

CALLING JESUS "LORD"

INTRO: There are many people today who call Jesus "Lord". In all likelihood, if you are listening to this broadcast this morning, you are one of that number.

We call Jesus "Lord"... "Lord of our life"... but we use that term pretty loosely! Do we understand what we are saying about Jesus when we call Him "Lord"?

The word "Lord" refers to the one having power or authority, a master or owner. Is that what we are meaning? God has made Him Lord of all (Acts 2:36). We certainly better accept His Lordship over us!! We are His slaves, His property (1 Corinthians 7:22). We have a hard time swallowing that in the "land of the free and the home of the brave".

How can we honestly know if we are serving Jesus as Lord in our lives?

I. DO WE DO THE THINGS HE COMMANDS?

A. Do We Do The Things He Commands (Luke 6:46; Matthew 7:21-23)? Some people call Him "Lord" and look to Jesus, but still live the way they want to.

1. Some men and women simply "live together" without being married. God calls such an arrangement "fornication" and commands us to "flee fornication" (1 Corinthians 6:18; Hebrews 13:4).
2. Some people are living in adulterous marriages and calling Jesus "Lord", when Jesus clearly condemned what they are doing (Matthew 19:9).
3. Some liquor store and bar owners are thankful to the "Lord" that their business is doing well. They are helping men to sin — God's favor is not shining on them (Galatians 5:19-21).

My friend, Jesus is not your Lord if you are not doing what He says (Romans 6:16)!!

4. Some people are substituting their own doctrines and teachings for Christ's in their assemblies, worship periods, and churches.
How can we call Him "Lord" if we are not obeying His every word (Matthew 7:22-23; 15:8-9)?

Is Jesus really our "Lord"? Are we submitting to His authority and obeying His commands?

II. HAVE WE GIVEN HIM OUR LIVES?

A. Have We Surrendered Our Lives To Him (2 Corinthians 5:14-15,17)? We cannot serve two masters — we cannot serve Jesus Christ and ourselves... we cannot serve Jesus Christ and our careers... we cannot serve Jesus Christ and our wealth (Matthew 6:24)!!

If Jesus is our "Lord", then we have given Him our lives to mold and make into what He sees fit... not to mold our service to Him into what we see fit!! So often we want to fit our Christianity into our plans for our lives and future... we must fit our lives and future into our Christianity (Galatians 2:20).

1. Some people will tell you that you need to make church a part of your life and fit church-going into your plans.

But that is not what Jesus says. Jesus says "Give up your life completely!!" Make your life a part of Him... Don't make Him a part of your life (Colossians 3:1-3; Luke 9:23-24)!!

CONCLUSION: My friend, if Jesus is your Lord, what are you going to say to Him when He says to you:

- * Whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment?
- * Whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also?
- * Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you?
- * He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be condemned?

Dear listener... Jesus is asking for you to do more than just say "Lord Jesus" when you are "calling on the name of the Lord (to be) saved" (Romans 10:13). The Bible says you do that as you are submitting your life to Him in baptism (Acts 22:16).

Thank you for listening. Think very seriously about these things!! Then make Jesus "Lord" of your life!!

THE IMPORTANCE OF DOCTRINE

INTRO: Does it make a difference whether we use instrumental music in worship or not? Whether we teach baptism is "for" the remission of sins or "because" of remission? Does it really matter whether we believe in miraculous healing for today? Or whether there are one or three persons in the Godhead?

Some people say such doctrinal discussions are just a bunch of questions for scholars and theologians to argue about — a mental exercise for bored, spiritual eggheads!! People say (and maybe you are one of them) that doctrine is not nearly as important as what is in a man's heart. But who ever told them that?

Truth in doctrine is important! And our souls depend on it!!

I. DOCTRINE OF CHRIST

A. What Is Doctrine? When you think of "doctrine" what do you think of? Stuffy old traditions? Human creeds established to give an "official church stand" on issues? Actually, in human denominations, that is exactly what their doctrines are!!

But there is also "doctrine" in a Biblical sense — the Bible talks about "sound doctrine" and all that doctrine is is "teaching"!

B. The Doctrine Of Christ. So is "doctrine" important (2 John 9-11)? That answers the question once and for all!!

1. When Jesus came it was important that men accept His "doctrine" because it came from God (John 7:16-17).
2. When the church was established it became important for them and us to accept the "apostle's doctrine" because they spoke in the place of Christ (Acts 2:42; John 15:20).

II. THE IMPORTANCE OF DOCTRINE

A. Is Doctrine Important? What does the Bible say about that? I know what many people say — they say doctrine is unimportant, but what does God say about it?

1. Obey doctrine (Romans 6:17). We are freed from sin by obedience to that "form" of doctrine.
 - a. "Doctrine" under consideration in this chapter is death, burial, and resurrection.
2. Saved by doctrine (1 Timothy 4:16). So would you say doctrine is important to me and you or not?
3. Don't have God if we pervert doctrine (2 John 9). God has no place for anyone who would twist, pervert, mock or denounce God's

teaching.

4. Forbidden to teach a different doctrine (1 Timothy 1:3,9-10). That is not like our democratic tolerance. We think everyone has a right to teach what he thinks is truth — God doesn't think that way!!
5. Warned to beware of strange doctrines (Hebrews 13:9). Such teachings lead us astray, away from the truth. The truth saves us... not false doctrines!
6. Some will not endure sound doctrine (2 Timothy 4:3-4). My hope is that you are not such a one, but that you will open-mindedly welcome and accept doctrinal truth!!
What are you listening to my friend?
7. Worship is vain if we accept man's doctrines (Matthew 15:8-9). You see, doctrine is important to God and if you are part of a group which is built on man's doctrines you better come out immediately.

CONCLUSION: Maybe you don't like doctrinal preaching because you think it is divisive. Actually false doctrine is the divisive wedge!! Not the truth!!
All those who believe and practice the truth are united in that truth. Why not contact us to find out more about that distinctive truth (John 8:32)?

THE SELF-DECEIVED

INTRO: Did you ever dial a 900 number expecting to claim a prize and find out you have to dial another 900 number, pay a ton of money for the call, and discover that your prize was really worthless? We live in a world full of deception. Many people, tempted by material gain, practice deception as a way of life, and prey on unsuspecting people. Sometimes we find ourselves to be victims of such a deception.

In religion though, one of the greatest dangers may be self-deception! The Bible warns us of this kind of deception, and encourages us to steer clear of it (2 Timothy 3:13).

Each of us need to think very seriously and make sure that we are not such a self-deceived person.

I. WHO IS A SELF-DECEIVED PERSON?

A. One Who Claims That He Does Not Sin Is Self-Deceived (1 John 1:8). I have had people tell me before that they have not sinned. They sincerely believe it... but they are deceived because they either do not know the nature of what sin is, or they have not taken a very close look at themselves (Romans 3:23).

1. We are all born into a world of sin. We are not born sinners because we are born, but we are hurled into a world full of sin even though we are innocent at birth (Psalm 51:3-5; Ecclesiastes 7:29).
2. When we become of age, all of us follow the lead of those before us... not because we have to, but because we choose to (James 1:14-16).

B. One Who Hears The Word Of God And Fails To Obey It (James 1:22-25). One who hears and knows to do right, but does not do it is illustrated as a very foolish and self-deceived man. He may pay lip-service to God and think that God is pleased with that... but God has never been pleased with that (Matthew 7:21-23; 15:8-9)

1. It is truly a foolish man who hears the words of the Lord, and as difficult as they might be, refuses to put them to use (Matthew 7:24-27).

C. One Who Thinks Too Highly Of Himself Is Self-Deceived (Galatians 6:3). It is just as deceptive to think too lowly of oneself. Some people are their own worst critics and as a result have no sense of self-esteem or self-worth (Romans 12:3).

But we would not have such an expression as "he thinks the world revolves around him" if we did not have people who think too highly of themselves and their worth!!

1. This causes some people to become their own god, loving themselves more than Him (2 Timothy 3:2,4). Then there are some people who

think themselves to be far superior to all the rest of us because of their worldly knowledge (1 Corinthians 3:18-21). They too are deceived!!

- D. One Who Fails To Bridle His Tongue Is Self-Deceived (James 1:26).** The tongue is the wildest, most uncontrollable part of the body, because it reveals what is in the heart releasing those evil thoughts that we are fighting so hard to overcome all the time.

I struggle to control my emotions, feelings, and thoughts. My tongue opens the door of the cage to let them out!! Therefore all my profession of religion is vain if I do not have it bridled and in control. I cannot always help what the heart feels and thinks... but I can help what it says!!

1. Evil begins in the heart... the mouth is what gives it expression (Matthew 15:11,18-20) and therefore, what condemns us.

The person who has no control over his tongue deceives himself to think he has control over his life!!

- E. One Who Thinks He Can Sow One Thing And Reap Another Is Self-Deceived (Galatians 6:7-8).** Everyone who ever planted a garden realizes this... why can't everyone who ever took a drink, smoked a joint, slept with someone else's wife, or cheated in business realize the same thing?

God is just. He will honor our choice. If we choose to sow to the flesh and live in disobedience to His commands, He will allow us to suffer the consequences we are responsible for bringing on ourselves!

CONCLUSION: It is bad to be taken advantage of by unscrupulous and deceptive men. But far worse is to allow ourselves to be deceived by our own selves! What is more pitiful than that? But what is more preventable than that??

Take advantage of God's wisdom and he will lead you in the right way (Colossians 2:2-3).

JEROBOAM'S ARGUMENTS FOR INNOVATIONS

INTRO: Sometimes we are deceived because we want to believe a certain thing. We are already trying to believe something and if someone can give us a sensible reason to accept it, we will.

Many people are deceived religiously for the same reason. The real power of deception is not in the false teacher who knows how to intellectually confuse us, as it is his ability to understand what we want and how to convince us to believe what we want! This is the key to successful religious innovation... both in ancient and modern times.

Jeroboam was the first king of the ten tribes of Israel in the divided kingdom, following the reign of Solomon in the Old Testament. He led the people of Israel into apostasy. It is astonishing how one man could bring about such a drastic and popular change in the religious devotions of an entire nation of God's people (1 Kings 12:25-33).

- * His own appointed cities stood as rivals with Jerusalem as seats of worship (12:28-29).
- * He instituted his own distinctive features, such as the images and the priests from other tribes than Levi (12:28,31).
- * He changed the dates of the feast days according to the thoughts in his own heart (12:33).

For a man to accomplish so much, even for that which is wrong, shows that he had quite an insight into the wants and weaknesses of the people, so that he could convince them to accept his innovations. How did he do it?

I. HOW DID HE DO IT?

- A. He Appealed To Comfort, Convenience, And Self-Indulgence (12:28).** "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem". Jerusalem was a long way for all the people from all over Israel to come to worship God at the three appointed feasts where they were to present themselves before Him in the temple.

No doubt, many of the people who were not very zealous were glad to hear a man of Jeroboam's prominence and position to say that was "too much to expect". And who would be so narrow-minded as to say that God would condemn worship in Dan or Bethel (which was only 12 miles down the road) but accept it in Jerusalem?

- B. He Appealed To Their Sense Of Piety And Worship (12:28).** "Here are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt". Don't underestimate Jeroboam's cleverness and cunning, by charging him with trying to tell God's people that Jehovah is not God! Had he done that, the people would have never accepted his innovations!

But the people did delight in having some kind of tangible representation of their God whom they could worship. That seems harmless... but why did God condemn it (Exodus 20:4-6)? Such images are the first step to idolatry... even if they are images of God Himself!!

- C. **He Appealed To Pride (12:16).** Earlier, the Israelites had fled from Judah in a huff and a tizzy upon hearing the rash words of king Rehoboam (12:3-4, 12-14). They had rebelled, saying "What portion have we in David? We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse" (12:16). They didn't think they had a place anymore in this nation.

Judah offered them nothing, but Jeroboam offered them holy places in their own homeland. He appealed to their pride — Israel is as good as Judah. Dan and Bethel are as satisfactory as Jerusalem.

- D. **He Appealed To Nostalgic And Precious Memories.** Look at the places he chose as places of worship. Aside from its convenience to the people in the north part of Israel, the city of Dan would be associated with the worship of God through the idol made during the time of the judges (Judges 18:15-31).

Bethel was strongly associated with Jacob and Samuel and thus was a sentimental place. Its name literally means "house of God" and was located at the very southern border 12 miles from Jerusalem, so that it was closer for everyone in the nation to go to one of those cities, than it was to go to Jerusalem. *Jacob called it that after his encounter with God and wrestling with the angel of God!*

- E. **He Implied That All Is Well.** This was simply the old worship... but was for those who have no part with Judah and no desire to support her and her king. It was religious revolution! But I don't think many of the people really knew it!!

They liked what he said and wanted to believe it. And so they did believe it. They were deceived, they were in error, they were being disobedient, all the while thinking that all is well and they were serving God!!

CONCLUSION: All the successful innovations in religion today possess the same ~~yielding~~ *religious* to popular taste, convenience, pride, apparent reasonableness, and piety. Using the method of sprinkling for baptism rather than burial in water, adding instruments of music, adding choirs to the worship, trying to draw people with gimmicks, recreation, food and other things... these are all innovations that people have accepted because they are willing to accept them... and there is always someone who is willing to tell us what we want to hear (2 Timothy 4:3-4). *concerts, wellness seminars, etc*

Man can never do anything "as good as" God (Matthew 15:8-9). Jeroboam's innovations ultimately led to the downfall of the nation of Israel. What will be the result of ours?

WHAT IS SO SPECIAL ABOUT THE LORD'S CHURCH?

INTRO: Let me ask you a frank question, and you can supply an honest answer. Obviously, I won't know your answer... unless you drop me a line.

The question is... What is so special about the Lord's church?

Maybe you responded that there is really "nothing special about it". There are many people like that, who don't see any purpose in the organized church in the busy 90's. In such a "mobile society" as ours, the Lord's church is losing its impact and importance in the eyes of many people.

I would like to impress us this morning, with the blessed privilege of being part of this prodigiously select society of reborn sons and daughters of God... And if you are a member of the "church of Christ" (the church which Christ died for and established — Acts 20:28), I want you to be impressed with how special of a position you are in (cf. Matthew 11:11).

I. WHAT IS SO SPECIAL ABOUT THE LORD'S CHURCH?

- A. It Is The Body Of Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23).** My friend, you can be a part of Jesus... and there is no part of Jesus that is not glorious (1 Corinthians 12:12-13, 20-24). Each member is important and Christ's body cannot be complete without each.
- B. The Saved Are In It (Acts 2:47).** There is not a saved person who is not a part of Christ's church!! There is quite an elite circle of people. Few of us ever get an invitation to be part of a special circle of people — the President's cabinet is small, the Halls of Fame for various sports and other accomplishments are select... but the Lord's church is open for all men and women to become part of (1 Timothy 2:3-4).
- C. It Is A Glorious Church (Ephesians 5:25-27).** It is not glorious because it is made up of people who are "better than everyone else"... it is glorious because it is made up of people who have been washed and cleansed and purified... who are clean and unblemished because Jesus has washed the filth from our souls.
We are the handiwork of Christ, not man-made, and that is why we are glorious (Matthew 16:18; 15:13).
- D. It Is Sanctified (1 Corinthians 1:2).** That means it is a group of people who are set apart from the world and set aside to fulfill God's purposes. The church is God's "special people" (1 Peter 2:9-10).
While it is true that God is "no respecter of persons" (Romans 2:11), it is also true that God looks favorably on His church and calls them "His people" (2 Corinthians 6:16-18).
Which group of people do you want to be numbered with?
- E. It Will Be Delivered Up To God (1 Corinthians 15:22-24).** The Lord's church has a great destiny to be fulfilled!! In this world Jesus is trying to transform His people and make us fit to inhabit heaven with God in eternity.

What is so special about the church of Christ? It is destined for glory!! It is headed for heaven!!

- F. **It Is Heaven Bound (1 Thessalonians 4:14-18).** Those of us who are a part of the Lord's church (this wonderful society of baptized believers) are anxiously awaiting the Lord's return!!

We belong to Him... we belong to heaven... and there is nothing here heaven enough to hold us to this world, nothing chaining us down (Philippians 3:20-21).

CONCLUSION: At the beginning of this program, you may have wondered what was so special about the Lord's church — now you know!!

I don't want to be left out... do you? Maybe you are not part of the Lord's church... maybe even not part of any church... Do you want to partake of these blessings?

Why not worship today with a group of such people meeting here in this city at the corner of College and West Office St. — the Harrodsburg Church of Christ? We are not perfect, but our Father is, and we are trying to be imitators of Him (Ephesians 5:1).

Contact us and let us know about your concerns!!

IS CHURCH JUST FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN?

INTRO: It is growing more apparent that women and children outnumber fathers and husbands at any given worship service. In many congregations men are a small minority even though there is a sizeable number of "Sunday morning widows" and "Sunday morning orphans" who continue to come.... at least for a while.

Where have all the men gone? Fellas..... what is standing in our way? Why are our wives and children the only ones interested in the Lord in a time when we need Him worse than ever?

I. WHERE HAVE ALL THE MEN GONE?

- A. The Male Ego.** Let's face it men, sometimes our egos are prone to exaggerate! I have to plead guilty to that one too.... perhaps more than you even!!

But what is egoism? The definition of "ego" is simply "the tendency to be self-centered, or to consider only oneself and one's own interests; selfishness; conceit" (Webster's New World Dictionary). Couple that with the aspect of being a male and you really have some combination.

Some men are terrified that the slightest admission that we are not totally self-sufficient for all human needs may be interpreted as a sign of weakness and failure.... Such men as this don't need the church because they have their own religion.... they have made gods of themselves!! To them, church is for sissies and weaklings.

We feel so sufficient that we think we don't need the Lord. But we don't even realize that the only sufficiency we can ever have must come from God (1 Corinthians 1:26-29). Our conceit becomes deceit because "following the path of least resistance" is no sign of a man!! Our egos play tricks on us. While pretending superiority ("church is for weaklings") we become quite inferior (and our wives and children know it!!).

My friend, don't be deceived like I often am (Proverbs 26:12).

- B. Worldly Men.** Where have all the husbands gone? Many have gone fishing, hunting or golfing when they should have been with their families in service unto God. Others have gone to mow the grass, shovel the snow, or work on the car. Still others have gone back to bed to read the newspaper or to sit behind the wonder producing TV remote control! Some husbands have just decided that Sunday is going to be their day of rest and no one will deprive them of "their" day.

Some husbands and fathers aren't interested because there are too many things they have to give up to be a Christian —beer, cigarettes, cursing, playing poker, and all the things they enjoy staying out late on Saturday night and doing. Maybe he doesn't have the guts to refuse the temptations placed before him by his friends... maybe he cannot stand the names they call him.

It could be that he was deceived by his tough talking buddies, not knowing that all that tough talk was just a front to hide their own feelings of weakness and inadequacy. All these things have a

stronghold on some men and deceive them into thinking they are masters of themselves when really they are slaves (2 Peter 2:19; Romans 6:16).

- C. **Materialism.** Where have all the men gone? Many are at work. Many of us have become workaholics, or at least are so caught up in providing the things that they and their families want that they don't have the time or interest in spiritual things (Luke 14:15-24).

We don't realize that we are robbing our families of the things they need the most — a father and husband who take the spiritual leadership of the family (Ephesians 5:25,28-29; 6:4). Providing the physical necessities does not fulfil our responsibilities, but we fail to see it. Being head of the family means "he who would control another must first learn to control himself".

- D. **The Non-Committal Syndrome.** Men like the freedom to come and go as they please! We bear enough responsibility, we don't want anymore.... especially in the church.... when we do go to church, we need a haven where we can **get** rather than always having to **give**.

But God has given men the responsibility to teach and lead and we cannot shirk it (1 Timothy 2:12; 4:16).

II. WHAT DO MEN NEED TO KNOW?

- A. **About Their Souls.** Men have souls that will be eternally lost if we do not do something about it (Matthew 16:26). Is it a sign of bravery to have no fear of hell? No.... there are other words that would better describe such an attitude. Both fathers and mothers should fear hell (Matthew 10:28).
- B. **About The Church.** The church is the realm to which the Lord adds the saved (Acts 2:47). He is the head of the church (Ephesians 5:25; 1:22-23). If you are not in the church, then Christ is not your head! Being a faithful member of the body of Christ involves assembling regularly to worship your Creator and take your place among brethren in Christ.
- C. **About Their Responsibilities.** Men may have to answer for others besides themselves. If we are lost eternally, then we probably won't be lost alone. Our loved ones may go with us. And even if they don't, how much lonelier would it be to be lost alone??!! You can be sure that your children will follow your example much better than they will follow your advice!! (Matthew 18:6-7).
- D. **About What To Do.** Men who are plagued with "male ego" problems can change. Men who live worldly lives can change. Men afraid of commitment can change (2 Peter 3:9). My friend, God needs strong men (1 Corinthians 16:13). Can He count on you?

THE SEARCH FOR PEACE

INTRO: The world is sick and ulcer-ridden because it is not at peace. Global conflicts and their constant threat rob the world of the peace and tranquility it needs to remain healthy. Yet, the greater threat to men in the world is not the threat of war without, but the reality of the war within!! Man does not need world peace to cure his woes but inner peace.

Stress and pressure are killing us. We meet ourselves coming and going and don't have time to cultivate and nurture peace within. Instead of finding real peace, we accept the absence of conflict in its place. Unfortunately, peace is an active force in the inner man whereas the latter is merely passive. It is inadequate as a substitute. All of life involves a search for peace, yet men persist in seeking it in the wrong places.

Some look for it in any number of things.

I. THE SEARCH FOR PEACE

A. Escape. We try to run from our problems and responsibilities. The fallacy is that we must always return!! Why do men become alcoholics and drug addicts? Why do men walk out and never return? Escape!! Those substances and situations allow one to leave life's problems behind temporarily. Sobriety brings them in confrontation with those same problems again.... unsolved.

We also use retreats for our minds. Television, recreation, entertainment, hobbies, and such help us escape the pressure for a time.

Escape is not wrong. Sometimes it is necessary in those harmless forms to preserve health and sanity. Jesus even recognized a need to periodically escape (see Mark 6:30-32; Matthew 8:18,24). Employers give us vacations and God even instituted the Sabbath as a day of rest for the nation of Israel. Escape temporarily eases trouble and pressure but it is never a solution or a cure!

B. Evasion. Many people refuse to even face their problems. We wish to put them in the back of our minds, rationalizing that if we don't think about them, then we can live with them or even won't have to face them somehow.

No one ever solved a problem by avoiding it though.... They tend to get bigger when you avoid them. The longer we refuse to face it, the worse it gets. The problem, like a disease, can become incurable if allowed to fester untreated for too long. Evasion may bring a temporary relief from conflict, but it can never bring peace.

II. WHAT IS THE CURE?

A. Trust. No one can ever experience inner peace until he says to God "Thy will be done". Once he has said that, peace like a river, floods his soul (Isaiah 48:18).

When one places complete faith and trust in God, he knows that God will always do what is best for him (2 Timothy 1:12).

Jesus Himself entered the Garden of Gethsemane with a soul so

encumbered with tension and emotional anguish that He sweated blood. There He accepted God's will with unflinching trust, and came out at peace even though He was about to experience the worst pain of His short life (read Matthew 26:36-46).

B. Prayer. Prayer is one of the remedies God has given us for these problems. Of course, since prayer is a spiritual blessing, its benefit is for those who are in Christ (1 Peter 3:12). Prayer, regular prayer, fervent prayer can change your life (1 Peter 5:7; Philippians 4:6-7). It can bring you closer to God, change your attitudes and give up the peace which passes all understanding.

C. Working For God. One of the greatest enemies we have to peace of mind is self. We are frustrated because we are selfish, self-centered, self-pitying, and self-absorbed. Ironically, these are the very things which rob us of peace.

If we will get busy working for God and denying ourselves, then our lives will be meaningful and fulfilled (Luke 9:23; Galatians 2:20).

CONCLUSION: Peace of mind then is not something you get from a bottle of tranquilizers, or on a psychiatrist's couch, or in the philosophies of men. Jesus, the "Prince of Peace" will give us the "peace of God which passes all understanding" if we will fully trust in and serve the Lord (Isaiah 26:3).

That trust involves taking God at His word and accepting His will for you — believing in the name of Jesus as the Son of God (Romans 5:1-2), repenting of your sins (Acts 2:38), and being baptized into Christ (Mark 16:16). How desperately are you searching for peace?

TEST THE SPIRITS

INTRO: I hope that you will do one thing... and would like to ask you to seriously do it! Will you not pay any attention to what I say unless you can hear me read it from the Bible? Will you do that for me? Actually, would you do it for yourself? But I really don't mind!! My soul is hanging in the balances too!!

The Bible encourages us to do that (1 John 4:1). The apostle tells us that we should not accept everything some religious leader or preacher asserts. We must put his teaching to the test. Does it coincide exactly with the teaching of Jesus' apostles and prophets (1 John 4:6)?

The apostle Paul sharply affirmed that we are doomed ^{if we} listen to someone who preaches something different, who is doomed himself (Galatians 1:6-8).

If you listen to this station all day, then you should do the same thing with every single person you hear teaching you today!!

I. TEST THE SPIRITS**A. False Teachers Don't Come Peddling Something Disgusting And Depraved.**

That would never appeal to religious people. They actually come bearing the truth... they just add a little extra to it or leave something out. Even faithful people can be fooled (2 Corinthians 11:3-4)!!

Many of the New Testament epistles were written to churches who had accepted false teachings and tolerated those teachers. And following it would lead to their own destruction along with that of those teachers (2 Peter 2:1-22).

Do you see how important it is to find out the truth and not follow those who are teaching that which is false?

B. False Teachers Are Deceptive. Don't be so naive as to think you can spot one a mile away (Matthew 7:15). They look and sound very much like the real thing! They sneak in right under our noses (Jude 4).

False teachers may sport fine, expensive suits or just plain old corduroy suits with ties that don't match. They preach powerfully moving lessons full of tears and fire... and the lessons are from the Bible. But their message is tainted with the poison of false doctrine.

They convey the appearance of godliness, which is no surprise (2 Corinthians 11:13-15).

C. The Origin Of Their Message. How can we determine whether their message is from God or from God's arch enemy and nemesis the devil?

1. Is it by his ability to quote scripture? Satan quoted scripture when tempting Jesus (Matthew 4:5-6).
2. Is it by his ability to do great wonders? A man who works wonders which defy explanation may not be coming with the power of the Holy Spirit, but with the power of a very unholy spirit, the Devil (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12).

Think about that! How many witch-doctors do wonders which defy explanation? How many voodoo practitioners? How many devil worshippers? How many psychics? How many New Agers? How many religious people saying they are Christians yet teaching all kinds of other things do wonders? How many people who are going to be lost do wonders that defy explanation (Matthew 7:21-23)?

3. The way we determine the source of a man's message is by comparing whether or not it agrees completely with God's revealed word in the Bible! Any more or any less is not God's word (Revelation 22:18-19)!!

CONCLUSION: Our response to every word preached should be the same as that of the Bereans (Acts 17:11). If you want to call me sometime and tell me "Rob... you were teaching some things that aren't consistent with the Bible" then please call me during the week at 734-7166 and I will be glad to talk with you.

And if you are right and I am wrong, I can do something about it. But don't believe anything anybody tells you until you "test the spirits whether they be of God for many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1).

DOES GOD EXIST ?

INTRO: The question concerning the existence of God is hotly contested today. Does God really exist? How can we know for certain, either way? Admittedly, these are difficult questions we grapple with.

Proof of God's existence or non-existence is not humanly possible. It is beyond man's finite power to produce proof either way. Therefore we must weigh the evidence for both views, determining which is more reasonable to believe.

Likewise, jurors serving in a court of law must evaluate the evidence, determining which way the scales tilt, guilty or not guilty. L.S. Keyser states "Let us remember this fact: Human reason cannot prove the Christian religion to be true. It can only show it to be more reasonable than unbelief" (A System Of Christian Evidence, pp.31-32).

I. EVIDENCE FOR GOD'S EXISTENCE**A. Many "Proofs" Have Been Offered As Evidence That God Does Exist.**

Probably the strongest argument comes from the phenomenon of design in the universe (Teleological Argument). It is based on the Law of Cause and Effect (for every effect there must be an adequate cause that brought it about).

For example, the watch that you wear is proof that there is a watchmaker who made it. You may not know him or know where he lives, but you do know that he/she exists. Likewise every house has someone who built it (Hebrews 3:4).

All men, whether atheists or Christians, must agree with the first statement of that verse. The natural conclusion reached is that since the universe does exist, it must have had a cause adequate to bring it into being. Design (rather than chaos) in the universe demands a designer, as a watch demands a watchmaker, or the existence of a baby demands that there were two parents who conceived it.

B. Science Rests On The Proposition That The Universe Is Understandable, Orderly, And Predictable. It is built on laws which can be observed and depended on to be consistent. The study of science involves looking over the shoulder of the Master Architect, thinking His thoughts and observing His handiwork.

Through the study of science itself God has left abundant evidence for faith in His existence (Romans 1:19-20). Men today fall into the same trap which the Gentiles were caught in. Evidence for God's existence is ample — willingness to obey Him in submission is lacking (Romans 1:21-22).

Pride has caused many men to stumble and fall (Proverbs 16:18). We can look at ourselves unrealistically, seeing mankind as greater than his true status as part of God's creation (Psalm 8:3-4).

Those who disbelieve in the creative hand of God want us to believe the delicate intricacies of nature developed through a gradual evolutionary process, until reaching its perfected stage. This balance of nature, through trial and error over eons of time, has finally been achieved. That is about as logical as asking us to believe a man can

jump across a wide ditch a foot at a time!!

- C. **The Fool Has Said In His Heart 'There Is No God' (Psalm 14:1).** He closes his mind to the evidence (Psalm 19:1-6; Romans 1:18-23). He denies his own special nature and lowers himself to the level of a brute beast (Genesis 1:26; 2 Corinthians 4:16). From a logical and scientific standpoint, he is completely unequipped to make such a declaration and equally incapable of proving it.

CONCLUSION: The evidence, when honestly and carefully examined, shows belief in God is more reasonable than unbelief. "By faith we understand the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible" (Hebrews 11:3), and we, as His creation, are accountable to God.

"And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6). "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is not declaring to men that all everywhere should repent because He has fixed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness through a man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead" (Acts 17:30-31).

THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN

INTRO: Rearing children is difficult in today's society. Working parents often abandon their children to other people during the most critical years of their lives.

Instead of giving the individual attention needed because each child is unique, with characteristics all his own, we have reverted to the group plan with day-care centers and such substituting for parents who are not there. Undoubtedly, this method works for raising kitty and puppy litters, but can it work as well with human beings?

Such arrangements are not always wrong, but we must guard against abusing them or substituting them for our own responsibilities.

I. THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN

A. Need For Individual Instruction. Many children lack the individual concern and instruction needed to develop their unique personalities. They need us to be outstanding parents and to map out for them a way of life that they can follow (Proverbs 6:20-23). When you brought your child into the world, you took on a great responsibility. In his early years, you are his connection to his heavenly Father. If you do not tell him about the God who created him, he will not know.

You brought a new soul into the mainstream of life who must ultimately face God in judgment. This is a soul which, quite possibly, would have never come into existence otherwise. How inhumane to abandon that child in the crucial years of youth and fail to bring them up in the instruction of God (Ephesians 6:4).

B. Removing Stumbling-Blocks. Although not specifically addressed to parents, Jesus' words equally apply when He warned against stumbling-blocks (Matthew 18:6-7). That should not frighten us necessarily, but sober us, that we might take parenthood more seriously!

The hypocrisy of parents may become a source of stumbling for our children, who naturally look up to parents as their example for living. Children do not naturally sin, they must be taught. Likewise, they will not naturally do right without being taught (Proverbs 22:6).

We have a big influence in what they become. They need us to be good examples and help them walk in the right way (2 Timothy 2:22).

C. The Influence Of The World. Seriously consider the evil and adulterous generation we live in, but don't allow that to excuse your child's behavior. We cannot always isolate them from the world, but we must insulate them.

These are evil days (2 Timothy 3:1-5). So we must work twice as hard teaching them about God, righteousness, godliness, kindness, and love.

1. The young preacher Timothy was raised in an ungodly society too. Therefore, his mother and grandmother worked even harder to exert a good influence on him (2 Timothy 1:5).

Eunice must have worked hard teaching him principles of

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righteousness from infancy. Undoubtedly, she had to offset the wicked influence of his father who was a Greek (Acts 16:2). But that did not sway her determination to teach him the way of God. She strictly complied with God's instructions (Deuteronomy 6:6-9).

Had Eunice lived in today's society, I could see her sometimes turning off the TV set, teaching her children Bible stories, and encouraging them to pray with her.

CONCLUSION: From one parent to another, please, let's not fail our children. We brought them into this world. We must therefore prepare them for the next world!!

Train them up in the way they should go and they will be a blessing to you (Psalm 127). And depending on the kind of training we give them, we can be a great blessing to them or one of the greatest curses in their life (Proverbs 17:6; 20:7).

WE ARE NOT SAVED BY GRACE, FAITH OR WORKS!!

INTRO: The argument rages on... theologians, radio preachers, and church-going people strongly press their point. One religious group says we are saved by grace and grace alone, then quotes its passages... Another group says we are saved by faith and faith alone, then quotes its passages... Still another group says we are saved by works and works alone, then quotes its passages.

Most people believe a man is saved by God's unmerited favor — His grace (Ephesians 2:5). But not all agree that man is saved by faith since some baptize babies to remove the guilt of their sins. Babies cannot believe or have any kind of faith!

Other people teach that one is saved by faith alone, without obedience, because if works had anything to do with it we would be earning our salvation. This is taught in most creedbooks of the major protestant denominations.

Still other people teach that our good works offset our bad ones and as long as we do enough good things or great things, we will be saved!!

It's enough to make you throw up your hands in confusion and frustration!!

The truth is that we must take everything the apostles and Jesus said on the subject of salvation and then we will have God's pattern. When we do that we learn that we are **not** saved by grace, faith or works!!

You heard me right. Maybe you are thinking "What kind of preacher am I listening to?" See if you don't agree with me when this lesson is over!! I honestly believe you will.

I. WE ARE NOT SAVED BY GRACE...

A. If It Bypasses Faith (Hebrews 11:6; Ephesians 2:8). Not even God's grace can save us if we do not have faith... Not because God's grace isn't strong enough, but because God has made it conditional!!

B. If We Expect It To Ignore Our Unwillingness To Repent And Obey. Jesus tasted death for "every man" (Hebrews 2:9). But "not everyone" will be saved (Matthew 7:21). Those who have the necessary faith and obedience will benefit from Christ's death (Hebrews 5:9).

Contrary to what most people think, there is something to do! We do not earn our salvation by doing such works, but Christ sure will withhold it from us if we don't!!

C. If We Are Looking For A Loophole. You will not be saved by God's grace in a way different from everyone else (Acts 10:34).

II. WE ARE NOT SAVED BY FAITH...

A. If It Is By Faith Only (James 2:24). That is the only time in the Bible the words "faith" and "only" are used together. We must not isolate passages that talk about salvation by faith and conclude that

means "faith only". God has had more to say about it than that!!

- B. **If We Do Not Also Repent (Luke 13:3).** God does not want any of us to be lost. He is longsuffering and patient, waiting for us all to repent (2 Peter 3:9). But as great as our faith may be in God and His Son Jesus Christ, our sins are not blotted out until we repent and are converted (Acts 3:19).
- C. **If We Refuse To Be Baptized (Mark 16:16).** Many people say that baptism is a work of merit, trying to earn salvation. No... the Bible says baptism is an act of faith in God's working to save us (Colossians 2:12). A faith that won't be baptized is not faith at all!!

III. WE ARE NOT SAVED BY WORKS...

- A. **If They Are Works Of The Law (Galatians 2:16).** The Law of Moses has been done away with (Colossians 2:14). From the Ten Commandments on, the works of Moses' Law cannot save because they are done away with in Christ.
- B. **If They Are Works Of Men (Ephesians 2:9).** Works invented by men cannot save anyone. If so, man would have reason to boast. Rather, we must "work the works of God" (John 6:28-29).

CONCLUSION: Do you remember what I said earlier? We are not saved by grace, faith or works. The truth is we are saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8). We are saved by faith that works through love (Galatians 5:6).
Not by any one, but by all three. Don't let anyone deceive you my friend!!

MORE THAN A CARPENTER

INTRO: About 2000 years ago a man named Jesus was born in an obscure little town in a small insignificant country. He was born into a poor family and worked as a carpenter with His father until He was 30 years old.

He set out on a personal ministry which lasted a little more than three years. While still a young man, the tide of popular opinion turned against Him... He was betrayed by a friend, denied and rejected by His followers.

His enemies scourged, beat and crucified Him on a cross - a fate reserved for the worst and most despicable of criminals. Roman guards gambled for the only material possession He owned - a seamless robe. After dying He was taken down and put in a borrowed grave.

This man never wrote a book... never held an office... never owned a home. He didn't attend any college or school of higher learning. And except for His early life, He never traveled more than 200 miles from home. Yet, He has had more influence and impact on humanity than any other person in history.

I. JESUS OF NAZARETH

A. Statement About Jesus. Philip Schaff (a noted church historian) wrote of Him:

"... this Jesus of Nazareth, without money and arms, conquered more millions than Alexander, Caesar, Mohammed, and Napoleon; without science and learning, he shed more light on things human and divine than all the philosophers and scholars combined; without the eloquence of schools, he spoke such words of life as were never spoken of before or since, and produced effects which lie beyond the reach of orator or poet; without writing a single line, he set more pens in motion, and furnished themes for more sermons, orations, discussions, learned volumes, works of art, and songs of praise, than the whole army of great men of ancient and modern times".

B. Jesus Was A Paradox Of Sorts. Many would attribute the great wisdom and influence of any great man to:

1. Education. But Jesus had none. At least no formal education any more than any other normal Jewish boy of that time.
2. Worldly Power And Influence. Again Jesus had none.
3. Overwhelming Physical Presence. Jesus was a meek man, with no outstanding physical characteristics (cf. Isaiah 52:14; 53:2-3).

C. Skeptics Have To Admit His Influence On The World. Whether they admit His deity or not, they must admit His influence!!

So why does He influence so many? What makes Jesus of Nazareth so unique? What makes countless thousands martyrs for His name? JESUS CLAIMED TO BE THE SON OF GOD... AND HE PROVED IT!! His resurrection from the dead proved He was God's Son (Romans 1:4).

One of the biggest cop-outs for those who do not believe but cannot deny the evidence is that Jesus was great teacher and religious leader... even perhaps a man ahead of His time and an idealist. That sounds intelligent and appeases the mind and conscience... but it just cannot be true! Jesus made some claims which complicate that idea.

II. THE CLAIMS OF JESUS

A. Jesus Claimed To Be The Son Of God. Now that claim is either true or false.

1. Suppose The Claim Is False. That leaves us with two options. Either Jesus knew it was false or He did not know.

- a. Liar. If He knew it was false, He was a liar. The Jews labeled Him a liar (John 10:30-38). But Jesus challenged them to show just one thing He had ever done wrong... they were silent!

How could a man who lived the purest, noblest, most righteous life of any man, teach astounding truths, and yet live the most colossal lie ever lived? It would be impossible. It would take a Jesus to invent a Jesus!!

- b. Lunatic. If He didn't know His claims were false, He was a lunatic. The disciples thought that at one time (Mark 3:21). They thought He was getting carried away because of His effect on others.

But a lunatic shows signs of imbalance and mental instability. Yet Jesus' teachings bring comfort to all such men who are distressed.

- 1) J T Fisher (noted psychiatrist) said that if you were to combine all the material written by reputable psychologists on mental health, take out the meat without all the excess verbiage, you would have an incomplete summation of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. This was no lunatic!!

2. Suppose The Claim Is True. That leaves us with only one other alternative.

- a. Lord. Jesus is really Lord. That is the most sensible... It is the only thing which can explain Jesus' claims, teachings, miracles and wisdom (Matthew 16:15).

B. The Claims Of Jesus. Jesus made some very serious claims which cannot be taken lightly. He put Himself on the spot. To even claim these things He must be either a Liar, Lunatic, or Lord.

1. Claimed Equality With God (John 5:17-18; 10:27-33; 14:7-10). Such a claim made by a mere man was worthy of death. Was He a liar? A lunatic? Or Lord?
2. Accepted Worship. He taught that only God was to be worshipped and none other was worthy of such a display (Matthew 4:10; John 4:23). Yet He accepted worship many times (leper [Matthew 8:2]; ruler of synagogue [Matthew 9:18]; blind man [John 9:35-38]; disciples [Matthew 28:9]). Was He a liar? A lunatic? Or Lord?
3. Claimed His Blood Could Acquire Remission Of Sins (Matthew 26:28; Acts 20:28). He died for this belief and this cause and His disciples began teaching that from His death onward. Was He a liar? A lunatic? Or Lord?
4. Which Was He? Jesus proved His claims by the miracles and signs which He did, thus proving Himself to be Lord (John 20:30-31; Acts 2:36).

CONCLUSION: The proof is set before us in the New Testament. Jesus is truly "more than a carpenter"!!

Now we must do something in response to that claim... we must have a reaction to the evidence. "What think ye of the Christ?" Jesus asked one time (Matthew 22:42).

1. Reject Him. If you reject Him and the proof of His deity, then you are dooming yourself (Hebrews 10:26-31).
2. Apathy Toward Him. Maybe you don't care enough to make a decision. But here your decision has been made (Matthew 12:30).
3. Obey Him. If you love Him, obey Him and He can be the source of eternal life for you (Hebrews 5:9).

Answer the question this morning my friend and choose your destiny!!
Was Jesus a liar? Was He a lunatic? Or was He "more than a carpenter"...
was Jesus Lord?

CAN WE UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE ALIKE?

INTRO: Whenever discussing religion with people, we often hear the statements made to the effect that:

- * "The only difference between us is our opinion of what the Bible teaches"
- * "We just see and understand things differently. There is room for differences in the church today and God allows such"
- * "It is impossible to get everyone to believe the same thing. We cannot be expected to agree on everything"

Is that true? It sure sounds convincing... but is it? Actually, God's word is not that way at all!! (1 Corinthians 14:33) Let's not blame this mess on God... this is our own doing!! Man just cannot leave out his own philosophies and theologies. Many of our divisions come in areas where God has not spoken.

Many blame the Bible itself for all the confusion. "It is just too hard to understand". That is the explanation for all the differing views about its teaching. If the Bible cannot be understood, we are wasting our time studying it. If you really believe that it cannot be understood, then you should just go ahead and turn the radio off.....

Are you still there? Then you do believe that it can be understood. You are right (Ephesians 3:3-4; 5:17). Some of you have been told by your preacher, pastor or priest that you are not capable of understanding it by yourself without their guidance... Be careful of that my friend (Matthew 15:14).

Now, it is possible that you do not understand the Scriptures, but it is not possible that your cannot understand them! And remember this one thing through the rest of our study this morning... "We may misunderstand the Bible differently, but we cannot understand it differently" (Ephesians 4:5; Jude 3; 1 Corinthians 1:10).

I. NECESSITIES FOR UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

A. Standard Of Authority. To be consistent, we must have some basis of authority, some standard by which to measure our opinions, beliefs, and practices.

1. Without a standard measure for one gallon which is consistent, we might drive into one gas station and get a pint of gas for \$1.03, and then another and get a whole gallon for \$1.03, and still another and get about a gallon and a half for the same price (by the way, if you know about one of those, get in touch with me).

A standard is necessary to be consistent and fair. We agree that double standards are unfair, but then we want to be judged by one religious faith and have others judged by another... Is that fair or not?

God has given us a standard to govern our lives (Psalm 119:105; John 12:48). So in order to know what is right and wrong you must

consult that standard!! When questions arise, that is to be our standard, and that alone!! Did you know that most preachers, pastors, and priests use a man-made creed book which they preach out of along with the Bible? It might shock you to know that your preacher may use one... Ask him this morning. And if he does, refuse to accept it because it is dividing us!!

The Bible, and it alone, is the revealed mind of God (1 Corinthians 2:10-11). And man is arrogant to think He can know God's will apart from God's revelation!

- B. Ability To Understand.** Can God's word be understood?? The writers of it said it can (Ephesians 3:3-4), although admittedly some things may be difficult (2 Peter 3:15-17). Many of the people Paul addressed may not have been as well educated as we are, yet they could understand.

In order for someone to understand, he must have some mental capabilities. Perhaps he is slower than most other adults, but the messages of the Bible are simple enough to be understood by children. There are only two groups of adults who cannot understand the Bible.

1. **Mentally Handicapped.** They do not have the reasoning capability necessary to understand. Therefore, God does not hold them accountable.
2. **Unwilling.** He has the ability to understand, but is foolish for not taking advantage of that ability. This typified many people Jesus came teaching (Matthew 23:37-39). Such people are accountable (Acts 17:30).

- C. Desire To Understand.** Here lies the crux of much of the problem. Man does not really care to know and understand. Perhaps the word condemns his life and therefore he does not want to accept it.

Without the desire to know and understand, the word of God does us no good at all... but anyone who wants to know the truth, shall know the truth (John 7:17). If we are willing to do His will and obey His word, then we will understand it (John 8:31-32).

And perhaps here lies the reason for so many different and false beliefs which are being held today. God allows it because man desires it and does not love the truth (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12).

- D. Open Mind.** If your mind is already made up about something, it will do you no good to appeal to the Bible for your answer. Too often we appeal to it with the attitude of trying to justify what we are doing, rather than trying to find out what God wants us to do. My friend, that is a dangerous position to be in!

Prejudice blinds a man... If you or I am not willing to take all God has said on a Bible matter, then we are better off without Bibles, because then the truth will just get in our way!!

When examining the Scriptures (even when doing it with me each Sunday morning), realize that they are right and pattern your life after them rather than patterning them after your life (2 Tim. 3:16-17)

- E. **Honest Heart.** Jesus talked about the word of God being scattered on men's hearts like seed on the ground, in His parable of the Sower (Luke 8). The ones which fell on the good ground are those "having heard the word with a noble and good hear, keep it and bear fruit with patience" (Luke 8:15).

Is that you, my friend? An honest heart will not try to justify itself by saying "Well, we just cannot understand the Bible alike". If you and I do not understand the Bible alike, it is because at least one of us is wrong!!

CONCLUSION: Today men are divided over a multitude of different teachings, doctrines, and faiths. But God's word can be understood if we are willing to understand and honest enough to accept it!!

We will be judged by all of God's words (John 12:48; Revelation 20:12). Do you honestly believe that god will judge and condemn men for misunderstanding something He made so vague that we could not understand what He would have us to do? I don't believe that... and I know you don't either.

Remember this last thought as our time runs out "When a man is honestly searching for the truth and finds that he is mistaken, he either ceases being mistaken... or he ceases being honest".

WHO IS ON THE LORD'S SIDE?

INTRO: There have always been times in God's dealings with his people when the spiritual men had to be separated from the boys. It seems that after a few generations would come and go the attitude of His children changed. They inherited their religion rather than being converted to it. Second and third generation Christians who have not had to fight the battles against error can become weak and insipid.

Sadly, the solution to bring us back to life is often persecution or church problems — then you must either take a stand or fizzle out. It is easy for us to just coast along without ever fighting any battles against Satan. Sometimes we are called on to make a stand.

After coming down from Mt. Sinai following the reception of the Ten Commandments, Moses saw Israel frolicking and worshipping a golden calf which his brother Aaron had made for them. Moses was so enraged that he threw down the tables of stone. He burned the calf and forced the people to drink the water sprinkled with the beaten gold dust.

As he witnessed their behavior, Moses called for the Lord's faithful to stand up and be counted — "Who is on the Lord's side?" (Exodus 32:26). The Levites stood up with Moses and slew 3000 that day.

Jesus had thousands following Him after feeding the multitudes with five loaves and two fish. They were "for" Him, even wanting to make Him their king (John 6:14-15). But after Jesus preached to them, and said some very difficult things, He determined "who was on the Lord's side". Only twelve men remained and one of those men was not really with Him (Judas Iscariot).

We are either on God's side or Satan's (Matthew 6:24; 12:20). There is no fence-straddling. The man who is never very strong "for" anything is never very strong "against" anything. To the same degree that one loves good he will hate evil.

We are either in God's kingdom or Satan's (Colossians 1:12-13). Being a child of God necessitates our soberness, watchfulness, preparation, and readiness, lest we slip into the same unprepared state as those in the darkness (1 Thessalonians 5:5-9). We must stand on God's side completely (not just with one foot in and the other in the world) (1 John 2:15). We must stand "with" God or we are not on His side!!

I. ARE WE "FOR" THE LORD OR "WITH" HIM?

A. There Is A World Of Difference In Being "For" The Lord And His People And Being "With" Them.

1. Example. We can sit in the grandstands and cheer our favorite ball team on or sit at home and watch them on TV. Every time I watch the "Kentucky Wildcats" I am "for" them, wanting them to win... But I am not "with" them!! I would have to play for Coach Pitino or be on the coaching staff to be "with" them.

B. We Too Can Sit In The Grandstands And Be "For" God. We might be behind

and support every bit of work that the church does... but until we are busy working we are not "with" the faithful!!

"Who is on the Lord's side?" The one who will stand in the trenches and fight it out with his Commander and fellow-soldiers. We must stand with God.

II. BEING ON THE LORD'S SIDE

- A. **Standing With Him (1 Corinthians 16:13; Philippians 4:1).** As Moses called for those on God's side, the Levites stood to be counted. They were not ashamed to let their brethren know where their loyalties lay. Paul stood by the Christ through imprisonment and suffering, unashamedly and encouraged Timothy and us to do likewise (2 Timothy 1:8-14). The advantage in the war with Satan is found on the Lord's side.
- B. **Defending Him In His Absence.** Even though the world is against us we need not fear their intimidation for "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31) Therefore, we must boldly stand up and defend our faith in Him (1 Peter 3:14-15). Jesus wants disciples who willingly confess His name before others (Matthew 10:32-33). We stand with Him, defending Him to the world.
- C. **Following Exclusively (Luke 9:23; Matthew 11:28-30).** In standing "with" the general, we take orders and obey. Obedience is necessary to stand with Christ. When He leads we follow.
 - 1. Example. Air force flying formations. All other pilots have complete trust in their leader. Thus, they follow him exclusively — turning when he turns, diving, climbing, rolling when the leader does, conforming to his every move. Four pilots slammed into a desert bed following their leader (1982).
- D. **Not Walking Ahead Of (2 John 9; Matthew 7:21-23).** We must be satisfied to let the word of God lead us. How ridiculous it is to shine the light behind us when walking in the dark. The lamp must go before us (Psalm 119:105). When we substitute our methods for carrying our God's appointed work we are walking ahead of Him. We must work with Him, not ahead of Him.
- E. **Cannot Lose (Romans 8:31; Psalm 118:6).** When we stand "with" Christ we are standing on the victor's side (Romans 8:37; 1 Corinthians 15:57). I want to be on the side of a winner... what about you?

CONCLUSION: Who among us are on the Lord's side? We must stand up with Him in the heat of the battle. We must follow Him exclusively without question or reservation... and never try to walk ahead of Him. The victory is His... Let us walk with Him. Let us stick to His precepts and commands and learn not to go beyond what is written.

"Who is on the Lord's side?" "Master, here am I!"

FIVE VIEWS OF MARK 16:16

INTRO: Do you ever get mixed up from all the different teachings, doctrines, and beliefs espoused by all the different religious groups? If all you do is listen to each group teach and preach, you cannot help but be confused... If you ask someone for directions to a particular place, and everyone you ask gives you different answers, then you will never find that destination.

Almost every preacher you will hear today on this radio will teach and believe something different... Maybe you think it is wonderful that we all have our different "faiths" and "beliefs"... But God doesn't (1 Corinthians 14:33; 1:10).

Let me offer you a little advice... Don't listen to any of us!! Don't listen to them, don't even listen to me!! Listen only to what the Bible says and then put each of us to the test by the Bible (1 John 4:1). Maybe we could quit listening to what theologians and clergymen tell us in explaining a passage of Scripture and ask a young child. The gospel is supposed to be that simple and a child has nothing to try to prove... whereas all these other religious teachers do.

Everyone has his own different view of what the Bible teaches. That is why you cannot listen to the views of any man. The Bible must settle all disputes. Take for instance a simple passage of Scripture (Mark 16:15-16). People have at least five different views in connection with that passage.

I. THE ATHEIST

A. "He that believeth and is baptized shall not be saved". To him it does not matter if you believe or are baptized... if you practice religion or not, because once you are dead that is it!! There is nothing more!! So he would tell us this entire dispute is meaningless anyway.

He doesn't believe in salvation because he doesn't believe in God. He is a fool because he does not accept the evidence (Psalm 14:1; Romans 1:18-22). He is foolish because of the severity of the consequences if he is wrong as opposed to the benefit of not believing if he is right.

So is he right??

II. THE UNIVERSALIST

A. "He that believeth not and is baptized not shall be saved". He doesn't believe anyone will be lost... or if anyone is, it will be child molesters, torturers, or psychopathic, cold-blooded murderers. After all, God is a merciful God isn't He? How could He send good people or even disadvantaged bad people to hell fire?

Most of us are pretty good people and would have a hard time if we were judging to tell anyone that they would be lost... I know I would!!

But the truth is that it is with much difficulty that God can save any of us. It would be easiest for Him to let us all be lost (1 Peter 4:17-18). Jesus did not come to save those who were good. If goodness could save us He would not have bothered (Romans 5:6-10) Jesus came to save those who were lost in sin (Matthew 9:11-13; Romans 3:23).

So is he right?

III. THE CATHOLIC AND PROTESTANT

- A. "He that believeth not and is baptized shall be saved". The Roman Catholic church began the practice of baptizing infants and many Protestant Denominations adopted it. Infants do not have the ability to believe, repent or understand what is being done to them.

The practice of baptizing babies originated because of the false doctrine that when we are born, we are born totally depraved, guilty of the sin of Adam. Thus, we are told that babies are born in sin and must have that guilt absolved. Is that what the Bible teaches? (see Matthew 18:3-4; 19:14; Ezekiel 18:20; 28:15).

The only people ever baptized in the New Testament were those who had the capacity to believe... Infants do not!!

So is he right??

IV. THE BAPTIST

- A. "He that believeth and is ^{not} baptized shall be saved". The Baptist view of this matter is that baptism is not essential for salvation but that in the final analysis it is only faith which saved... then two dozen passages are quoted which tell us a man is saved by faith.

It is suggested to us that ideally that faith will cause you to do something and we are told that if one is a true believer he will be baptized because Jesus was... but that it has nothing to do with salvation.

Will "faith alone" really save us? Not according to Scripture (James 2:24). Faith is not all. The Bible never says we are saved at the point of faith!! Look at those who were not (John 12:42; James 2:19-20). We must obey God's word (Luke 6:46-49). We build on faith and obedience, not just faith.

So is he right??

V. THE BIBLE

- A. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved". It is not a difficult command to understand. Like the first command God ever gave with a consequence (Genesis 2:16-17). It was easy to understand... that made it a good test of their loyalty and devotion to God. If they truly loved God they would obey it and if not then they would disobey.

So it is with this command of Jesus'. My friend, if you do not submit to this command, you are not rejecting my will on the matter... This is what Jesus said!! I don't want you to be baptized because I want you to but because Jesus wants you to!! What else could I tell you without lying to you?

So is this right??

CONCLUSION: What is your view of this passage? Do you accept it as God's authoritative word? Have you ever believed and been baptized to receive salvation? If not we would like to aid you. Get dressed and come to the meeting house this morning and we can help you render obedience.

DON'T BELIEVE A LIE!!

INTRO: Did you ever believe someone who lied to you? It hurt didn't it... Not only that, but by believing that lie, you may have done something wrong or suffered some consequence because of it. Lies are destructive to those who tell them (Revelation 21:8)... but can also be destructive to those who believe them, especially lies about God's word (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12).

It is dangerous to listen to those who tell us lies about the Bible and teach false doctrines, because not just the false teachers, but also those who are taken in by their lies will be lost (2 Peter 2:1-3). You and I must love the truth because truth is of God and God hates every false way (Proverbs 6:16-19; Psalm 119:104). So should we!!

I. TRUE OR FALSE

A. Origin Of Truth And Falsehood. The truth comes from God and will help to save ~~the~~^{our} souls (John 8:32), whereas lying originated with the devil and all liars are under his influence (John 8:44).

It's like the devil tells us his lies in one ear and God tells us the truth in the other. Each thing we hear we must examine and determine whether it is truth or error. We cannot just ignore a matter when someone teaches it from the pulpit, over the radio, or across the backyard fence... It is either true or false, one or the other, it is not 'maybe'!!

Since it is so vital to our spiritual health and well-being we must heed:

1. What we hear (Mark 4:24).
2. How we hear (Luke 8:18).
3. Whom we hear (Matthew 7:15).

II. BELIEVING A LIE IS DANGEROUS

A. We Are Accountable For What We Believe. A person's heart can be so full of lies and false doctrine which he has been taught all his life that it is not receptive to the truth. Jesus says of such people that they are blind and ignorant by choice (Matthew 13:14-15).

Then again we must beware because a person can believe much of the truth, but then believe one lie in the midst of all that truth and be lost because of the lie... That does not leave us in a hopeless situation, but does emphasize to us the importance of knowing the truth (Matthew 5:6,8).

III. EXAMPLES OF THOSE WHO BELIEVED A LIE

A. Examples. The danger of accepting a lie is obvious when you look at some of those in the Bible who were punished because they believed a lie rather than the truth of God. They may have been sincerely deceived... but were still responsible for obeying the truth!!

1. **Adam And Eve (Genesis 3:1-6).** This couple believed just one lie that the devil told. In doing so they sinned against God and brought God's wrath against them and introduced sin to an innocent world. God allows us to believe a lie if we choose, even though it has destructive consequences.
2. **Young Prophet (1 Kings 13).** God told this prophet to go to Bethel and prophesy against King Jeroboam and his idol worship. He also told him not to eat or drink while he was there and return a different way. This young prophet did that until an old prophet sent word to him that God had told him something different. The young prophet believed the lie, went home with the old prophet, and on his return to Jerusalem, he was slain in the road by a lion.
He believed a lie and paid the price.

IV. SOME OF SATAN'S LIES

- A. **Satan Still Spreads Lies.** He does that so that we will be destroyed... and God allows him to so that we can be tested and God can determine whether or not we love the truth (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12).

Satan says things through false teachers that are lies... they have to be lies if they are not the truth! He has been doing the same things since the beginning of the Garden of Eden. God says one thing and Satan says another. Look at some of the statements and beliefs we hear people teaching today, then compare them with what God says.

These are some of Satan's lies:

1. "It makes no difference what you believe as long as you are honest and sincere". Then note what God said (Matthew 7:21; Hebrews 5:9). Who should we believe?
2. "One church is as good as another". Then note what God said (Acts 20:28; Matthew 16:18; 15:13). Who should we believe?
3. "One can be saved without being baptized". Then note what God said (Mark 16:16; 1 Peter 3:21). Who should we believe?
4. "You cannot fall from God's grace. Once you are saved, you are always saved". Then note what God said (Galatians 5:4; 1 Corinthians 10:12). Who should we believe?

CONCLUSION: So what is the whole point of all this? There are many false teachings in the world today... more false than true. Therefore you must put every one of them to the test (1 John 4:1).

My friend, if you do not love the truth with all your heart, and are just willing to accept what sounds good from the pulpit or radio, then God will not only let you believe a lie, but will send you one because you do not love the truth so you could be saved (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12).

WHY ALL THE FUSS ABOUT BAPTISM?

INTRO: There is no subject more hotly contested in religious circles than baptism. But why is there so much dissension? Is the Bible inconsistent in its teaching? Is it vague or ambiguous? Could the problem be not so much with our interpretation as with our misinterpretation? Only the Bible offers the key to the truth. Let's see what it has to say!

I. WHAT IS BIBLE BAPTISM?**A. What Is Bible Baptism?**

1. Baptism is a burial in water (Romans 6:4; cf. Colossians 2:12).
2. It is a form of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (Romans 6:3-9).

a. Jesus was crucified on a cross and then died. He was buried in a tomb and on the third day arose from the grave to new life — freed from corruption and death.

When a man is baptized into Christ (6:3) his old man of sin is crucified (6:6), he is buried in water (6:4) and then raised out of that water in the likeness of Jesus' resurrection, to walk in newness of life (6:4).

At this point, Christ was freed from death (6:9), and we are freed from sin at the point of baptism (6:7).

3. Sprinkling and pouring are counterfeits, adopted for man's convenience but missing the entire significance of baptism's form. Were you buried in water, or was water merely sprinkled or poured over you?

Remember there is only "one baptism" (Ephesians 4:5).

II. WHO IS TO BE BAPTIZED?**A. Who Is To Be Baptized?**

1. The baptism of infants stems from false assumptions concerning the nature of man and inherited guilt of Adam's sin. In the New Testament, those who were taught the word of God and gladly received it were fitting subjects of baptism (Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:41).
2. Belief and repentance are necessary prerequisites to baptism — responses of which infants are incapable of experiencing (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38).
3. Friend, have you been immersed as a penitent believer, or were you baptized as an untaught, unbelieving infant? Remember, there is only "one baptism" (Ephesians 4:5).

III. WHY BE BAPTIZED?

A. **Why Be Baptized?** The reasons for encouraging people to be baptized far outweigh our excuses for refusing it.

1. Baptism is commanded. Convinced by the Holy Spirit that salvation was now also for the Gentiles, Peter "commanded them to be baptized..." (Acts 10:48).
2. Baptism saves a man. No power exists in the water itself, rather the saving power comes through the resurrection of Christ. As Noah and his family "were saved through water. There is also an antitype which now saves us, namely baptism..." (1 Peter 3:20-21). Why should we doubt God's word?
3. Baptism gives remission of sins (Acts 2:38).
4. Baptism washes away sins. Ananias, speaking to an unsaved Saul of Tarsus after being blinded on the road to Damascus, told him "Arise and be baptized..." (Acts 22:16).

Were you baptized as a penitent believer in order to be saved or were you taught that you were already saved when you were baptized? Remember, there is only "one baptism" (Ephesians 4:5).

CONCLUSION: Does it really matter? Many think not! God's will concerning baptism is all that matters. What does he want? What have you done? Why make such a big deal about baptism? You must be kidding!!

Jesus Himself said "Except a man be born again, he cannot enter the kingdom of God... except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:3-5).

I AM A MURDERER!!

INTRO: I have something that I need to admit to you... I am a murderer! That's right... I am a cold-blooded killer, a fugitive from justice. Oh, I haven't spent any time in jail for my crime, nor will I likely. I won't be facing a jury of my peers to judge and pass sentence on me. I may not be a hardened thug, but I am just as guilty as one!

I don't expect that I will sit on death row, but if I don't receive the mercy of the judge I will get life in the prison of eternal pain and misery -- hell!!

See... I killed Jesus Christ! But then... so did you!! (1 Corinthians 15:3-4) Those were my sins for which He died. I know that Jesus died for the sins of the whole world (1 Timothy 2:5-6) and that "He bore the sins of many" (Isaiah 53:12), but that doesn't make me any less responsible! I cannot rightfully cast any disgusted looks at you because of your sins because mine are staring me right in the face (Matthew 7:1-5)!

I. I AM A MURDERER

A. None Of This Would Have Been Necessary... had I not been so foolish and self-indulgent, giving in to my temptations and lusts (James 1:13-15). If Paul was the "chiefest of sinners" then I must be "king".

B. Do I Feel Guilty About It? Not nearly enough. Sometimes I act like it never even happened. Other times I try to shift the blame to you or someone else (after all, I never would have done it except for..., therefore you were a co-conspirator). Shifting the blame seems to be a way that many people deal with their guilt (Genesis 3:11-13; Exodus 32:21-24; 1 Samuel 15:18-21).

But the blame is mine! It was my sins He died for. God requires that sins be punished (Romans 6:23). If I died for my own sins, that would accomplish nothing more than justice. I need mercy!

Jesus lived a perfect life so that when He died, it would not be for His own sins, but so He could serve as a substitute and receive the just punishment due to me (Romans 3:23-26)!

C. No One Else Would Have Ever Done Such A Thing For Me. I didn't deserve it and I am certainly not worth it. The truth is... knowing what I know about me... I would never give up my life for myself (Romans 5:7-8).

D. I Have To Confess. I killed Jesus! I am just as guilty as those who nailed Him to cross. I am just as cruel and unconcerned as those soldiers who gambled for His garments. I am just as heartless as those soldiers who blindfolded, mocked and taunted Him. I am just as cowardly as those who denied Him when He needed someone to stand up for Him!!

In order to be forgiven of my crime, I have to be forgiven of the sin by the victim of my sin. And Jesus offers me complete forgiveness (Ephesians 1:7). Thanks be to Jesus for His love!!

But I didn't pull off this crime alone. I had an accomplice and my friend, you need to confess your sin and guilt too!

CONCLUSION: We are all filthy murderers (1 John 1:8,10). But thanks be to Jesus for His merciful forgiveness!! He tells us what we must do to receive the forgiveness He offers. There are conditions He expects us to meet. Jesus said:

1. "Except you believe..." (John 8:24).
2. "Unless you repent..." (Luke 13:3).
3. "Whoever confesses..." (Matthew 10:32).
4. "He who believes and is baptized..." (Mark 16:16).
5. "If anyone would follow me..." (Matthew 16:24).
6. "Be faithful unto death..." (Revelation 2:10).

My friend, Jesus will gladly forgive all those who murdered Him if we will comply with His commands and be faithful. Because if we fail to be faithful and fall back into our ways of sin, we crucify Him all over again and trample Him under foot (Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:26-29).
Won't you be forgiven?

THE DESTINY OF MAN (Part 1)

INTRO: "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment..." (Hebrews 9:27).

There is one thing which transcends all the unique features and differences among men. Death is the common denominator of all men and women. Death strikes down the young and allows others to see "threescore years and ten (70); and if by reason of strength... fourscore (80) years... so teach us Lord to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom" (Psalm 90:10,12).

I. THE DESTINY OF MAN

- A. No One Escapes The Power Of Death.** Whether we face the facts or not, all of us eventually die. We try to avoid that fact by doing all we can to stay young. But in the end, we will die.

Yet, hope shines through that gloomy, dark cloud of death. Life continues to exist, even though we have no more part in this world (Ecclesiastes 9:5-6,10). The body crumbles and decays, but the spirit which at one time is housed in this earthly body lives on (Ecclesiastes 12:7; 2 Corinthians 4:16).

- B. The Soul Of Man Never Dies!** Jesus rebuked the Sadducees for disbelieving in the resurrection and life after death.

Undoubtedly, like many modern day religious people, they perverted Old Testament passages, trying to establish and confirm their theories that at death a person is annihilated and completely ceases to exist, along with other such teachings. Jesus sternly rebuked them (Matthew 22:29-32). The soul of man is eternal, created in the image of God. And God created it to last forever!!

- C. Hades — The Abode Of The Dead.** God has prepared an intermediate place for the souls of all men who have died... a place where men await their sentence of judgment, either for a faithful or unfaithful life.

1. Jesus Tells Of "Hades" ("the place (state) of departed souls", Vine's Expository Dictionary Of New Testament Words) in His account of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31).

- a. Many people believe this account is simply a parable. Yet, this story does not have the markings of a parable.

- 1) Jesus does not speak of men in a faraway land, as is characteristic of many parables (cf. Luke 7:41-48; Matthew 18:23-35; Luke 12:16-21; etc.) He tells of specific men (Abraham, Lazarus, and a certain rich Jewish man with five brothers).

- 2) Parables use common, earthly occurrences to teach spiritual lessons. So if Jesus is not giving us a glimpse of life after death... what lesson is He teaching?

2. Other Passages Clearly Speak Of This Abode Or Receptacle Of The Dead.
 - a. Jesus made a promise to the thief on the cross (Luke 23:43).
 - b. Jesus Himself entered that same region when He died (Acts 2:25-31).
 - c. Hades is a temporary place prepared for those who leave this life, and await the judgement on the final day. When that judgment comes, death and Hades will be destroyed... it will have no more use (Revelation 20:11-14).

CONCLUSION: What difference does all this make... you might be asking? It tells us that there are eternal consequences for our actions in this life. It tells us that life goes on and we receive punishment for our sins or a reward for our faithfulness.

If the wicked were totally annihilated at death, then their punishment would be severe, but then it would be over. But God created us to live forever. And next week we will conclude some of our thoughts on man's destiny. We hope you tune in again next week at the same time.

THE DESTINY OF MAN (Part 2)

INTRO: "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment..." (Hebrews 9:27).

There is one thing which transcends all the unique features and differences among men. Death is the common denominator of all men and women. Death strikes down the young and allows others to see "threescore years and ten (70); and if by reason of strength... fourscore (80) years... so teach us Lord to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom" (Psalm 90:10,12).

Last week we talked about the reality of death and our lives which continue to exist even beyond the grave. This week we will conclude by studying about what awaits us at the end of God's purpose for this world and life in this world.

I. THE DESTINY OF MAN

A. Resurrection Of The Dead (Acts 26:8). If God can create our life from nothing, why is it incredible to believe that He can return life to the empty bodies of the dead at the Great Resurrection of all men (John 5:28-29)?

1. God will reunite the souls of departed men and women with an incorruptible body fit for inhabiting eternity (1 Corinthians 15:42-49).
2. The reason is that flesh and blood cannot inhabit a spiritual realm, because of the limitations of the flesh (1 Corinthians 15:50-53).
3. Therefore, there will be a change, a transformation, of those living when the Lord returns, to inhabit a new and immortal body. What will this body be like? Will we recognize one another (1 John 3:2)? We simply do not know!!

But whatever this body is, rest assured that it will be glorious (Philippians 3:20-21)!

B. The Judgment Day (Revelation 20:11-15). Following the resurrection comes the final, great judgment. All nations and all people will stand before God, naked to His eyes. Nothing will be hidden (Matthew 10:26).

1. The righteous shall be separated from the wicked, the ungodly, and those who do not obey the gospel (2 Thessalonians 1:7-10).
2. All will receive their sentence according to the things they have done in the body (2 Corinthians 5:10). The unrighteous will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life (Matthew 25:46). That judgment will be fair and completely impartial.
3. Lest anyone might doubt the truth of the impending judgment coming

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on all of mankind, the apostle Paul reassures us of its truthfulness and the evidence God has given us as proof (Acts 17:31). The fact of Jesus' resurrection verifies the certainty of our resurrection and of the judgment which follows!!

CONCLUSION: Although death ominously stalks each of us... children of God have hope! Jesus came into this world, taking on human flesh, that through His death He might render Satan powerless and deliver man from the fear of death (Hebrews 2:14-15).

What about you, dear listener? Do you have that hope (Revelation 14:13)? Believe in Jesus Christ (John 3:16), repent of your sins and be baptized to be forgiven (Acts 2:38), so you can face God confidently in judgment!!

FLATTERING TITLES AND SPECIAL CLOTHING

INTRO: When many people learn that I am a preacher, they feel compelled to address me in a way that they think is showing courtesy and respect for me. I appreciate that desire... I honestly do... but using such religious titles as "Reverend, Pastor, Doctor, Brother, etc." to describe another man so as to flatter him or give him special honor is contrary to God's will.

For me to accept such a title, or to take one for myself, shows spiritual arrogance and is making a distinction between me and others that God never intended to be made. And for me to wear clothing that would set me off as distinct from other Christian brothers emphasizes a distinction that God never accented for New Testament gospel preachers. Flowing robes, clerical collars and other distinctive items of clothing are all out of place!

There are many reasons why I reject the wearing of religious titles.

I. FLATTERING TITLES

- A. There Is No Authority For The Practice In The New Testament.** There were many preachers and ministers of the gospel in the first century and not one of them accepted or wore a religious title.
You never read of "Reverend Paul", "Archbishop Andrew", or "Your Holiness Peter". You never read of "Pastor Timothy" or "The Right Reverend, Dr. Luke". If it was not approved in the church when it was established, it is not approved now (2 John 9-11; 1 Peter 4:11).
- B. Wearing Religious Titles Is Specifically Condemned (Matthew 23:8-10).** The purpose of these titles is to elevate one brother over another... a practice which Jesus specifically condemned. Yet, when was the last time you heard a Catholic "Father" read that passage and then reject his title?
The practice of giving or accepting religious titles like "Father" or "Reverend" or any other is completely against the will of Jesus. No man should be flattered as superior to another (Job 32:21-22).
- C. Wearing Religious Titles Exalts Man Too Highly (Romans 12:3-8).** Man should not be an object of worship or veneration for any reason. Peter refused to allow Cornelius to bow down before him (Acts 10:26). Even an angel of God refused worship (Revelation 22:9).
When a man exalts himself through flattering titles such as "Reverend", "Right reverend", "Worshipful Master", etc., he encourages others to offer praise to someone who does not deserve it in the place of someone who does deserve it!!
- D. Wearing Religious Titles Exalts One Brother Over Another (Matthew 23:6-12).** We are all equal in God's sight (Galatians 3:27-28; James 2:1-4). Elevating one man over another as more spiritually important just shows that such people have not yet left the carnality of the old man of sin.
- E. Wearing Religious Titles Contributes To A Clergy-Laity Distinction.** What I mean by that is a distinction between who can serve God in certain ways and who cannot. The early church never had a clergy that

was separate from the members.

In God's church, every member is a priest (1 Peter 2:5,9-10). Every Christian is capable of offering acceptable worship to God for himself... no one else can offer it for him. Jesus is the only High Priest we need through whom we can approach God (Hebrews 2:17-3:1).

1. It is a denominational concept, not a Bible one, that requires men to have a diploma from a church approved college, be commissioned, licensed, or ordained and go through many other steps to become part of the clergy.

The clergy is composed of those ordained for performing Christian worship and teaching. Such an individual interprets the Bible for the people (cf. Acts 17:11). He administers what they call the sacraments (usually defined as the Lord's Supper, baptism, marriage, etc.).

But the Bible speaks of no such class of men... or class distinction as far as that is concerned!!

II. SPECIAL CLOTHING

- A. **Special Clothing.** To go along with these special titles, men who wear and accept them will often wear a certain type of clothing that will set them apart as clergy or "men of the cloth". They might wear special clerical robes or special collars to distinguish themselves as the "parson" or the "reverend".

But Jesus condemned those who used their clothing as a means of setting themselves apart religiously from others (Matthew 23:5; Luke 20:45-46).

1. **Broadened Their Phylacteries.** These were strips of parchment on which they wrote four passages of the Law of Moses (Exodus 13:3-10,11-16; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 11:13-21). They were enclosed in a leather case and were fastened to the forehead and left arm. The authority for wearing them was purely traditional... but was designed to impress the people with their spirituality.
2. **Enlarged The Borders Of Their Garments.** These were the fringes of their garments mentioned in the Old Testament (Numbers 15:38-39). These religious leaders wore broader fringes than everyone else that they might appear more religious.
3. **Walk In Long Robes.** The robe was a professional garment. It showed that the one who wore it was professionally religious.

I don't understand how any man or woman today could dress in such a way to set himself apart and still be pleasing to God. Can you?

CONCLUSION: If any of us are exalted, let it be God who exalts us... and if any of us are wearing religious titles let us renounce them at once!!

** See tract - "Should I call My Preacher 'Reverend'?" (Mike Willis)*

THE THREE R'S OF YOUTH

INTRO: Do you remember the old adage about the three R's of youth — Readin', Ritin', and 'Rithmetic? Well God has His three R's for youth too (Ecclesiastes 11:9-12:1).

Youth is a critically important time in a person's life. It is enjoyable but difficult. God's instructions can help us through it if we will simply trust and follow Him.

I. THE THREE R'S OF YOUTH

A. Rejoice In Your Youth (11:9). God does not want to deprive any young person of fun and enjoyment. Actually, He tells you to receive and enjoy all the blessings life and youth can give you (Philippians 4:4).

Pursue your dreams now, because this is the time God has provided you for making choices. You can do many things now which health and age will not permit you to do later (Proverbs 20:29). Pursue your dreams now! Don't settle for a dull, mundane, and bitter life.

But remember that whatever choices you make must be made in light of God's will!! You need to be a Christian first, and that distinction must encompass your entire existence and color all of life's choices. Be sober-minded, because you are accountable to God for all the choices you make (Titus 2:6; 2 Corinthians 5:10).

Despondent young people are ending their lives in every community because they see nothing but pain, problems, and hopelessness. But you should rejoice in your youth and make the most of it because that is what God wants for you!!

B. Remove Sorrow From Your Heart (11:10). There are some activities which appeal to young people... but they only bring sorrow and misery in the end. They cannot bring rejoicing! Some are followed by severe consequences, and although every sin can be forgiven, you may have to bear its consequences for rest of your life (Galatians 6:7-8).

Smoking may be the cool thing to do when you are young, but you may become addicted and suffer until you die from smoking... Drinking is the only cause of alcoholism, you don't have to be an Einstein to figure that one out. But drunkenness is destructive to your soul (Galatians 5:19-21).

Drugs provide only a temporary good feeling, it cannot last. I have never known one single happy person, who derived his happiness from drugs. Have you? It is always the sad, resentful, disgusted, and tortured who thrive on drugs... Being sexually promiscuous brings sorrow to many tender hearts. Because once you have done it you can never get back what you lost. Unwanted pregnancies, abortions, venereal disease and AIDS are all sorrowful consequences which last a lifetime, not to mention the eternal consequences (Hebrews 13:4).

Childhood and youth are vanity, in that one day they will be gone and we will have to leave with the consequences of what we did with our youth if we went down the wrong paths and wasted it!

- C. **Remember Now Your Creator (12:1).** "Now" is all that you have for sure, and that is a shaky promise (2 Corinthians 6:2). Maybe you think that you will dedicate yourself to God tomorrow! But "tomorrow" is an empty promise, because one day, tomorrow will not come! But even if it does, your heart and disposition may change.

Many notable teens chose to remember while they were young and never regretted that decision. Moses, Joseph, David, Josiah, and Daniel were all God's teenage heroes. Pick up your Bible sometime and read their stories. Each may have encountered difficulties and opposition, but none regretted the choice he made. Their friends may not have understood why they had to do what they did (1 Peter 4:1-4). But that did not keep these brave youths from doing what was right.

CONCLUSION: Youth is a tough time and these are difficult times to be growing up in too! My heart goes out for you because I have recently been where you are now. But with God's help, it can be one of the most rewarding times of your life!

Rejoice in your youth... Remove sorrow from your heart... Remember now your Creator.