

LOOKING ON THE HEART, NOT OUTWARD APPEARANCE

By Danny Tunnell

“The Lord does not see as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7). “All things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account” (Hebrews 4:13). “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8).

Have you ever met anyone named Judas? If you know someone named Judas it is still a very rare name.

But once there was a mother who held a little baby boy in her arms and kissed her baby and called her little baby, Judas. She probably loved him with all her heart. But now the name Judas is a name of infamy, disgrace, and treachery.

If Judas was around today, many would say, “Judas had the right stuff!” Many religious people would say, “What a great guy Judas is!”

Why? In the first place, Judas had the right associations; he rubbed shoulders with the eleven (Matthew 10:2-4). That’s pretty good company! He also had a relationship with Jesus. Jesus called him a friend (Matthew

26:50). Judas spent three and a half years receiving the finest training in the world, learning from the Lord Jesus Christ, and hearing Jesus talk.

Also Judas had the right reputation. They trusted Judas so much that they made him treasurer. He had the money bag (John 13:29). Who do you make treasurer? The person who appears to have the most integrity, the person that you respect and trust the most.

Judas also had the right participation. He was a worker. He went out with the others to teach, preach, and do good.

Looking at Judas from the outside, he appeared to be a wonderful person. On the outside, he looked like everyone else who was diligently following Jesus. Jesus talked about some who said they had done many wonderful works, yet Jesus said to them, “I never knew you” (Matthew 7:21-23).

No one suspected Judas. Judas deceived many. but Jesus was not deceived. Jesus knew all along that Judas would betray Him (John 6:64). Nearly everyone else must have thought, “Judas is okay, after all he’s

part of the select twelve, a charter member, and he’s treasurer.”

What a warning Judas’ life should be to us! That’s the reason the Bible says, “Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith” (2 Corinthians 13:5).

Sin deceived Judas and it destroyed him. It’s not pretty what happened to Judas in the end. He hung himself (Matthew 27:3-5). R.G. Lee said, “You can eat the devil’s corn if you want to, but he’ll choke you on the cob.” The Bible says, “Bread gained by deceit is sweet to a man, but afterward his mouth will be filled with gravel” (Proverbs 20:17).

Judas ended his own life but it’s not the end of Judas. He still has to appear before God in judgment (Hebrews 9:27).

Not only is Judas’ life a warning to us, it can also be an encouragement. How can that be? Think about the other eleven who did not stop serving the Lord Jesus Christ. Don’t let some “Judas,” some hypocrite, stop you from serving the Lord.

— Miami, OK

PLAYING SECOND FIDDLE IS OK

By Richard Dent

“Do not exalt yourself in the presence of the king, and do not stand in the place of the great” (Proverbs 25:6).

A conductor for an orchestra was once asked what the hardest position was to fill. His answer was “second fiddle.” It is not a position where one is exalted by self or by others. It serves to assist the first chair fiddler.

Do you know any second fiddle people?

The Bible tells us about a fellow who was content to pay the role of second fiddle. His name was Andrew. He was a follower of John the Baptist, but when John said, “Look, behold the Lamb of God,” off went Andrew in search of Him. There are three stories where we see Andrew playing second fiddle. Here they are:

1. John 1:35-42 shows us that

Andrew was so excited about finding Jesus that he ran to tell someone. That person was his brother, Peter.

2. In the second story, Jesus was preaching to about 5,000 men. Jesus wanted to feed them when they got hungry. Philip complained that there was no food available to feed such a crowd. Someone found a boy with five loaves of bread and two fishes. Guess who that person was? It was Andrew (John 6:5-13).

3. In the third story, some Greeks (Gentiles) came to see Jesus. We don’t know why they came to see Him nor did his disciples know either. When they asked to see Jesus, Philip didn’t know what to do. He went to Andrew and said, “These Gentiles want to see Jesus.” Andrew did not have to wonder what to do. He and Philip brought the matter to Jesus (John 12:20-22).

In all three of these stories Andrew

did something important - he took people to meet Jesus. First, he took his brother; next, he took a young boy; and lastly, he took some strangers.

You know what is interesting about all of this? Andrew never became one of the prominent apostles. He didn’t seem to care about that! Second fiddle is OK.

— Liberal, KS

“But Jesus called them to Himself and said, ‘You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave - just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many’” (Matthew 20:25-28).

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“ask for the old paths” (Jer. 6:16)

BUILT TO LAST

By Danny Boggs

“Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.’ And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes” (Matthew 7:24-29).

The Bible gives little indication of the mechanics of Jesus’ preaching and teaching. Did He have an impressive voice? Was He physically animated? We don’t know. What drew people to Him and amazed them was the substance of His preaching and teaching. He taught with authority. Consider His parable.

Two men built houses. The same rain fell on both. The same winds blew and beat upon the two houses. The same floodwaters surged. The similarities end there. One man wisely had chosen to build on rock, and his house stood solid. The other foolishly settled on sand, and his home fell with a thundering crash.

Life can hand us one kind of crisis after another. Have you been through storms? Have storms been through you? Jesus’ signature sermon offers help for the blizzard of broken relationships, the tempest of unholy thoughts, the squall of unholy motives, the commotion caused by misplaced priorities, and more. Whether the storms are our own fault, due to the choices of others, or something less explicable, Jesus’ teaching provides a foundation that enables us to weather any storm.

Jesus’ wonderful promise is for people who both hear and do. His grim warning has broad application, but most specifically it challenges someone just like you. The parable is about good and bad habits. To keep on hearing and keep on doing is the good, life sustaining habit. The bad, deadly habit is to keep on hearing while failing to do. If you are reading your Bible every day, participating in Bible classes and sitting through sermons, there’s a whole lot of hearing going on. How much doing?

What assurance to know that we can build to last if we listen and obey! “When the tempest passes, the wicked is no more, but the righteous is established forever” (Proverbs 10:25, ESV). Forever.

— Neosho, MO

AMERICA’S GREATEST NEED

By Dalton Key

(The following article ran as an Old Paths editorial under the title, “America Needs God,” in June of 1994. I leave it to you to answer: have things gotten better or worse in the thirty years since?)

You are no doubt all too aware of America’s continuing moral decline. The evidence is both overwhelming and indisputable. You may be unaware, though, just how far and how swiftly we have slipped. William Bennett has recently released, through the auspices of the Heritage Foundation, “The Index of Leading Cultural Indicators,” a statistical portrait of the nation’s behavioral trends since 1960. His findings are alarming.

According to Bennett’s study, the population has increased 41% while violent crime has jumped 560%. Divorces have quadrupled. The teenage suicide rate has risen 200%. Illegitimate births have increased 400%. Today 30% of all births and 68% of black births are illegitimate.

What has gone wrong?

Consider these questions carefully. During the past thirty-four years, have we as a nation drawn closer to God or have we slipped further away from God? Have we placed a greater emphasis on the Bible or have we neglected the Bible? Have religion and spiritual matters generally been advanced or have they been pushed aside in favor of secular concerns? Are our families attending worship services, praying, and reading the Bible more often or less often than families did a generation ago?

The answers are painfully obvious.

We are reaping what we have sown. The Bible has been right all along: “Righteousness exalts a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people” (Proverbs 14:34).

The solution to America’s most pressing problems may be found within each of us, in a renewed and determined commitment to put God and His will first in our lives. As His people, we don’t need more government. We surely don’t need more selfish greed or self-promotional grandstanding. What we need is what we’ve always needed.

We need God.

“He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:8).

Being A Sheep

By Joe Slater

Cyber-bullies berate people who disagree with them, calling them sheep. On social media being a sheep means you are naïve, gullible, and generally lacking in smarts. You just follow wherever the herd goes, even if it's over a cliff!

God is no bully, cyber or otherwise; yet He refers to us as sheep. Sometimes that's because we act foolishly. *"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way"* (Isaiah 53:6). Let's face it – sometimes our behavior betrays the fact that we aren't the sharpest knives in the drawer!

All too often we go along with the herd instead of thinking things through and acting individually. That's what most Israelites did when ten of the twelve spies discouraged them from invading Canaan (Numbers 14:1- 10). Following the crowd cost those rebels 39 more years of trudging around in the wilderness. After they died, their children inherited the Promised Land.

But being a sheep isn't always bad! Wise sheep follow a good shepherd. Jesus said, *"I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by my own"* (John 10:14). Jesus doesn't ask for "blind faith." He has earned our trust. We follow Him because we know Him to be faithful.

Jesus entrusted the care of His sheep in local churches to shepherds. We commonly refer to them as elders and overseers, but they have been charged to shepherd (pastor) the flock of God which is among them (1 Peter 5:2). Churches appoint qualified men whom they trust to shoulder this heavy responsibility. Every sheep in the flock ought to strive to make the shepherds' task as easy as possible. Be a sheep, not a billy goat!

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep. I am the good shepherd; and I know my sheep, and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep" (John 10:11-15).

EDITORIAL . . .

LET'S CALL THE CHURCH THE CHURCH

By Dalton Key

Jesus promised to build His church (Matthew 16:18), and He kept that promise.

Now, nearly 21 centuries later, that church, His church, yet remains.

The past several years, though, have produced an uneasy, unfounded shift in brotherhood terminology, with the identity of the Lord's church taking the brunt of the damage.

We are hearing more and more references from writers and speakers - our writers and speakers - concerning "our fellowship" and "our movement," and at the same time, less and less acknowledgement of the Lord's church. While we enjoy both our fellowship and the fruits of the Restoration Movement, we are members of the church which Jesus built.

A generation ago, preachers of the gospel proudly proclaimed the singularity and beauty of the Lord's church. But times have changed and so, sadly, has our language. It appears that now, at least in the minds of what looks to be a sadly growing segment among us, loyalty to the Lord and His blood-bought church is being blindly bartered for affiliation with either an historical, humanly devised movement or some undefined, nebulous and vaguely-bounded fellowship.

It is true that we, as God's people living now in the 21st century, owe much to the honest and truth-seeking leaders of what has been commonly coined, "The American Restoration Movement." Good and courageous men such as Alexander Campbell, Barton Stone, James O'Kelly - along with a host of countless others of like faith and fortitude - performed a tremendous service to the world by leading men and women back to the Bible. But our roots run deeper than the American Restoration. Our history traces all the way back to the first Pentecost Day following our Lord's resurrection, that wonderful day of beginning described in the second chapter of Acts.

We were not members of a denomination founded by Alexander Campbell. Campbell never intended such. He rather sought to point men back, beyond himself, to the risen Savior. He urged men to unite in the one, non-denominational, New Testament church.

Such was his plea. Such is ours.

I am thankful for "our movement." I appreciate the blessings and warmth of "our fellowship." But my allegiance, my loyalty, yea my very life, belong to the Lord and His church.



BUILDING A ROAD FOR THE LORD

By Bobby Key

When a highway is put through town some residents have to move, some are irritated, and many complain. You cannot put a highway through a community without a commotion.

How can we expect to clear a way for the Lord when we sit in church on Sunday morning with "Please Do Not Disturb" written all over our faces? The word of God is called a hammer, a fire, and a sword. You just cannot use these things without disturbing somebody.

What would our country do with John the Baptist today?

Here was one preacher who did not use an anesthetic! His job wasn't to win friends but to change hearts. His message was clear and unmistakable: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2). He dug right in and went to work removing the

trouble - the sin in the lives of people.

John the Baptist knew what many of us seem to have forgotten - the road to salvation requires repentance and repentance is always destructive and uncomfortable business. (1929-2018)

"In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!' For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying: 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: prepare the way of the Lord; make His paths straight' . . . But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, 'Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance.'" (Matthew 3:1-3;7,8).

SAYING GOODBYE

By Hershel Dyer

saint was most distressing even to those with strong faith. (Acts 9:36-42.)

During World War I, a father went with his soldier-son as the young man prepared to board ship for the war zone in France. Knowing that when he passed through the swinging gates to go aboard, he might never see his father again, the son commented, "Dad, if I never meet you again here, I'll meet you where the gates never swing outward." While riding the train back to Chicago, Charles Gabriel meditated upon the parting words of his son and then wrote those memorable lyrics for the song, "Where the Gates Swing Outward Never."

To say goodbye to those we love is not so hard if we have hope that we will see them again. What balm it is to our aching hearts that "over there" the dear ones will never be leaving us, for then we shall be "where the gates never swing outward." (1925-2018)

"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." (Romans 8:18.)

"Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me" (Malachi 3:1). "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God'" (Isaiah 40:3). John the Baptist was that messenger promised by Malachi and the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy. John's job was to make a way for the Lord and he did his job well.

Highway building is destructive before it is constructive. It requires blasting and demolition. The wrecking crew precedes the construction workers. John, like old Elijah, was a troubler of Israel. He disturbed the peace.

Perhaps we could use an upheaval in our world today. This might wake us up. "It is high time to awake out of sleep" (Romans 13:11).

As a very young preacher, fresh out of college, I was sitting near the bedside of a man who was an unbeliever. He was nearing the time of his death and I was most anxious to convert him to the Lord. Sadly, there seemed to be nothing that I could say which would change his thinking. However, he did lament that in his death he would be leaving behind his wife and this was truly a grief to him. He had no hope of ever seeing her again.

As the years go by we are compelled to bid farewell to those who have become so close and dear to us in this life. Although we know that death is just as natural to mankind as birth, the sorrow of the first is not mitigated by the joy of the last.

There is, though, a great difference in the departure of a Christian and the death of an unbeliever. When the friends of Dorcas gathered with the apostle Peter to weep at the passing of this dear sister, they could not help but be comforted by the blessed hope of her glorious resurrection and eternal life. Yet, to say goodbye to this beloved

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