abortion. The plan will make "unborn children" eligible for health care under the State Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). CHIP had previously been established for kids and did not typically cover parents or pregnant women. "Prenatal care for women and their babies is a crucial part of the medical care every person should have through the course of their life cycle," said Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson. "Prenatal services can be a vital, lifelong determinant of health, and we should do everything we can to make this care available for all pregnant women." Pro-life advocates were elated with the news. ... Abortion rights advocates believe the decision could lead to a "slippery slope" — that is, the establishment of a fetus as a person with legal standing therefore could make abortion a crime.

* * *

Prison Chaplain Is A Witch. — Wisconsin's newest prison chaplain is "Rev." Jamyi Witch, who

changed her name from Welch, "because I am one" (a witch). Taxpayer funds are used to pay a "wicked Wiccan witch" prison chaplain's \$32,500 salary, according to a Jan. 14 *Christian News* article. Wicca is a very fast-growing pagan religion. — CC

* * *

EU's Arresting Power. — European Union leaders gathered at the Royal Palace in Dec. to put in place plans for a new "global superpower." Per the Dec. 16 *Wash. Post*, the EU summit launched "a constitutional convention to design a federated Europe that could govern over a half-billion people from Dublin to Dubrovnik before the end of this decade" (1/14 *New Amer.*). At present the EU claims to represent "about 380 million people in 15 countries who share a common president, parliament, court system, central bank, anthem, bill of rights and 80,000 pages of legal code." Under a new EU-wide arrest system, citizens from one EU country could be handed over to another. CC

* * *

Vatican To Keep Pedophilia Trials Behind Closed Doors. — Priests accused of sexually abusing children will be tried in secret ecclesiastical courts, with the Vatican oversee-

(See WNR on page 14)

WNR . . .

(Continued from page 13)

ing cases directly from Rome, per the *New York Times*. The new rules are intended to “protect the rights of the accused,” said a Vatican official. But the *Times* said some feel the rules could “instead add to the impression that the Roman Catholic Church is trying to conceal abuses. . . .” “The problem of pedophile priests has been a huge and expensive embarrassment to the church,” the *Times* reported. Pope John Paul II has, in the past, apologized to victims of sex abuse by priests. And one large award was given in a case involving a priest two years ago in Dallas, where the diocese had concealed the abuse of boys who were later awarded \$120 million in damages by a civil court (*Religion Today*). — CC

* * *

Persecution Severe In Vietnam. — After South Vietnam fell to the Communists in 1975, North and South were joined and hundreds of church buildings were confiscated or destroyed. The Communist government’s strategy for dealing with Christianity was eradication. Pastors were killed or imprisoned. Missionaries were expelled (1/02 (*Charisma*)). Communists now tout “religious freedom,” and officially approve some churches which they con-

trol. To control the growth of unofficial house churches, Communists apply such measures as “forcing Christians to deny their faith by drinking a mixture of blood from sacrificed animals and rice alcohol in a ‘Ceremony of Repentance for following Christianity.’ . . .” — CC

* * *

Truth: the Important Things. — “When truth compromises with error, it is truth that loses for error had nothing to give up in the first place” (Dr. Bob Ketcham, via Harvey Seidel). Someone else put it this way: “Better to be divided by truth than united in error.” — CC

* * *

Missouri “Moderates” Develop Plans For Convention. — For the first time, a group of Baptist moderates is planning to break away from a state convention to form its own convention, a step previously taken by conservatives leaving state conventions in Texas and Virginia. The first annual meeting of the proposed new convention, possibly to be named the Baptist Convention of Missouri, is tentatively set for April 18-19 in Fee Fee Baptist Church of St. Louis.

* * *

Christian Persecution

(See WNR on page 15)

It Isn't The Church — It's YOU

If you want to work in the kind of a church
Like the kind of a church you like,
You needn't slip your clothes in a grip
And start on a long, long hike.

You need not run to a far-away church,
With your mind and feelings all ajar;
Just yield your will to His grace and power, and
Enjoy true fellowship where you are.

You'll only find what you left behind,
For there's nothing that's really new;
It's a knock at yourself, when you knock your church,
It isn't your church — It's YOU!

Real churches aren't made by folks afraid,
Nor by those who refuse to be led;
When everybody works, and nobody shirks,
You can raise a church from the dead.

But your church fellowship, the kind you like,
If you have the Master's view,
You can find in the church where now you live;
It isn't your church — it's YOU!

It isn't your church or your pastor, friend,
That's obstructing your clearer view;
But the secret sin deep down in your heart,
That's really hurting YOU!

If you'll yield your will, and your grouch let go;
Enthroning your Savior anew,
The church you've sought through the long, long years
Will suddenly rise to view.

Surrender your selfishness, love of self,
And follow His footsteps true,
You'll find the kind of a church you like;
It isn't your church — it's YOU!

When you've died to self, your vision free;
The church which long you've wished to see,
You'll find in the church where now you be;
And it's just the church for you and me.

So when you've made your surrender true,
You'll influence others the same to do;
And your church will be what you really like,
Without your taking a long, long hike;
For it isn't your church — it's YOU!

WNR . . .

(Continued from page 14)

In China. — Two Christians have been killed in the Chinese government's crackdown on pastor Gong Shengliang and his South China Church in central Hubei Province, according to a letter from members of the underground church revealing graphic details and new information about the persecution. Gong was sentenced to death Dec. 5 on charges of operating an "evil cult" and on the seemingly trumped-up charges of rape and assault. The month-long period for deciding his appeal was extended to Jan. 5 by a Hubei court following sharp international protest. The letter, written by two underground Christian women, Li Ailian and Wang Yue, reports that in efforts to find and apprehend Gong and suppress the South China Church, police arrested and severely beat at least 25 Christians, killing two of them, while torturing other with electric prods. The letter, smuggled to the New York-based Committee for Investigation on Persecution of Religion in China, was released in mid-January by Freedom House in Washington. — ABN

* * *

Communist View of Christianity. — "I dream of the hour when the last Congressman is strangled to death on the guts of the last preacher — and since

the Christians seem to love to sing about the blood, why not give them a little of it — slit the throats of their children and drag them over the mourners' bench and the pulpit, and allow them to drown in their own blood and see whether they enjoy singing these hymns." — Gus Hall, 1961

* * *

Number of Israeli Christians Still Small, But Growing. — The Christian community in Israel is small but continues to grow, according to recent figures compiled by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics and reported by **The Jerusalem Post**. According to the databank, there are 137,000 Christian Israeli citizens, up from 120,000 in 1995. The overwhelming majority — about 115,000 — of Christians are Arab, and about 17% are recent immigrants from the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Most Christians are older than their Muslim neighbors and have fewer children. An additional 250,000 non-Israeli Christians currently live and work in Israel, according to the reports. The data did not distinguish, however, between Christians living in Israel and Christians living in the embattled Palestinian territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Palestinian Christians in those areas have caught the attention of Western church leaders

who are concerned for their safety and livelihoods. The figures also showed that the largest bloc of Israeli Christians — 18% — live in Jesus' hometown of Nazareth, where they constitute one-third of the city's population, and smaller pockets are found in Haifa, Jerusalem, Shfaram, Meghar and Tel Aviv. — RNS

* * *

Same-Sex Benefits Now At SBC University.


— Furman University has become the first college in South Carolina to offer health insurance to same-sex and unmarried couples who are employed by the university. Fortunately, none of the other state's public colleges offers such benefits to homosexuals and young couples who live together without benefit of clergy. Ironically, Furman University was founded as a Baptist University by Dr. James Furman, a great Southern Baptist theologian and evangelist in 1834. It remained a Baptist institution until 1992, when it withdrew from the South Carolina Baptist Convention because it no longer wanted the convention to elect the school's governing board. In actuality, Furman has been veering toward theological liberalism since the 1950s, and had ceased believing in the inerrancy of the scriptures and a belief that we may be saved

only through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Of course, the scriptures teach that homosexuality is an abomination to God. In Leviticus 18:22 we are told: "Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: It is an abomination." Leviticus 20:13 says, "If a man also lie with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination." The Bible makes it very clear that homosexuality is the reason that He judged Sodom and Gomorrah and indeed all of the land of Canaan. Furman University, by lowering its standards, is rebelling against God and disobeying His word!

Christian News

The Baptists' Standard

The Bible and the Bible alone is the rule of faith and practice for Baptists.

To them the one standard by which all creeds and conduct and character must be tried is the Word of God. They ask only one question concerning all religious faith and practice, and that question is, 'What saith the Word of God?' Not traditions, nor customs, nor councils, nor confessions, nor ecclesiastical formularies, however venerable and pretentious, guide Baptists, but simply and solely the will of Christ as they find it revealed in the New Testament. — George W. Truett (**Baptists and Religious Liberty**). 

A Surgeon's Argument As To Prayer

The youth's companion told of a young man in an operating room who asked a great surgeon there if he believed in prayer. "And why not?" the surgeon asked.

"What! A man of your scientific training?" the younger man exclaimed.

"And why not?" the keen-faced elderly man replied.

"Surely you cannot believe that God would upset all the laws of nature to grant the request of one of His creatures. You know how inexorable are the laws of nature."

The surgeon quietly said, "That is exactly why I believe so strongly in the efficacy of prayer. The skeptic seems to think that if a prayer were answered, all the laws of nature would be smashed to pieces. That is not necessarily the case. Why does this instrument that I hold in my hand not fall to the floor?"


"Why, because you are sustaining it," said the boy.

"Exactly — and yet the law of gravitation is not wrecked or denied. It is merely superseded by a higher law — the law of life. Gravity is the great law of the inorganic world, but the great law of the organic world, the law of life, is superior to it. Why may there not be a law in the next plane of nature, the

spiritual, that just as naturally supersedes some of the laws of the organic world without outraging a single law of nature?"

"Yes, I guess it could," the young man replied. "Then there is something in prayer, after all."

"The effectual prayer of a righteous man availeth much," quoted the doctor. "I tell you, my young man, prayer changes things."

And the young man knew from the light on the older man's face that there was one man at least for whom prayer had changed things — yes, many things. 

CURSE . . .

(Continued from page 1)

nature of fake and fraud and deception. Many mediums have been exposed as tricksters. But the Bible would lead us to believe that there is such a thing as genuine manifestation. In such case demons enter into human beings, or use them for the purpose of impersonating the dead.

The Curse Of God Is On Spiritism

God forbade Israel in Old Testament times to have anything to do with spiritism in any form, under penalty of death. For examples read Lev. 20:7, 27; Isa. 8:19-20; Dt. 18:10, 12, 14. Saul's death was due to his consulting the Witch of Endor. Jehovah "who changes not" is not in favor of that today, which he anciently punished with

death. Think of the blasphemy of a group calling itself a "church," when that group meets to practice those things that the Lord used to have people put to death for practicing!

Early Christianity And Spiritism

One of the first foes encountered by apostolic Christianity was Spiritism. Demons recognized who Jesus was and cried out. He rebuked and cast out such. On one occasion He sent them into some hogs and the hogs committed suicide.

Paul called old Elymas the sorcerer (a medium) "thou child of the devil" (Acts 13:10). He ruined a medium for further use at Phillip (Acts 16:18-19). When people at Ephesus were saved they burned their books dealing with spiritism.

The New Testament foretells a revival of spiritism during the closing days of this age, in these words, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly that in the last days some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils (demons)."

Following the first world war there was a tremendous revival of spiritism in England, and many prominent people, like Sir Arthur Conan Doyle went off after it. It is claimed that there are at least 200 journals devoted to the publication of spiritist propa-

ganda.

What Spiritism Really Is

1. It is man's effort to find out more than God chooses to reveal. The Scriptures say, "Sweet things belong unto the Lord our God. The things that are revealed belong unto us."


2. It is a religion of demons. Fakery or demons — one or the other. Either the medium is a fake, or else the instrument of demon communication.

3. It is not something that puts one in touch with the dead — either saved or unsaved.

Had the wicked rich man of Luke 16 been able to come back to earth he would have warned his five brothers. He could not is why he did not. And certainly the spirit of a saved person would not engage in something that has God's curse of death upon it.

4. It repudiates the foundational truths of the Bible. An examination of spiritualist literature will make that plain.

The Final End of the Spiritist

"But the fearful and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake of fire and brimstone, which is the second death" (Rev. 21:8). 

BETTER . . .


(Continued from page 5)

but I got the impression that it didn't matter." There has to be something in the spoken discourse, the equivalent of italics and black face type in the printed page.

Effective preaching is original. Of course that does not mean that it says things that have never been said. After nineteen hundred years of preaching that kind of originality can not be expected. But a sermon is original if it has so thoroughly been thought through and assimilated in the mind of the preacher that it is verily the projection of his own thought. A resourceful preacher will get material from every available source. If he is really concerned about his preaching everything he sees or hears or experiences sprouts suggestions. But he will make it his own before he tries to impart it to others.

There are no finer examples of public speech than the later addresses of Lincoln. Few of the ideas they expressed were really new. But, the ideas were re-minted in Lincoln's mind and stamped with his personality, and that made the authentically his own. That fine paragraph in the First Inaugural, beginning, "The mystic cords of memory ...", was written for him by William H. Seward. Lincoln took it, mulled over it, made some verbal changes in it, and it became real "Lin-

coln". The famous closing part of the Gettysburg address, — "this government of the people, by the people, and for the people," — was all borrowed. The same thing, in very similar words, had been said by Daniel Webster and Theodore Parker years before. But no one doubts that it was Lincoln's own when he spoke it at Gettysburg. In that same sense, the effective sermon will be original with the preacher. And, it may be added, it generally takes time for the mind thoroughly to assimilate an idea. It may take sweat to feather the arrow with the words that will carry it straight to the target.

May I humbly suggest to any preacher this simple test of his preaching: Let him take a sermon of his, assuming that he has some written sermons, just as it was preached five or ten years ago. Would he be satisfied to preach it again just as it is? If so, he is not growing. 

VITAL . . .

(Continued from page 1)

words, 31,102 verses, 1,189 chapters, and 66 books. The Old Testament contains 39 books; the New Testament 27 books. In point of length, the average word of the Bible contains fewer than five letters.

The word "Jehovah" occurs 6,855 times.

The word "Lord" occurs 1,853 times.

The word "and" occurs 46,277 times.

The book of Esther contains ten chapters, but neither the word "Lord" nor "God" is mentioned.

The middle chapter and shortest is Psalm 117. It contains only two verses.

The middle verse in the Bible is Psalm 118:8.

The middle book of the Old Testament is Proverbs.

The middle chapter of the Old Testament is Job 29.

The middle verse of the Old Testament is 2 Chronicles 20:13.

The shortest verse in the Old Testament is 1 Chronicles 1:25; the longest, Esther 8:9.

The middle book of the New Testament is Second Thessalonians.

The middle chapter in the New Testament is between Romans 13 and 14.

The middle verse in the New Testament is Acts 17:17.

The shortest verse in the New Testament, in English, is John 11:35; in Greek, 1 Thessalonians 5:16.

The longest word in the Bible is found in Isaiah 8:1.

All the letters of the alphabet, except "J", are in Ezra 7:21.

The nineteenth chapter of Second Kings and the thirty-seventh chapter of Isaiah are nearly identical.

The Bible holds the distinction of being the first printed book.

The first Bible printed in this country was in the Indian language in 1663. This translation was made and published by John Eliot, called the "Apostle to the

Indians."

The first English Bible printed in this country was in 1782.

The first translation of the Bible made in America was printed in 1808. It was the work of Charles Thomson.

The first translation of the New Testament published in America was printed in 1826 by Alexander Campbell.

It is not generally known that Noah Webster, author of the famous "Webster's Dictionary" and the "Blue-Back Speller," made a translation of the Bible, which was published in 1883.


The King James Version of the Bible was first published in 1611.

The Bible was divided into chapters by Cardinal Hugo in 1250.

The New Testament was divided into verse by Sr. Robert Stephens in 1551.

The whole Bible, divided into chapters and verses, first appeared in 1560 in what is known as the "Geneva Bible." It was so called because it was prepared by the Reformers in Geneva. It is also called the "Breeches Bible," because Genesis 3:7 is translated: "They sewed fig leaves together and made themselves *breeches*."

The Bible is the most translated book in the world. It has been translated into more languages and dialects than any other book.

It is the best book in the world. 

VIRGINS . . .

(Continued from page 1)

Kingdom of Heaven for it is a definite fact that it had a beginning. If we can determine the time this kingdom began, we can appreciate all the more the teaching and points emphasized by our Lord. This kingdom is first mentioned by John the Baptist for we hear him tell his listeners these words:

"In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judæa, and saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" — Mt. 3:1-2.

From these verses, we conclude that the Kingdom of Heaven was not at hand before this time. I am aware that the Kingdom of God is an eternal kingdom; therefore, the Baptist in referring to it would not have said it was at hand. Rather, he was referring to a kingdom which had not yet come into existence, but was at hand, or very near. Also we know that John was a forerunner of that which he declared was at hand. Thus, when he declared the Kingdom of Heavens was at hand, he was pointing to Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God. The Kingdom of Heaven is therefore associated with Christ, and His earthly ministry. To further substantiate this view, we learn in the study of the parables that the Kingdom of Heaven did not go back beyond the coming of

Christ and His ministry. I can find no Scripture to indicate its existence before the time John referred to it.

Since the Kingdom of Heaven had its beginning on earth, it will also come to an end as to its earthly position. This is very evident in that the parable teaches an absent Lord, and then His returning to judge those in whose hands He had left His goods (Word of God). He left His goods in the hands of His church which He instituted and authorized to carry on His work. She shall continue this until He comes, and at which time, the Kingdom of Heaven will come to an end on earth.

"And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: And whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Mt. 16:18-19).

The keys in verse 19 refer to the authority to open or to close, and He told His church (Baptist) that the keys He gave her were the keys of the Kingdom of heaven; thus the Kingdom of Heaven refers only to the church age which began with Christ's personal ministry and ends with His personal return to gather His redeemed unto Himself. Israel is mentioned

in Christ's parabolic teaching as a treasure which He found at first event, then he hid them in His field (world) while He selected a people from among the Gentiles for His name sake. The Lord did not possess the treasure (Israel) though He bought the field in which it was hid. The reason Israel is not a part of the Kingdom of Heaven is that she shall be God's peculiar treasure after the Kingdom of Heaven (church) is raptured. Israel, as of now, is hid among the nations and will remain there as His treasure until the Lord regathers them after the Kingdom of Heaven comes to an end. Thus, Israel has no part in the kingdom that our Lord is explaining in Matthew 25.

Furthermore, the word virgin or virgins could not be used in reference to Israel, for she is married and has brought forth a son. She (Israel) is married to the Father of Jesus Christ. Her Son is therefore Him whom we know as our Savior and Lord. We read in Jeremiah 3:14 these words, "Return, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for *I am married unto you.*" Not only did God claim her as His wife, but He also prophesied that she would have a Son. Let us listen as the Father promises Israel a Son who shall rule the nations.

"I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre

shall rise out of Israel and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth. And Edom shall be a possession, Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies; and Israel shall do valiantly" (Num. 24:17-18).

Thus, Israel is looking for her Son as king, not as a bridegroom.

Through the prophet Isaiah, He tells Israel, "*Unto us a child is born*" (Isa. 9:6).

There are many other verses which I could refer to to prove that Israel could not be referred to as a virgin, but the ones I have used should suffice as positive proof that the ten virgins are not Israel.

The word virgin means one who is pure, beautiful and holy. In this parable, it is used to show forth the separation from idolatry, or whoredom, and to express the love and concern of these pure ones (true Baptist churches) for the coming of the bridegroom, who is Jesus Christ. Therefore, the Lord pictures the Kingdom of Heaven (church age) as ten virgins, or that which is pure, beautiful and holy.

You may object and state that five of them were foolish. Of course, I will agree, but may I point out that the five foolish were as much virgins as were the five wise. Their foolishness did not in any way cause them to lose their virginity.

(See **VIRGINS** on page 19)

VIRGINS . . .

(Continued from page 18)

They were as much virgins at the end of the parable as they were at the beginning. The parable, dealing with ten virgins, is dealing only with true Baptist churches, which are pure, beautiful and holy in the sight of the bridegroom (Jesus Christ).

Brother, may I point out that the Lord is dealing only with a marriage. Regeneration is not in view. Those who are eligible to be married to Christ are those who have been regenerated and baptized as He (Christ) was by the Baptist; they are members of the true church or virgins.

In this parable, the Lord designates a specific time that the church will be likened unto ten virgins, for He starts the parable with the word, "then." To find the time that the kingdom will come to be like these ten virgins, it will be necessary to go back to the last portion of chapter 24, for the word "then" connects chapter 25 with chapter 24. After a careful reading of chapter 24, we find the saints being brought before the judgment seat of Christ to be rewarded (or loss of rewards).

"Watch therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the good man of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered

his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh" (Mt. 24:42-44).

We can determine that "then" will be when the Lord comes to judge His servants and appoints them their portion whether it be a reward or appointing their portion with the hypocrites or unbelievers (doctrinally). Therefore, the parable of the ten virgins is a description in parabolic illustration of the end of this age and the judging of the deeds done in the body (Christ's church). Having revealed the time of the Kingdom of Heaven (church age), our Lord then proceeds to reveal the basis of this judgment, and He does this by dividing the ten virgins into two groups which He calls wise and foolish.

"And five of them were wise, and five were foolish" (Mt. 25:2).

I have heard men objecting to the belief that the five foolish were saved, stating "God would never call one of His children foolish." Brother, may I point out to you a Baptist church in which a number of her members had drifted from the truth, and God called them foolish.

"O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?" (Gal. 3:1).

A man is a fool to think

that by not contending for the truth it will make no difference. Some seem to think that it really doesn't matter, even though the Lord has commanded that we, "contend for the faith, once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). Some even think it wise to go along with the crowd though they do not agree. The Lord would have us know that such a one is considered to be very unwise and thus foolish. Even though all of us are going out to meet the bridegroom, the Lord declares some are wise and some are foolish. Now let us notice the basis of His judgment which separates the virgins into the two classes of wise and foolish.

"They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps" (Mt. 25:3-4).

You will notice that all ten virgins took up their lamps, and went out to meet the bridegroom. It is at this point that many stumble and fall. Perhaps, it is because they have not sincerely examined these Scriptures, for they are following the popular interpretation, which teaches that the lamps these virgins took with them were salvation or spiritual life. Brother, no one picks up or takes eternal life like it was a lamp. Eternal life is the work of the Spirit planting within the elect the nature of God, and the recipients of that life have no part in it. But, here

in the parable these virgins took their lamps. It is something they did, and not something done for them. Furthermore, the foolish took up the same thing as did the wise. Thus, both groups are alike at this particular point. Because both groups had the same thing, we must discard the popular theory that the five foolish were only professors not possessors of eternal life. In order to be consistent, we would have to teach that the five wise were in the same category for they both had the same thing.

I am not trying to minimize the importance of the lamps for they definitely are important. What I am trying to get you to see is that the popular interpretation is not the correct one. Now let us look into the Scriptures to identify the lamps which the virgins took up.

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. ... The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple" (Psa. 119:105, 130).

From these verses, we learn that the lamps or lights are the Word of the Lord which each true Baptist is to take up and go out to meet the bridegroom. It is a definite fact that one without the Scriptures is walking in spiritual darkness and does not know the bridegroom as such. They are not going out to meet Him since they have no

(See **VIRGINS** on page 20)

VIRGINS . . .

(Continued from page 19)

lamps (Scriptural knowledge — thus no faith). The lamps which all ten virgins took was the Word of God which is used to reveal Christ as the bridegroom. The Lord commanded His church (Baptist) to go into the world, but she doesn't go empty handed; she takes the lamp (Word) with her to lighten the way to the bridegroom to whom she is espoused. I believe that the Lord gave to His church (Baptist) and her only the authority to go forth with lamps (Scriptures). This, of course, leads to the great truth of a Baptist bride for one must have the truth in order to go forth and meet the bridegroom, and this truth is found only in the church where Jesus placed the Comforter to lead into all truth. This parable and its teaching also reveals that even among the Baptists, there are some who are foolish and are not worthy to walk with Jesus in white (wedding dress).

This brings us to the point of difference between the wise and foolish, which on the surface would seem to be an insignificant one, but we shall find that it is very important, yea, vital as to the marriage with the bridegroom. The difference we find to be the lack of oil, or in other words, the wise took an extra vessel of oil with them, but the foolish did not think it wise. Brother, this is the only difference between

the virgins. All ten had lamps; all ten had lights, but the five wise prepared themselves so if the bridegroom tarried they would be equipped to wait until such a time as He should come. Oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit, and in this teaching, He (Spirit) is pictured as the Comforter who energizes the church (Baptist) or empowers her in her journey toward the coming of Christ. He, the Spirit, is the one who leads into all truth. No one else can lead the church into truth. Furthermore, no one else can lay claim to Him for the Lord promised Him only to His church.

“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come” (Jn. 6:13).

From this we can begin to understand that the five foolish had not prepared themselves for the delay in the coming of the Lord, whereas the wise did. Brother, would you please return to the last portion of chapter 24 where we have the same teaching by our Lord. Here is one servant, with two possibilities: one in verse 45 which our Lord calls faithful and wise servant. Then in verse 48 the Lord says, “But and if that evil servant (still a servant) shall say in his heart, My Lord (still his Lord) delayeth his coming,” then

verse 50 the Lord tells us of the coming of the Lord to that servant. *“The Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of.”* That, brother, is the same picture we have portrayed in the ten virgins. People unprepared for the coming of the Lord, not in respect to eternal life, but in respect to works, or taking up the cross and following Jesus.

One may be a member of a Baptist church and not believe in the coming of Jesus, thus his work is not energized by the Comforter and he would be without oil. By leaning to his own understanding and becoming careless and indifferent, he becomes foolish with the result that he is without oil (works energized by the Spirit) when his Lord comes.

“While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh: go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps” (Mt. 25:5-7).

In these verses, the Lord tells us that all ten virgins slumbered and slept. Notice again the similarities between the wise and foolish. There are seasons of work, seasons of rest (sleep), but once more the five foolish were not condemned because they slumbered and slept, rather because they did not have extra vessels of oil. It is only natural that we slum-

ber and sleep waiting for the coming of the Lord. The picture is that it was a long walk and then a long wait until the bridegroom came, yet they did not lose completely their zeal for the coming of the bridegroom. Because the bridegroom tarries in His coming, there is need of rest. This is true of us all for there must be seasons of working and seasons of just simple rest and reliance in Christ and His promises. Thus, the church works in the vineyard of her Lover (Jesus Christ), then rests in His promise that He will come and take her to be with Him.

It was then that they (virgins) heard the cry, “Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go you out to meet him.” Only those who are the children of God will hear His voice when He comes, and His children are the only ones who will arise to meet Him. I would have you notice that the five foolish heard the cry. Not only did they hear, but they, with the five wise rose to meet Him. This is the rapture of the saints which will take place at the end of the world (church age). Thus, the Kingdom of Heaven to which the ten virgins is likened is removed from the earth.

After the rapture, the saints must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, and also immediately after the ten virgins rise to meet the bridegroom, we find them trimming their lamps. The trimming of their lamps

(See **VIRGINS** on page 21)

VIRGINS . . .

(Continued from page 20)

is but the cutting away of that which gave no true light. The wick charred and burned, thus our dead works which are not energized by the Comforter will be cut off and destroyed at this judgment.

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (2 Cor. 5:10).

May I also point out that it was not until after the virgins arose and trimmed their lamps that the five foolish became aware that their lamps were going out, and they needed oil to make it burn its brightest. It will be here that the saints shall come to the knowledge of their rewards and position with Christ in the Millennial age. Many, like the five foolish virgins, will be made to know that their failure to be true witnesses of Jesus will result in their lamps going out — saved yet so as by fire.

The time of truth has come to the five foolish virgins. They have now realized that the only things that will count in the judgment are the things that one does for Christ. Oh, that the Spirit might use this lesson to teach the children of God that it does make a difference as to what one believes and contends for in this life. Those who suffer and sacrifice for the cause of Jesus will find their lives,

after the rapture, for their works will then be made manifest that they were wrought for Jesus Christ, their life’s work saved with the bridegroom taking them to be with Him as His beloved bride. The preparation for the coming of the bridegroom paid off for the five wise, and so it shall be with all those who love Him and labor for Him. Coming to the knowledge that there was a difference between them, the five foolish asked the five wise for their oil.

“And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves” (Mt. 25:8-9).

In thinking relative to the request of the five foolish virgins, I assume that it would only be natural for them to ask oil of the wise after seeing the blessing bestowed upon them. They desire to be partakers of their works, but the Scriptures affirm that each one of us is to give an account of his own deeds, as each one must answer for themselves. The wise refused their request telling them to go to them that sell, and buy for themselves. Evidently, this is the method by which the five wise secured their extra oil. Buying it from those who buy and sell. May I point out that the oil which the five wise had and which the five

foolish desired was not eternal life. Neither did they ask for life for they had that, and the wise would never have answered their request for spiritual life by telling them to buy and sell, rather they would have done as the first Baptist did — point them to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world (elect). To buy and sell indicates works. Eternal life does not come to us by works.

The wise in answering the foolish virgins also reveal that there were storehouses where this oil could be bought. The answer of the wise would be ridiculous if there were no places for the product to be secured. But, Brother, there are storehouses on earth full of oil. These storehouses are known as true New Testament Baptist churches where the Holy Spirit lives, having taken up His abode with them on Pentecost. The oil in question in the parable is the works of the Comforter through the church. This is the only place on earth that the oil can be secured. God gave it to His church and her alone.

The answer as to buying and selling is answered by the Lord through the prophet Isaiah.

“Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is

not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness” (Isa. 55:1-2).

That which we are to buy is the truth, and we are not to buy that which is not bread, which refers to the doctrines contrary to the truth. Thus, the five foolish virgins are instructed to buy the truth, and they are instructed to go to the church where the truth is stored. Verse 10 of the parable reveals that they left hoping to secure additional oil, but while they were away the bridegroom selected His bride from those who were ready.

“And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut” (Mt. 25:10).

Once more we need to pay particular attention to the actual words so as to better understand the Lord’s teaching. First, the ones who went in were ready or qualified because they had the extra vessel of oil (works, under the leadership of the Comforter). Having entered with the bridegroom, the Lord closed the door to the marriage. This was not the door to spiritual life, but to the marriage. We need to keep in mind that the five foolish virgins were not prepared

(See **VIRGINS** on page 22)

RECTOR . . .

(Continued from page 3)

involves all redemption truth.

He preached against sin and called people to repentance (Mt. 3:2). This doctrine is cardinal because it recognized God to be the just One, and all sin is rebellion against Him.

He preached "confession of sins" (Mt. 3:5-6). Thus demanded that sinners be brought to repentance, or be reconciled with God, before they can become members of the family of God, and before he would baptize them.

He demanded new creatures in Christ Jesus (Mt. 3:8). Following the confession of their sins and the giving of evidence of this new life, John baptized them. And surely he did so in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (Mt. 28:19).

4. John's Baptistic message and method were confirmed by a Triune God. Observe this fact in the actions of the Son, the Holy Spirit, and the Father.

Christ showed His approval of the message and the baptism of John by demanding and receiving baptism by John (Mt. 3:13-15). Thus He OKed the work of John, whom He later called "the Baptist."

The Holy Spirit showed His approval of John's message and method by appearing on Him in the form of a dove (Mt. 3:16). Thus He OKed the work of John, whom He later

called "the Baptist."

The Father also shows His approval upon witnessing the baptism of His Son by John, saying, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased" (Mt. 3:17). So the Father, by acknowledg-

(See **RECTOR** on page 23)

VIRGINS . . .

(Continued from page 21)

for that event (Marriage) though they were resurrected with the wise. They (foolish) lost the honor of reigning with the bridegroom over the nations of the earth. They did not lose eternal life.

Now let us examine their return to the door of the marriage pleading for entrance:

"Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not" (Mt. 25:11-12).


This at one time was a mystery to me for when they came back they were still without oil and had nothing which the bridegroom would accept. Were the places where they went sold out; why didn't they secure this oil? The answer is the stores were closed. Verse six tells us it was midnight. The day (church age) was over, and the storehouses (New Testament churches) were raptured — thus they were closed as to buying and selling. In fact, our Lord has told us to "Work while it is called day, the night

cometh when no man can work." Since this was night time, it was too late to produce works, and they came back empty handed. Once more, the Lord emphasizes the importance of our work in this life for it will be too late to produce the works that would qualify one to be a part of the bride after the resurrection.

Besides of the late hour, and there being no storehouses (Baptist churches) open, these five foolish virgins (still virgins) were turned away from the marriage door with these words, "Verily, I say unto you, I know you not." Once more we need to be very careful for the popular interpretation tells us that these five foolish virgins were sent to Hell; whereas, the truth of the matter is the bridegroom sent them nowhere, all He did was deny them the right to enter the marriage door. I am aware that He told them, "I know you not," but may I ask the question, He knew them not as what? It is the voice of the bridegroom, and He told them I know you not as my bride. Brother, I personally know many women, but to everyone of them with the exception of my bride, I can say, I know you not. I do not mean that I do not know them in any sense of the word, rather I am speaking of a certain capacity, which is being my wife. So, it is with the bridegroom for He knew them as to regeneration for they were raptured (arose), were called virgins, had

lamps, but their lights were going out. The only difference in them and the five wise was the extra vessels of oil. Therefore, all ten were regenerated, all were looking for the coming of the bridegroom, all ten trimmed their lamps, but the five wise, because of preparation for the coming of Jesus as the bridegroom, was granted the honor of being married to the Lamb — thus worthy to walk with Him in white (wedding dress).

"He that overcometh the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my father, and before his angels" (Rev. 3:5).

May God grant to you and me faith which comes by hearing the Word of God, that we may be counted in the great throng which the five wise typify, and that we shall not hear the words "I know you not" as my bride. Faith will cause us to watch for the coming of the bridegroom for we know neither the day nor the hour that He may come. Because of the lack of knowledge of the day of His return, let us hasten to make ready by having sufficient oil to light us to the marriage chambers. With this oil (Comforter) with which our lamps (Word of God) burn, may we, "Let our light so shine before men that they may see our good works and glorify our Father which is in Heaven" (Mt. 5:16). 

ISLAM . . .

(Continued from page 2)

much instruction time when it comes to teaching about other religions, such as Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism and Buddhism.

"A lot of it is a desire to overly compensate in the name of political correctness and sensitivity," said Brad Dacus, chief counsel with the Pacific Justice Institute, a nonprofit legal-defense organization that is representing the parents. "It's outrageous."

The course on Islam is one of 11 units of a social studies class called World History and Geography: Medieval and Early Modern Times, that's being taught all over the state. The class is included in the state's curriculum standards, which were approved by state officials in 1998.

The standards tell teachers in general which subjects should be taught at specific grade levels so schools could keep up with the topics that will be included in tests. However, the standards do not tell teachers how to teach the classes.

Teachers are encouraged to come up with the lesson plans themselves, said Doug Stone, a spokesman for the California Board of Education.

The school that recently came under fire for the way it was teaching the three-week course on Islam is Excelsior School in the Byron Union School District

near Oakland. There, about 125 seventh-graders dressed up in Muslim robes, studied Islamic proverbs and read verses from the Koran, according to course description handouts that the school sent home to parents. The students also had to pick a Muslim name out of a list of 30, learn how to write six Islamic phrases in Arabic, and organize a make-believe journey, or hajj, to Mecca, according to the handout.

"From the beginning, you and your classmates will become Muslims," the handout reads. "Dressing as a Muslim and trying to be involved will increase your learning and enjoyment."

Peggy Green, superintendent of the Byron Union School District, said in an interview yesterday that her schools are only teaching about Islam, not promoting the faith. Mrs. Green said students were given the option to dress up as a Muslim for extra credit.

"We are not teaching religion," Mrs. Green said. "We are teaching the California state-mandated standards with state-adopted textbooks. Dressing up in costume, role-playing and simulation games are all used to stimulate class discussion and are common teaching practices used in other subjects as well. There's nothing to be upset about."


Mrs. Green said her schools teach all religions in the same way.

Promoting any religion in a public school would violate state code, said Roger Wolfertz, deputy general counsel for the California Department of Education.

Critics, who learned of the course and its teaching methods yesterday, said they were outraged by the class.

"I don't think seventh-graders should be reading the Koran," said Phyllis Schlafly, president of Eagle Forum. "What they should be learning is the Constitution, the Declaration of Independence. They shouldn't be playing games with another religion. It's a way of entertaining the students, not teaching them. It's just an outrage."

Ken Connor, president of the Family Research Council in Washington, agreed. He said if students were to dress up as Pilgrims and "give thanks to the Almighty" in class, then civil rights activists would be "apoplectic" about it.

"This reflects a terrible double standard," he said. "Anything that smacks of Christianity is systematically excluded in the classroom, but everything else like Wicca to Islam is welcomed. This case exhibits all the more that Christians find themselves in a disfavored class of religion while others are in a preferred position. That's unfortunate."-- The Washington Times 

RECTOR . . .

(Continued from page 22)

ing His pleasure in His Son and His Son's act of being baptized by John, also OKed the message and the method of John, whom the Holy Spirit and His Son later called "the Baptist."

According to the witness of these three we can but conclude that John was given the name "the Baptist" because of his message and his method, and we can but conclude that the disciples won unto the Lord and baptized by "the Baptist" must be of the same faith and practice as John. Accordingly, the baptized converts, brought to the Lord by John, were Baptist saints.

5. When Christ was ready to organize His church, He went up into a mountain and called unto Him His disciples, converts won and baptized by John the Baptist (Mk. 3:13-14; Lk. 6:12-13; Acts 1:21-22). According to the Scriptures, we must conclude that John won and made disciples for Christ to use. This is disclosed in the following testimony of John:

"I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias" (Jn. 1:23).

"I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not; he it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to

(See **RECTOR** on page 24)

OLD . . .

(Continued from page 1)

self, isn't all wrong. For we should take stock in our youth, help them make this a better world than it is, give them opportunities we never had.

The only trouble is that we have done so too often at the expense of the older person. Perhaps the most neglected person in our society is the elderly person. Too often, there seems to be no room, no place for those who are in their golden years.

In our quest for beauty, we have looked only upon the outside. This has caused us to turn to youth, for it is true that they are physically prettier than the elderly. But beauty, real beauty, is to be found on the inside. And here, many of our older adults put Hollywood's beauties to shame. Perhaps the most beautiful sight in the world is an elderly mother sitting and thinking about the time when her children were young. She cared for her children, worked like a slave for them, gave up many things she wanted in order that her children could have something. We too often forget the many meals she fixed us, how many nights she lay awake while we were sick, how many new dresses she would do without so we could have new clothes.

Then, too, an elderly gentleman is perhaps our


best illustration of a real man. The magazines, you know, say that you have to be young and muscular to be a real man. But that is only superficial. For real manhood belongs to the man with the walking cane who has given his life working for his family, friends and community. But now that he is slowed, now that his strength is weakened, now that his hair is gray, we forget about him and his outstanding deeds.

All of us, without exception, are indebted to the elderly. Few of us could begin to match the real beauty and strength that is theirs. They have worked and worried, starved and sacrificed that our world would be a better one for us.

Now they are often neglected, unwanted, forgotten. I guess more than anything else in the whole world, an elderly person just wants to be appreciated instead of ignored. It appears that it is not asking too much for youth to give up a few hours, a few wishes, a few dollars, to say to the elderly, "You are still loved, wanted and appreciated. We have not, and will not, forget your great love and sacrifice for us."

The Creator, in all His wisdom, saw fit to reserve real beauty and real strength until our golden years. What we call beauty and strength in our younger years is but a fainting, fading, passing resemblance of the real thing. It takes years upon years to

develop those traits.

Why should we hesitate to sacrifice so little for those who have given so much? 

RECTOR . . .

(Continued from page 23)

unloose" (Jn. 1:25-27 and "He must increase but I must decrease" (Jn. 3:30).

Thus John puts the Lord ahead of himself to be a worker for the Lord.

Since the disciples out of whom the Lord organized His church were baptized converts of John; and since the Triune God had previously confirmed the witness and the work of John; and since the Lord had added the name "the Baptist" to the name "John"; and since disciples, won and baptized by John, obviously embraced the same faith that John embraced, and approved the same method John practiced, then they had to be Baptists, even as John. Accordingly, we can but conclude that the Lord organized His church out of Baptists. The first church was a Baptist church.

The Significance of the Name "Baptist"

The Lord does not choose and use names loosely. The word, "Baptist," had definite significance with the Lord, and its meaning was surely found in the message and the method of John.

The name "Baptist" is a symbol of blood redemption with all of its attendant

truth. To verify this symbolism, the Lord called John, who preached redemption truth and baptized by burial in water, "the Baptist", and this burial, practiced by John the Baptist, showed forth the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, the which would transpire during the days ahead. So John the Baptist's baptism was a pictorial of blood redemption.

The name "Baptist" stands for what John stood for. He stood for blood redemption, for the Saviorhood and the Lordship of Jesus Christ, for repentance toward God for sin, for the confession of one's own iniquity, for a new creature in Christ Jesus, for the immersion of believers in Christ, and for the whole of heaven's work on earth.

The name "Baptist" then stands for salvation by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, of blood cleansing and pardon, for repentance toward God and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ, for the new birth from above, and for the Saviorhood and the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

The name "Baptist" centers all authority and all power and all justice and all mercy in the name of Jesus Christ. Salvation comes only in and through the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 4:12).

We, Baptists, have a mighty heritage in the name of the Lord gave us. May we never betray it. 