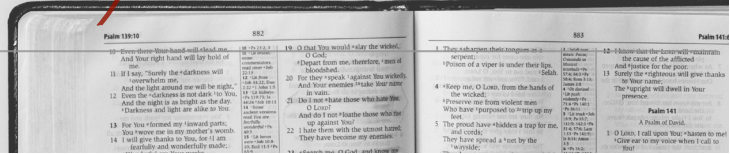


WORDS *of* TRUTH

Keeping the Faith



Theme Articles

David Dixon is the preacher for the Sixth Avenue Church of Christ in Jasper, AL. He is a 2011 graduate of MSOP.

Dan Jenkins preaches for the Palm Beach Lakes Church of Christ in Palm Beach Gardens, FL. He is a graduate of Freed-Hardeman and David Lipscomb Universities.

Bobby Duncan passed away in 1999. He preached the longest at the Adamsville Church of Christ, but he also served the Sixth Avenue and Munford congregations. He was educated at Freed-Hardeman, Jacksonville State, Birmingham Southern, and Southern Christian Universities. After the death of Gus Nichols, Bro. Duncan served as the editor of *Words of Truth* for seven years.



A Lifetime of Service

In this age, true dedication to Christ is difficult. Distractions, dissensions, and disheartening decisions all turn men’s hearts away from their devotion to Deity. Near the end of his life, Paul said he had “kept the faith” (2 Tim. 4:7). He had endured more than we can imagine for the cause of Christ. He had crossed mountains, sailed seas, and spent cold, lonely nights in prison, all to be able to make Christ known to the world. We may never face the jailor’s whip because of our faith, but we can live a life of discipleship from the day of our obedience until the day we draw our last breath.

Keeping the faith is about more than just attending worship services every first day of the week. Keeping the faith is about moment to moment trust, yielding every thought to God’s will for our lives (2 Cor. 10:5). It can be done. We may have to block out many of the modern indulgences to which we have grown so accustomed, or it may require us to deny ourselves of certain liberties in order to gain spiritual strength, but the choice is up to us. Are you keeping the faith?

Keeping the Faith as Times Change

David Dixon

Time is sometimes called the fourth dimension — length, width, and height being the other three. Time, in the sense that we experience it, is linear, just as the other three dimensions are. Imagine a coordinate plane with all three axes (x, y, and z) on it. In order to plot a point on that plane, you would “travel” along each axis from the origin until you arrived at that location in three-dimensional space. Time would add a fourth axis to that coordinate plane, but we would not “see” it as we do the other three. The entire coordinate plane would traverse the fourth axis together as a unit, beginning at its origin and concluding at its demise. This is the purpose of “timelines” — to show that time is linear, and that events happen in a location or to a certain group over time, and to reveal the changes that time has wrought upon that location or to that group. I have a timeline on the wall in my office of the history of mankind from Creation to the Roman Empire. We all like to go back and look at pictures of ourselves from years gone by to see how we have changed over time. Those pictures are like a point on a graph — a single point on a linear axis.

If you think of a line as succession of infinite points, one “behind” the other in one direction forever, then you can understand how that one single point on that line could never appreciate how long the line in which it resides actually is. A single point on a line cannot withdraw itself from that line to “see” the entirety of the space in which it abides. The same would be true for a figure in a two-dimensional plane. When we draw a triangle, we know it is a triangle because we are looking at it from above the plane, from a realm of which the triangle could not even conceive. If we placed two triangles side by side on a plane, those triangles would not “see” the other as triangles. Each could only “see” the other as a line segment. To continue this analogy, we are creatures bound by the fourth dimension. We lack the ability (and always will — time travel is impossible) to extricate ourselves from this linear axis (time) to see ourselves in our complete environment. Mankind will never be able to lift himself out of time to see the entire dimension from beginning to end.

But God can.

That’s who God is. God is the Being Who exists outside time. He can see the dimension in which we dwell in its entirety. There is nothing hidden from Him. This explains His omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence. I like to say that Eternity is the fifth dimension — where time can be seen from a different vantage point, similar to when we fly in an airplane over the three dimensional world below us. And God is the Infinite Being Who fills even the fifth dimension.

From our perspective times change. Society is not the same as it was 100 years ago. Values and morals have shifted. Technology has advanced. National priorities have been reorganized. Abortion, homosexuality, and government dependence are all viewed differently by many in our nation than they were two generations ago. With the swift changes we have seen to the moral fabric of our world in the last few decades, how can Christians keep the faith? How can we remain “stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58)?

We can keep the faith knowing that, even though times change, God does not. God says in Malachi 3:6, “For I am the Lord, I change not.” Change, by its very nature, implies the possibility for either growth or death, improvement or digression. God can do neither. He cannot improve, learn, grow, or develop. Neither can He diminish, defer, or decrease. We serve a perfect God. Time is in His hands. He is never not in control. Nothing ever exceeds His expectations. He is immutably and unchangeably trustworthy. Therefore we can keep the faith.

We can keep the faith knowing that God’s Word never changes. The Bible is perfect because it is the product of the mind and will of God Himself (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:20-21). Because the Bible is so morally perfect, there is no conceivable way it could have been produced by a man or any group of men. The beauty of God’s plan to reveal His will to all humanity in a preserved, written form is that writing stands the test of time. God knew this would be the case. No matter how the morals, proclivities, and practices of a nation evolve throughout its history, God’s Word will always stand as an objective source of judgment and legislation. Of the Fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23), the Holy Spirit through the pen of Paul said there is no law forbidding people from possessing such good qualities. Why would there ever be? No productive society will ever demand that its citizens lie, steal, cheat, and murder each other. As such, the Bible will always be good for all humanity.

We can keep the faith knowing that people don’t change. Interests, abilities, possessions, and boundaries change, but behavior does not. Lying and murder were occurring 6000 years ago and they still happen today. Selflessness and sacrifice have been wholesome motivations since Creation. The way man thinks is not changing. Humanity, despite what modern “scientists” claim, is not in a state of evolution, just waiting for our next species-wide advancement. Since this is the case, man’s needs are not changing. All have sinned (Rom. 3:23), thus all will forever need God’s grace and forgiveness if he wants to receive the blessings pertaining to God’s promises. Mankind will forever need the Gospel. No matter how many years there are remaining for life in the fourth dimension before God brings it all to a conclusion, the message of the truth of Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection will forevermore be the satisfaction of man’s deepest need. We can keep the faith knowing that man will always need faith.

Life for us is dynamic. We never know what a day may bring — joy or sadness, labor or rest, life or death, blessing or cursing. Life in eternity seems more static. Heaven is pictured as one eternal day where there is no night, no death, no tears, and no sin. Hell is eternal punishment as separated from God’s will. Both seem like a long time doing the same things over and over. But eternity is not like that. The hope and joy of Heaven is in God’s inexhaustible goodness. Time will not pass in eternity, but we will fully know how good God has been throughout all existence. In Heaven there will be no end to the increasing joy we experience. It will never get old! Hell is undesirable because the suffering will never diminish or start over. It will escalate forever. No matter how long your life lasts or time persists, keep the faith!

Keeping the Faith in the Storms of Life

David Dixon

Weather is, in large part, unpredictable. Meteorologists do their best to keep the general public aware of what could potentially transpire, but they can never be completely accurate. They give their best estimation of rain chances, temperatures, and potential dangers based on their computer models and historical data, but no one can see the future. Meteorologists cannot say with complete surety what the high or low temperature will be in a precise location on the next day. It is not possible. But with the information they provide, people can make informed decisions about what to wear, what plans to make, and where they might go on a particular day.

Surely we can all appreciate that meteorologists have saved lives. We may sometimes get upset at them for what we think of as “missing it” with their predictions, but just think of how many potential deaths they have prevented with their warnings. As their technology has advanced and as their means of communicating have developed over the last few decades, weather-people have provided a life-saving service to their communities by giving advanced warning of potentially severe weather.

Thunderstorms are weather phenomena that can be predicted with a high degree of accuracy. Their paths are straightforward, their severity is measurable, and their size can be known. Just because thunderstorms are trackable, and advanced warning of them can be given, does not mean they are not dangerous. Lightning, flash flooding, strong winds, and downed trees are all life-threatening dangers of thunderstorms.

Spiritually speaking, we may not experience storms on a daily basis, but when they strike our lives, there is the same spiritual danger as that posed by physical thunderstorms. The loss of a loved one, especially a spouse or a child, is one of the most severe storms we may ever face. Losing a job is as fearful in most cases as a thunderstorm. Disease, illness, tragic accidents, and unfaithfulness in our children are all stresses that may strike our lives as suddenly as a summer storm. Sometimes it seems certain people are affected by spiritual storms with a higher frequency than others, as if they just attract adversity. While this may not be true, we can probably all think of people we know who have been through so much more than we have, and who know how to face difficulty with grace and faithfulness because of their experiences. Here are some thoughts to consider when facing life’s storms to help you keep the faith.

We always have a life preserver. Wearing a life jacket in a boat or canoe may seem like a hassle at times, but its effectiveness is undeniable. On one occasion, this writer was canoeing with his family and some friends on a local creek which had a considerable current. The month was March so the water was cold as well. At one point, two of our canoes flipped over, including my own, and if we had not been wearing life jackets there is no telling what would have happened to us. It was a scary situation. God’s Word is our spiritual life preserver. No matter where we go or what conditions we face, God’s Word teaches us how to survive spiritually. When the storms of life are raging around us, God’s Word keeps us afloat. How many times have you felt like you had no where else to go, no where to turn, and no one to talk to, and your only comfort came from Scripture? A personal flotation device can keep your head above water when you have nothing else to which to cling and your strength is failing. As long as we hold tight to the Bible, there is no force on earth that can force us under the spiritual waters. Romans 8:38-39 says, “For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

We always have an ark. It is safe to say, none of us have ever experienced thunderstorms to the degree that Noah did. For forty days and forty nights, the deluge was incessant. The face of the whole earth was covered with water to a depth of at least 15 cubits (Gen. 7:17-20). God had instructed Noah to build a vessel that would preserve life within it. All other life on earth died, besides plants and what could survive in the water (Gen. 7:21-23). The Church which belongs to Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the type set by Noah’s ark. Spiritual life can be found ONLY within his Church. Outside the Lord’s Church there is only spiritual death. Noah’s ark transported that family from the old sinful world to a new landscape full of hope and promise. The Church of Christ is the Christian’s transport vessel from this wide, wicked world to the heavenly habitation of God in eternity.

We always have a harbor. Mariners who make their living on the seas surely know they are safer in a storm on solid ground than they are aboard a ship of any size. The ship of the Lord’s Church will never sink, but it may have to pass through storms on this side of eternity. Those within this ship can endure those storms, though, knowing they are headed for a harbor where the storms of life will have ceased forever. Heaven is our harbor, and therein we will never again face death, disease, or destruction. No sin, no sorrow, and no sadness will afflict us in that safe harbor. What a blessed peace is ours when we endure life’s worst storms because we know our Lord has prepared for us a dwelling place!

Jesus likened those who listen to and obey him to a wise man who builds his house upon a rock (Mat. 7:24-27). No matter how hard the winds blow or how intense the rain becomes, his house will survive. But a foolish man hears the words of Jesus and still decides to follow his own heart. His spiritual house will be washed away in the storms of life. We have recently seen major flooding in our local area. It is frightening how much damage storms can do. Spiritual storms can wreak havoc in the lives of those who are not wearing their life preserver, who are not safe within the Lord’s ark, and who do not have Heaven as their harbor.

Keeping the Faith as a Spouse

David Dixon

Pornography has never been so easy to access in our nation as it is right now. There is a non-religious, non-legislative group opposing pornography that I follow on Twitter which frequently provides links to and information from studies on the effects of this sin on minds and hearts. They are called “Fight the New Drug,” a name which references the addictive nature of pornography and the chemical response our minds have to it. They recently tweeted that the majority of kids are exposed to porn by age 13, with some as young as 7. You can assume your child has seen pornography by age 13 whether accidentally, incidentally, or intentionally. Imagine the effect that these images have on minds so young as they grow older and begin to look for a lifelong spouse! Their expectations begin to be formed, not by Godly examples and Biblical teaching, but by unrealistic scenarios and sinful images. The harm and damage that porn does cannot be overstated!

Another link this group recently provided was to research indicating that “consuming porn can normalize sexual objectification, which can have profound consequences in the ways porn consumers view and treat others.” In the several cases of Christian couples whom I know personally that have divorced because of adultery, it almost always started with pornography. Their addiction to porn invariably led to a change in the guilty spouse’s behavior. A faithful, loving, Christian husband began to view his submissive, sincere wife differently because of the effects that hours of pornography had had on his mind. It is a tragedy on a global scale.

So what can we do to keep the faith as a spouse? Once adultery has been committed a line has been crossed, and that is a different issue. What I want to explore are some ways we can prevent that from happening. Even if a spouse is struggling with pornography, it is not too late to reverse that addiction, renew that marital infatuation, and prevent that voyeurism from escalating to adultery.

Christian couples PREFER EACH OTHER. While you were courting, there was no one you would rather be around. Your mind was constantly on him/her, and you made your plans together. As you grew older, had children, and became busy with work, you may have been made aware more keenly of your differences. Those may be some of the most common reasons people turn towards porn. But your spouse is still the same person you fell in love with. You have had so many experiences together that are irreplaceable and which took so much time to accomplish together. Remember why you preferred your spouse to begin with and see those qualities in him/her again! They are still there! At the same time, make sure you are exhibiting those qualities that your spouse prefers. Marital success requires selflessness on both parts. We cannot consume hours of pornographic images and then expect our spouse to be what we see therein! To keep the faith in our marriages, we must deny those personal lusts of the flesh, and make the effort to remember why we found our spouse preferable in the first place. It is a choice we make. Look to the examples of couples married for 50 years or more. They still prefer each other’s company to anyone else’s.

Christian couples PRAISE EACH OTHER. Positive reinforcement goes a long way in a marriage. Maybe your spouse is

not the same body shape as when you were dating. Have you looked in a mirror? You probably aren’t either. Find new reasons to praise him/her. Maybe the reason your wife doesn’t have the same body she did when you were dating is because she has had multiple children and now she stays home to teach or goes to work to help provide for those children. Praise her for the sacrifices she makes. Love her for the godly woman she is! Couples who have their affections set on things above (Col. 3:1-2) love each other no matter their body shapes. Sexual satisfaction can be had by couples of all shapes and sizes, and it is made so much more intense when our spiritual appreciation of each other is not ransacked by pornography.

Christian couples PAMPER EACH OTHER. If you make the effort to prefer, praise, and pamper your spouse, consider how drastically reduced the probability is that you will turn to pornography for sexual gratification. The time you would have spent in looking at sexual images on the computer could be spent perusing Amazon for a special gift for him/her. Instead of picking up a dirty magazine, write him/her a note sincerely praising his/her affection for you. The more we pamper each other, the less we will turn to porn. Investing in your spouse’s mental and spiritual affirmation will be a commitment you will not soon relinquish. The time and effort you put into making your wife feel like the Queen of Your Life will be returned in like manner!

Christian couples PRAY WITH EACH OTHER. This is obviously the most important. If you want to preserve the relationship you have with your spouse, insist on spending time in prayer and meditation on God’s word daily. It does not matter who initiates it, it does not matter when it happens, but don’t let a day go by without praying with and for each other. Building each other up in the faith is the surest way to prevent marital infidelity. A good way to fight the temptation to descend into the depravity of pornography is to train yourself, when you feel that temptation, to instead pray for your spouse. Pray for her to have a good day at work. Pray for him to make it home safely. Pray for some alone time together. And pray for yourself. Pray that you will work to be the kind of spouse that does not need porn. Pray that God’s word will teach you to prefer your spouse once again. Pray for your own marriage!

One thing that has helped me in my struggles with pornography is turning to the words of Leviticus 18. This chapter is one of the most uncomfortable chapters in all of scripture. Leviticus 18 reminds us that the nakedness we see online, on television, in the movies, or in magazines *is not our nakedness!* We have a nakedness. The nakedness of our spouse is our nakedness. It belongs to us. It should satisfy us (Pro. 5:19)! No other nakedness is ours. Pornography is a nakedness that does not belong to us. Leave it alone.

Pornography is a thief. It robs the consumer of the proper attitude and desire towards his/her spouse. It robs the heart of purity and contentment. It robs a marriage of its fire. It is extremely difficult to avoid pornographic images in our society. It is hard to keep the faith in our marriages. But when we do, when we prefer, praise, pamper, and pray for our spouse, the bliss we experience is incomparable to anything else in this life. The sexual gratification we receive from viewing pornography pales in comparison to the passion we can have in a Christian marriage.

Keeping the Faith as the Light of the World

David Dixon

Satan has filled the world with darkness. Evil men and seducers are growing worse and worse, and they always will (2 Tim. 3:13). Any time we turn on the television, radio, computer, or cell phone we are bombarded with the effects of Satan's work on humanity. Evil and good have lost all meaning among the general public, and there seems to be none who seek full truth, only their own version of it. Babies are not safe even in their mothers' wombs, and sexual depravity is lauded and celebrated as the lifestyle of social heroes. It is enough to make a God-fearing person seek seclusion and isolation from the rest of the world.

But we cannot.

The world needs Christians. Jesus of Nazareth is the central figure of all human history for a reason — because he is God made flesh. His selfless compassion, even for his enemies, is the perfect example for every human who will ever live. His teachings of humility, generosity, service, and sacrifice are the foundation upon which any successful nation will ever be built. The number of good deeds done in his name could never be counted. He wants us to be his lights in this world so full of darkness. If we are not shining, then the light grows dim indeed.

Keeping the faith means being consistent. Even though it seems like the world continues to spiral downward, Christians should have no reason for ever being hopeless. If we focus on what the news reports or on what we see on social media, it will invariably have a negative impact on our hearts and minds as we strive to keep our affections set on things above (Col. 3:1-2). While those around us are being heaved about by the winds of the storms of life, we can demonstrate true peace of mind by keeping an even keel during similar storms.

A light's intensity is measured in candelas. Light can be intensified to the degree that it causes flammable material to burst into flame. As reflectors of God's light in the world, we all burn with a different intensity. We have different spiritual interests about which we are passionate. None of us should ever seek to douse another Christian's light. Just because someone is not as intense as we are in one area does not mean their light is not burning consistently for Christ. As has often been said, "Lighthouses are not in competition with each other." Paul's explanation of the functions of the body of Christ in 1 Corinthians 12 is a similar analogy. Just as no two body parts have the same function, no two Christians are going to burn with the same intensity. Just as every body part is essential, every Christian candle helps bring light into the dark world.

Keeping the faith as lights in the world means burning as intensely as possible without burning out. "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Gal. 6:9). When we start to find ourselves weary in well doing, it is time to take a break. A flashlight left burning will soon wear out its batteries.

Resting occasionally is not the same as fainting. We must beware of overworking ourselves. There are only so many productive Facebook arguments we can have at one time. We may be trying to win people to Christ, but exhaustion can lead to anger, hatred, and unkindness.

It breaks my heart to see so many Christian couples in my own age bracket going through divorces. If it is heartbreaking to us, I cannot imagine the disappointment God feels. It seems to surprise us the most when we hear of preachers being found out in some lascivious relationship. We often use Matthew 16:26 in reference to the pursuit of material treasures, but it also applies to preachers in their pursuit for souls. In that verse, Jesus asks, "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?" (ESV). Having converted 10,000 souls to Christ will not save a man on the day of judgment if he let his light burn out after he taught others.

It is said that the naked human eye can see a single candle flame on a dark night over 30 miles away under the right conditions. The power of light in darkness is hard to overstate. That is who we are. Even when we feel like we are burning all alone on our hill, we can rest easy knowing that as long as we keep burning, we will draw others to the light. A second light on the same hill doubles the power of the light. As more lights are drawn to burn, the light grows ever brighter. The world is never too dark for light to be seen. "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Mat. 5:14-16).

A Nation Out From Under God

Dan Jenkins

[This article originally appeared in Vol. 14, No. 1 of Words of Truth. It was written in December 1977. That is almost 45 years ago. The matters discussed herein remain to this day hot-button issues, but they have progressed unimaginably. These are battles we must continue to fight. Let truth prevail!]

One of the joys of being an American is the freedom of speech which has serviced as a foundation stone of our country for two centuries. Our forefathers came to this land to insure that we might have a nation where all ideas, both political and religious, have free expression. As an American I was thrilled when a local TV station arranged for the Equal Rights Amendment to be discussed by those who were for the amendment and those against it. Jim Dearman, preacher at the West Concord Church of Christ, was asked to speak against the amendment and he arranged for a local lawyer, Miss Charlotte Railey, to assist him in the debate. Those for the amendment chose two ladies, one of them an attorney, to represent their side.

I was at WBMG-TV on December 1, 1977, when the debate was taped. The participants in the debate arrived and the rules were clearly laid out. The debate was to begin with a three minute statement by each side showing why they either favored or opposed the proposed amendment. Following this, various aspects of the amendment were to be introduced and each side was to speak three minutes, with equal time being given each side for any rebuttal comments.

Those for the amendment began the debate with the usual reason given for the necessity of the ERA — women were being discriminated against in our nation, their pay was not equal with that of men, they were being treated as second-class citizens by many of the present laws, and the passage of the ERA would give them all their rights. When the time came for the opposing side to present its case the tone of the debate was set. Jim Dearman began by showing from the Scriptures that the teachings of Christ give to women an exalted place rather than one of inferiority. He then showed that both Old and New Testaments (Lev. 18:22; Rom. 1:26-28) pointedly said that homosexuality is a sin, and for this reason every God-fearing person in America must be opposed to that which would make such legal in our society. When Miss Railey spoke she quoted from constitutional lawyers at both Yale and Harvard who showed that the passage of the ERA would of necessity make homosexual marriages a part of our way of life. The point was also made that laws already existed to remove the injustices against women in our land and that both of those opposed to the ERA were against such injustices. However, it was affirmed, the ERA was worded in such a way that rather than simply dealing with these injustices it would go far beyond and legalize immorality. Those for the amendment could not deal with this issue! Further evidence was given during the debate showing that the most vocal advocates of the passage of the

ERA, the National Organization of Women (NOW), looked upon the passage of the ERA as a necessity in achieving another of their goals, the legalizing of lesbian marriages.

Those for the amendment felt the force of these arguments and asked three times that other aspects of the ERA be discussed. However this was designed as a debate and not as a time for discussion of areas of agreement, and for once the true impact of the passage of the ERA was shown. The moderator was fair, giving equal time to each side. Each participant in the discussion conducted himself in an honorable fashion, so that by the end of the thirty minute program the area of disagreement was clearly seen.

Much to the surprise of many the station has now refused to air the program! Following the taping of the debate those for the amendment demanded to see the station manager, even threatening a court injunction against its showing. Pressure was brought to bear upon the station and so the program, "Spectrum," due to be shown on Sunday morning, December 4, was not shown! Can you believe this?! This was not in Russia, China, Cuba, nor Hungary; this was in Birmingham, Alabama, USA! Why was it not shown? Not because of wrong attitudes, not because of unfairness, not because it did not deal with the issue. The station says it was because too much time was spent on the homosexual issue and not on the other issues, because those for the amendment asked three times to go on and discuss other aspects of the ERA, and because little time was left for summary by both sides. The real reason that it was not shown is that the station yielded to the pressure brought upon it by those for the ERA. Every American should be concerned that such could happen in our nation.

Not only am I concerned as an American, I am concerned as a Christian. Our nation is great because it has exalted righteousness and God has exalted it. Our religious freedom has allowed the cause of truth to flourish, but now I stand in awe as I see the truth of God being withheld from our people.

I am concerned as a father. My children will grow up in this land and I want for them what I had as a child — a nation concerned about righteousness. I have no desire to see them reared in a land where freedom of discussion is not known, and immorality is upheld by the laws of our land. I know that the strength of our nation rests in the strength of our homes — homes governed by God's truth and where His teachings are the rule of our lives.

I am concerned about the future. What other freedoms will be withdrawn from us? What other changes will be made that will make our lives as God-fearing people more difficult? As Jim Dearman said in his closing remarks, "Our forefathers envisioned a nation concerned about righteousness, they wanted to bring about one nation under God, but if the ERA is passed we may find ourselves one nation OUT FROM UNDER God."

Does “Burned Up” Mean “Burned Up”?

Bobby Duncan

[This article also appeared in Vol. 14, No. 1 of Words of Truth (Dec. 16, 1977). Bro. Bobby Duncan is the author of this article and he was the editor of this publication at the time. He was a learned Bible scholar, and his words are relevant today.]

The Premillennialists of a generation ago and the Zionists of more modern times all claim that Jesus is coming back to this earth and establish his kingdom hereon. When the statement in 2 Peter 3:10 is shown to them, they have no recourse but to deny that Peter really meant what he said, or that he really said what he meant. Peter’s statement in 2 Peter 3:10 is as follows: “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.”

The real problem seems to be with the phrase, “burned up.” The Zionist does not believe that “burned up” means “burned up”; because if “burned up” means “burned up,” Jesus cannot establish his kingdom upon this earth when he comes again. Does “burned up” mean “burned up,” or does it mean something else? The Zionist insists that “burned up” means “renovated” or “purified.” Let us examine the matter carefully.

The phrase, “burned up” is translated from the Greek *katakaio*, a word which is used a total of twelve times in the New Testament. It is used in Matthew 13:30, and also verse 40 to describe what would happen to the tares when they were separated from the wheat. It is used in Matthew 3:12 and Luke 3:17 to tell of the burning of the chaff when it is separated from the wheat. It is used in Acts 19:19 to tell of the burning of the many books in that great bonfire at Ephesus. When the tares were burned, were they just renovated? When the chaff was burned, was it just purified by the fire? When the books were brought together at Ephesus, were they just warmed by the fire?

Other passages where the word *katakaio* is used are: 1 Cor. 3:15; Heb. 13:11; Rev. 8:7 (twice); 17:16; and 18:8. In each of these cases it is clear that the word describes destruction by fire; and there is absolutely no cause to believe it means something different in 2 Peter 3:10.

We are aware that there is a variation among the manuscripts at this passage. Some manuscripts have *eurethesetai* ‘discovered,’ instead of *katakaio*. But this adds no strength to the argument of the Zionist; for to “be discovered” does not mean to “be renovated” or to “be purified.” Furthermore, we believe there is reason to agree with the following statements: “The reading ‘shall be burned up’ is well supported, and suits the context best” (The Pulpit Commentary). “We consider the variant reading...out of the line of thought” (R.C.H. Lenski).

Incidentally, we have checked several different translations; and the only one we have personally examined at this passage which translates the variant reading is the one put out by the Jehovah’s Witnesses. The New International Version, which is being used by a good many brethren, does not accurately translate either *eurethesetai* or *katakaio*. It says, “the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.” This appears to be an attempt on the part of the NIV translators to insert their Zionistic theology into the text of the Bible. It is lamentable that the NIV translators stooped even lower at this point than did those of the Watchtower Society. At least the Watchtower Society translators did properly translate the less likely variation; while the NIV translators showed a preference for the less likely variation, and then supplied their own interpretation.

We believe “burned up” means “burned up.”

PLEASE SUBMIT CHANGE OF ADDRESS!

Every month we have a few publications returned to us due to mailing records that are not up to date. Each return costs us money in addition to the initial postage. We ask that you please submit updated mailing information if you are moving so that you will not miss any issues. You may submit your change of address by mailing us at 1501 6th Ave., Jasper, AL, 35501, or by emailing us at office@sixthavenuechurch.org. If we do not receive updated information we will have to remove those that are returned from the mailing list.

sixthavenuechurch.org

We hope and pray that you will use our website for personal growth in the faith of Jesus Christ. On our website you will find many resources including bulletins, sermon audios, Bible correspondence courses, Searching for Truth materials, and House to House/Heart to Heart materials. You can also sign up to receive our bulletin by email or submit questions you would like to have answered. On the website you will also find back issues of *Words of Truth*. Please visit regularly and use the resources available to you!

The Words of Truth

Sixth Avenue Church of Christ
1501 Sixth Avenue
Jasper, AL 35501

Non-Profit Org.
US Postage
PAID
Permit No. 2002
Birmingham, AL

Address Service Requested

ASK A BIBLE QUESTION

QUESTION: Brother Posey, in your opinion, what is the greatest need in the church today?

ANSWER: There are many significant needs: Love (John 13:34-35), Kindness (Eph. 4:32), and Faithfulness (Rev. 2:10); but the greatest need is discernment. Discern means "to segregate, to separate by careful search, to examine." The worldly mentality blurs the difference between good and evil, right and wrong, holy and profane, to the point that morality becomes subjective, and evil becomes Politically Correct. Today, there is a hazy line separating the definitions of good and evil. When discernment is low, sin grows unchecked. Thus, Christians need to restudy what the Bible says about Spiritual Discernment and practice it! Notice the following:

- Discernment results from much Bible study (Heb. 5:14a).
- Discernment is strengthened by practicing the Bible (Heb. 5:14b).
- Discernment is reinforced through spiritual senses (Heb. 5:14c).
- Discernment involves vigorous spiritual exercise (Heb. 5:14d.).

The Hebrews writer stressed the following: first, "give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard" (2:1); second, follow the will of God without fear or disobedience (4:11); and exercise discernment regarding good and evil (5:14). Thank God for Paul's prayer for "knowledge and all discernment" (Phil. 1:9). God bless us with mature judgment and wisdom! May our feet always be planted on solid ground, never swayed by fads or fatalities. Let us pray: "I am Your servant; give me understanding, that I may know Your testimonies" (Psalm 119:125).

-Mark Nichols Posey
mark.nichols.posey@gmail.com

The words of *Truth*

The Words of Truth

is a monthly publication overseen by the elders of the Sixth Avenue Church of Christ in Jasper, Alabama. It is dedicated to the promotion and defense of New Testament Christianity.



The Words of Truth

is sent free to all upon request.

If you would like to submit an article for consideration, please send via postal mail or fax, or (preferably) in electronic form (e-mail or on disk or CD).

Please send all correspondence to:

The Words of Truth

Sixth Avenue Church of Christ
1501 6th Avenue
Jasper, AL 35501
Phone: (205) 384-6446
Fax: (205) 302-0595

E-mail: office@sixthavenuechurch.org
www.sixthavenuechurch.org