

## COMING TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH (THROUGH EVALUATION IV)

We have been digging pretty hard into the idea in 2 Timothy 3:7 of how to come to the knowledge of the truth. We have studied the first three steps of really learning something well enough to change our lives - education, meditation, and participation. In the last three articles we've looked closely at the fourth step, evaluation. We need to go further into this step, but first let's take a moment to step back and check our purpose for doing this in-depth study on the step of evaluation.

Imagine two characters that you have met in your life. Both are elderly and can look back over their years and evaluate what life has done to them. They may or may not attend church (church attendance doesn't guarantee a good change). One is cynical (has a disbelief in the sincerity of human motives), pessimistic (a habit of looking on the dark side of things and to believe that the worst will happen), and sarcastic (sneering or making cutting remarks). This attitude of the heart shows in the way he holds his eyes and mouth. His walk is slow and apprehensive, as are his decisions. He is not sure where he is going and he is probably not going to like it, wherever it is. His conversation is mainly about his health problems, the collapse of the world, and a lack of good family relations (nobody visits him anymore, except to ask for money).

On the other hand, the second character is optimistic (looks on the bright side of things and believes things will work out). This attitude also shows in his face, mostly by his quick and easy smile. His posture is one of confidence, and his stride is full of determination and purpose. His conversation is usually about good things of the past and better things in the future, and his future plans are all about helping others or some family activity he is anticipating.

How did these two individuals that began with the same empty memory of infancy come to such different mature states? It could be the result of their parents and how they were raised, or maybe their marriage, or maybe their different educational or professional opportunities. All of these may have had some influence. The real bottom-line reason for the differences in these two people is a difference in the way they evaluated themselves. At some point they both looked at what other people were doing to them and said, "I like it, and I want to treat

others this same way," or "I don't like it, and I don't ever want to treat someone else this way." Without evaluations like this there is no basis or cause for change for something consistently better. But with evaluation there is a continuing need to change, for there is always something better. If evaluation can actually have this much of an impact in the kind of person we will become, can you see how important it is? Can you see how we should develop the skill of evaluation and use it daily on ourselves?

Let's leave this example and study a few more details about evaluation from the Bible:

The designated standards we choose will have eternal consequences for us. We have previously examined the idea that we each have designated standards that we evaluate everything against, whether we know it or not. Consider the importance of those standards as having eternal consequences as stated in Romans 2:12. *"For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law;"* Two groups of people are described, one outside the law and one inside the law. All of one group will perish while some in one group may be saved. How did people ever get into either of the two groups in the first place? Assuming that we are not dealing with a situation of total ignorance that the law exists, we would say at some point someone evaluated the situation, used the wrong designated standard, and decided not to come under the law. Another person evaluated the same situation, chose the right designated standard of God's will, and accepted the law and obeyed it. So they may go to two totally different eternal homes all based on the designated standards these people used in their evaluation process. Have you chosen wisely?

We can choose our designated standards based on "self". That is, do we choose to do what is good for others or what is good for us? Apparently this was a big problem in Bible times. Paul warned Timothy that *"Men shall be lovers of their own selves"* (2 Tim. 3:2). Paul lamented to the Philippians that he had no man to send unto them because *"all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's"* (Phil. 2:20,21). When a person evaluates against designated standards based on self is it any wonder that no improvements are ever made? If we are always resetting our designated standards whenever we see something better in others, then improvements will be automatic.

We can choose our designated standards based on "others". That is, things that will help others, that will profit others, that will help others get to heaven. These are the best designated standards to evaluate against, especially if it's all done according to God's will. Paul said for us not to seek our own, but another's wealth (1 Cor. 10:24). This does not mean we are to be greedy and seek to take the wealth from another. Rather, it means to seek improvements in the welfare of others. In fact, there is a question of interpretation as to whether the word should be "wealth" or "comfort and salvation". A few verses later Paul said he did not seek his own profit, but the profit of many that they may be saved (1 Cor. 10:33). Here Paul clearly states one of his main designated standards, the salvation of others. What a clear goal! We would do well to evaluate against this one ourselves.

In Romans 15:1-2, Paul hits us hard with the idea of bearing the infirmities of the weak and edifying our neighbor. And the stunning simplicity of 1 Corinthians 13:5, "*charity...seeks not her own,*" is so easy to understand that there is no doubt that our designated standards cannot be based on "self".

We can choose the designated standard of a servant like Christ did. In Philippians 2:5-8, the greatest example of designated standards based on "others" is given. It is the example of Jesus Christ, in service to those living around Him and to all mankind for all time. Paul described it here that Jesus took on the "form of a servant". This was not a servant who grudgingly did his duty while cursing his master under his breath, but a servant who willingly and joyfully gave Himself to others while living and made the ultimate sacrifice for others in His death. We don't have any trouble understanding the designated standards that Jesus evaluated Himself against. The designated standards were those of God and were all about saving man. What should really bring this home to us is that we can choose the same designated standards today. More to the point, if we expect to have the same eternal home of Jesus, then we must choose the same designated standards to evaluate against that Jesus chose and make the evaluation process work in our lives to cause us to become as much like Christ as possible.

We began by considering two people that began life the same (the blank mindset of infancy), but then matured into two very different personalities. This was due to the different designated standards they chose to evaluate their lives against for a long time. Then we studied several passages about designated standards based on "self" or "others", and lastly

considered Jesus as the ultimate designated standard. I hope and pray that each of you, dear Readers, have chosen the designated standards that will guide you to grow into the person that God wants you to be, *"perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works"* (2 Tim. 3:17). Not cynical or pessimistic or sarcastic, but full of the Christian graces and an eternal joy to be around. Will you please evaluate yourself and make this choice for God and Christ, for the church, for your family, and for yourself, forever?

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## APOLOGIA

QUESTION: Has the kingdom of Christ been established?

ANSWER: This question is one which is very timely and quite appropriate. There are a great number of people who teach that the kingdom of Christ has not yet been established and when it is, it will be a literal, earthly kingdom. However, as we shall see in that which follows, the kingdom of Christ has been established and Jesus is ruling now!

The question in order to be answered adequately must be resolved into two basic parts. One, what is the nature of Christ's kingdom, literal and earthly, or spiritual? Next, does the Bible tell the time of its establishment?

The idea that the kingdom of Christ is a literal, earthly kingdom is not new. The Jews of Jesus' day believed that this was to be the case. They believed that the Old Testament prophecies taught that the Messiah would come and establish a great kingdom and Israel would rule the world. Jerusalem at the time of Christ was dominated by the Roman Empire and they were looking for the Christ who would deliver them from the hand of their oppressors. However, this as will be shown, was not the case.

Jesus, during his earthly ministry, several times taught concerning the nature of his kingdom. He left no doubt that his kingdom would be of a spiritual nature. In Luke 17:20-21 Jesus states to the Pharisees, *"...The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, lo here! or lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you."* It was not to come as other kingdoms had come with sound of a battle trumpet and a great war, but rather with men accepting the teachings of Christ

and submitting themselves to his will. Another passage which will serve to set forth the nature of the kingdom is found in John 18:36. Here we find Jesus being questioned by Pilate. Pilate during his interrogation asked Jesus if he were a king. This was of great concern to the Roman government and the rule of Caesar. Jesus then puts Pilate's fear to rest. In answering he said, *"...My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence."* Herein we find the nature of Jesus' kingdom. It was not of this world but rather a spiritual kingdom.

Now addressing the time of its coming we find several passages which shed light on the subject. It first should be noted that both Jesus and John the Baptist taught that the kingdom was at hand. This implies that the kingdom was imminent, not some two thousand years in the future. Another point worthy of consideration is the statement of Jesus to his disciples found in Mark 9:1. Jesus states, *"...Verily I say unto you, that there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power."* Jesus plainly teaches that some that were in the audience that day would not die until the kingdom had come. There are only four possibilities concerning this statement:

1. Jesus deliberately told a lie.
2. He thought it would come during their lifetime but was wrong.
3. There are some people alive today who were alive when this statement was made.
4. The kingdom came during the lifetime of the disciples.

The first three ideas are not even worthy of our consideration. This leaves only number four. The kingdom came during the lifetime of the disciples.

One does not have to look very far to see that it indeed came to pass just as Jesus said it would. This is revealed in the writings of the Apostles. Paul in his epistle to the Colossians 1:13 writes as he gives thanks unto God, *"Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:"* Paul here states that he and the brethren had been translated (past tense) into the kingdom of Christ. John also in the Revelation 1:9 writes, *"I John, who*

*also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom..."* Here John says he is in the kingdom. How could Paul and John have been in a kingdom that did not yet exist? The answer is that they could not have. The kingdom was established during the lives of the disciples just as Jesus said it would.

The kingdom of Christ is not an earthly kingdom, nor is it yet future. It is here now and has been in existence for approximately two thousand years. Christ is now the king and reigns over his subjects. The kingdom is the Church of our Lord. All who have heard, believed and obeyed are in his kingdom and anxiously await the time when the kingdom shall be delivered up to the Father (I Cor. 15:24). The question now becomes ARE YOU IN THAT KINGDOM?

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## GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>DATES</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>SPEAKER</u>
June 1 - 6	Taylor's Cross Roads Congregation Roanoke, AL	Tony Whiddon (Roanoke, AL)
June 2 - 6	Lode Congregation Lode, KY	J.D. McDonald (Woodbury, TN) & Joe Hill (Hager Hill, KY)
June 8 - 13	Mt. Carmel Congregation Woodland, AL	Wilbur Bass (Auburn, AL)
June 9 - 13	<a href="#"><u>Annual Gathering in 2008</u></a> Vilonia, Arkansas	Various Speakers Contact: Don Averitt 501- 450-8582 for information.
June 13 - 15 7:00 P.M. CDST Fri. & Sat. 9:30A.M. & 4:00 P.M. on Sun.	Antioch Congregation Greenup, IL	Mike Daniel (Douglasville, GA)
June 15 - 20	Ephesus Congregation Ephesus, GA	J.D. McDonald (Woodbury, TN)

June 15 - 20	Hokes Bluff Congregation Hokes Bluff, AL	Sam Dick (Cave City, KY)
June 16 - 20	Estesburg Congregation Estesburg, KY	Harry Cobb (Wedowee, AL)
June 20 - 22	New Bethel Congregation Cullman, AL	Joe Hill (Hager Hill, KY)
June 20 - 22	Antioch Congregation Douglasville, GA	Ron Scott (Bloomington, IN)
June 22 - 29	Marrowbone Congregation Marrowbone, KY	Harry Cobb (Wedowee, AL)
June 25 - 27	Summer Fellowship 2008 <a href="#">Pine Mountain State Resort Park</a> Pineville, KY.	Various Speakers
June 27 - 29	Willow Oaks Congregation Russell Springs, KY	J.D. McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
June 27 - 29	Verona Congregation Verona, KY	Joe Hill (Hager Hill, KY)
June 28 - 29	Dowell Hill Congregation Columbus, IN	Mike Daniel (Douglasville, GA)

## SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. What animal's hide served as the outside covering for the tabernacle tent?
2. As a token of his friendship, what did Jonathan give to David?
3. Who did Nehemiah say would be excluded from the congregation of God?
4. According to Luke, who had seven demons cast out of her?
5. In the book of First Peter, what did Peter refer to Christ and his followers as?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH . . .

and remember last month's questions?

1. In Judges, what did Jephthah's vow to the Lord end up costing him? HIS ONLY CHILD, A DAUGHTER (Jud. 11:30-40)
2. According to David in Psalm 62, what are men of high degree? A LIE (Psa. 62:9)
3. In the book of Isaiah, which city was referred to as a marketplace for the nations? TYRE (Isa. 23:1,3)
4. John said the law came through Moses, but what two things came through Jesus? GRACE AND TRUTH (John 1:17)
5. What were the names of the two women whom Paul urged to be of the same mind? EUODIA AND SYNTYCHE (Phi. 4:2)