

THE

# HARVESTER

"The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest." [Luke 10:2]

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## BEYOND HEAVEN AND HELL

Why are you a Christian? Why do you serve God? What do you think most people would say if asked these questions? Overwhelmingly people answer by saying, "because I want to go to Heaven." While there is nothing wrong with wanting to go to Heaven, if that is the main reason a person serves God, then that person has a problem. While it is certainly understandable for a new Christian to be primarily motivated by a desire to go to Heaven or to stay out of Hell, as we mature spiritually our motivations must change.

During His time here on earth Jesus dealt with the Jewish people like children. He realized they were

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spiritually immature and needed to be taught at a very low level. This is why He taught them only in parables (Mat 13:34). Their immaturity was also the reason He spoke so often of Heaven and Hell. When someone talks about the great rewards to be had in Heaven or the awful punishment to be endured in Hell it will get people's attention. And this is precisely what He needed to do.

When we move to a time after the Church has been established we notice a profound change in what is expected to motivate people to obey God. While the rewards of Heaven and the punishments of Hell are spoken of in the apostolic writings, the occurrence of such remarks are few and far between. The thing which takes their place is love.

Jesus showed how important love was even under the Law of Moses when He was asked which commandment was the greatest. *"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."* (Mat 22:37-40)

When we examine things a little more closely it is easy to see why, for the mature Christian, Heaven and Hell will not be all that strong of a motivator when compared to love. A person who serves God primarily because he hopes to reach Heaven or to avoid Hell is basically saying, 'I will serve God if there is something in it for me.' It sounds a little harsh but it's true. If the promise of Heaven is taken away the person would no longer have a good reason to serve God. This attitude is understandable, and even expected, for a new

Christian. But as we mature we must look beyond reward and punishment and let love rule our lives.

Christ said simply, *"If ye love me, keep my commandments."* (Joh 14:15) God should not have to promise us anything to get us to obey Him. After all that He has done for us we should gladly fall down before Him and be willing to do any and every thing He asks of us simply because we love Him.

Love is by far the most important thing a Christian can have. I know that is a strong statement, but I feel that experience shows it, and the Bible teaches it. John told us that *"God is love."* (I Joh 4:8) He doesn't say that God loves us, but that God IS love. That is a very powerful statement.

Love is even greater than faith. Paul spoke of *"faith which worketh by love,"* (Gal 5:6) Faith is essential for the Christian (Heb 11:6), but it is worthless unless it is accompanied by love. Our service to God is even spoken of as a *"labor of love."* (Heb 6:10)

In I Corinthians chapter 13, commonly known as the chapter on love, Paul speaks eloquently of the necessity of love, or charity as he refers to it. He said that it would matter little if he could speak with the tongues of men or angels. Or if he had the gift of prophesy, or if he had enough faith to move mountains. Or if he gave everything he had, including his life, for others. If he didn't have love to accompany these things then he had accomplished absolutely nothing.

I'm afraid that there are indeed those around us today who 'go through the motions' of being a

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Christian, but who really aren't motivated by a love of God and of their fellow man.

God will not count the number of church services we attended. He will not count the number of meetings we attended. He will not count the hours we spent studying the Bible. He will not count the number of people we invited to Church. If He looks into our heart and doesn't find love, He will look no further. We will be as Paul described, *"sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal."* (I Cor 13:1)

Love is not something you either have or don't have. And it is not something you are born with. We must learn to love. And even the meanest, cruelest man can learn to love if he will allow himself to do so. We must lay aside all hatred, prejudice, envy, bitterness, pride, and other evil ways if we are ever going to learn to love.

The hope of Heaven is sweet. Sweeter than the best honey any bee could ever make. But it is not enough to satisfy God. Faith is powerful. It can lead us to do things which would be otherwise impossible. But it isn't enough to satisfy God. Love is the glue which binds it all together. Love is the guiding light in the life of a child of God.

Paul said, *"And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity."* (I Cor 13:13)

Without love we are empty and adrift in life's ocean. Without love we are destined to be alone in the eternal night. Without love we are powerless to resist as Satan devours our soul.

Love can be expressed in many ways, but is best expressed without words. And it has never been expressed with more power or depth than when Jesus showed to the world a love which is nearly beyond human comprehension. A love which can never be understood with the mind, only with the heart.

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## SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. How old was Abraham when Isaac was born?
2. After sending out seventy workers, Christ gives special warning to three towns concerning repentance. Name one of them?
3. If a brother or sister needs clothing or food, what should a believer do?
4. According to Proverbs, a man plans his course in his heart, but the Lord determines his what?
5. What was Hezekiah's first act as King?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH . . .

and remember last month's questions?

1. To what governor did Claudius Lysias write a letter about Paul? **FELIX** (Acts 23:26)
2. At what age were the firstborn sons and the firstborn of unclean animals required to be redeemed? **ONE MONTH OLD** (Num. 18:14-16)
3. Did the Lord grieve for making Saul king over Israel? **YES** (1 Sam. 15:35)
4. In the book of Revelation, which part of the dragon flung a third of the stars to the earth? **THE TAIL** (Rev. 12:4)
5. What book of the Bible records the destruction of Sodom? **GENESIS** (chapter 19)

### **BEWARE OF JAVELINS!**

King Saul was very jealous of the lad David (1 Sam. 18:8). One day while David was playing music for the king, Saul had a javelin in his hand. Suddenly he threw the spear at David, hoping to smite the young man to the wall with it, but David was able to flee (1 Sam. 18:10-11). Amazingly this same exact scenario occurred in the next chapter (1 Sam. 19:8-10) and again David avoided the javelin.

Today the devil continues to throw javelins at God's people. He wants to destroy us in the same way that Saul desired to eliminate David. Therefore as Christians we must constantly beware of the devil's javelins.

One javelin that Satan throws at us when we are not looking is foolish questions. *"But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and*

*strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain.*" (Tit. 3:9) During His time here on earth Christ encountered many tricky and tempting questions that were designed merely as snares. We must realize that the devil continues such tactics on Christians. *"But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes."* (2 Tim. 2:23)

A second javelin that Satan is sure to hurl at us is excuses offered for committing sin or for neglecting our duty. Such weapons were used against Adam (Gen. 3:12), Moses (Exo. 4:10), Aaron (Exo. 32:23-24), Saul (1 Sam. 13:12; 1 Sam. 15:21), and the one-talent man (Matt. 25:24-25). Surely we are not immune to the devil's attempts, so we must be careful to accept responsibility for our own actions and quit making silly excuses. *"For every man shall bear his own burden."* (Gal. 6:5)

Another javelin that Satan will use to overcome us is traditions, philosophies, and superstitions of man. *"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."* (Col. 2:8) These things can turn us away from the Truth if we become so engrossed in them as they are handed down from generation to generation.

The devil's javelin comes in different shapes and sizes. When we least expect it, he will try to "nail us to the wall." Thus we must constantly be on guard and wear the whole armour of God (Eph. 6:10-18). *"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."* (1 Pet. 5:8)

# GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>Dates</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Speaker</u>
April 4 - 7	Liberty, KY	Gerald Carter (Eubank, KY)
April 8 - 12	Oak Grove Church Pulaski Co., KY	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
April 12 - 14	Second Ave. Church Opelika, AL	Bill Prince (Oxford, AL)
April 22 - 26	New Bethel Church near Stanford, KY	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
April 26 - 28	Barnes Church Monroe, TN	Kenny Spaw (Liberty, KY)

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## WEST BROAD STREET CHURCH OF CHRIST in WEDOWEE, ALABAMA announces a SPECIAL GOSPEL MEETING

Thursday, April 4 at 7:00 pm.

Topic: "The Evidence of God Around Us"

Speaker: Dana Chandler (Wedowee, AL)

Friday, April 5 at 7:00 pm.

Topic: "The Heavens Declare Thy Handiwork"

Speaker: Tony Whiddon (Statesboro, GA)

Saturday, April 6 at 7:00 pm.

Topic: "Genesis - Chapter 1"

Speaker: Dana Chandler (Wedowee, AL)

Sunday, April 7 at 10:30 am.

Topic: "Noah and the Ark"

Speaker: Sam Dick (Cave City, KY)

Sunday, April 7 at 7:00 pm.

Topic: "The Great Flood"

Speaker: Sam Dick (Cave City, KY)