

Two Men Disagree With the Preacher

Two men disagree with the preacher. They have both been taught that they are not just to "swallow" everything the preacher says; that they are to think for themselves. They are to be commended, therefore, for their careful evaluation of what is taught.

The key words with the first man, however, are, "It seems to me." All teaching is judged according to his own thinking, as to whether or not it makes sense to him.

The key words with the second man are, "What does God say about it?" He desires truth and knows that truth can only be found in God's word (John 17:17). If he disagrees with the preacher, he does so because he is convinced the preacher has misused a passage of scripture or has failed to consider a scripture that might affect his conclusion. He comes with an open Bible and an open mind, prepared to defend his position or to yield if he sees that it is indefensible.

The first man exalts self. He places too much confidence in his own thinking. He may do so unconsciously, but in reality he makes his own intellect and experience his god. His thinking is reflected in the words of Naaman, "Behold, I thought," words that would have taken Naaman to a leper's grave had it not been for the admonition of his servants (2 Kings 5:1-14).

The second man exalts God. His confidence is in what God says in the scriptures. He recognizes that his own intellect and experience fade into nothingness when placed in the brightness of the light of truth. A "thus saith the Lord" ends all controversy with him. His thinking is reflected in that of the Bereans who "were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they... searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11).

Unless the first man changes his attitude he is hopeless.

He is susceptible to all manner of false ideas. He cannot come to know God and His truth through his own wisdom (1 Corinthians 1:21). He must throw his own wisdom, intellect, and experience aside; he must become poor in spirit, meek before God, mourning, hungering and thirsting for righteousness; he must bow in submission to the Lord and to His word. He must say with Paul, "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor?" (Romans 11:33-34).

The second man is a blessed and fortunate man in-deed, for he will learn the truth that will make him free (John 8:32). Unfortunately, he is a rare man in the twentieth century. But he does exist—and he can exist even in the man who is presently reading this article. What a challenge to each of us! After all, it is one thing to disagree with a preacher, but quite another thing to disagree with Almighty God!

- by Bill Hall

The Kingdom Is The Church

The first preaching of Jesus is found in Matt. 4:17, "*From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'*" The kingdom was near, in regard to time, not distance. He told His disciples, "*Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power*" (Mk. 9:1). Some would see the kingdom arrive in their lifetime.

We learn the kingdom existed in the first century. Paul wrote in Col. 1:13, "*He has delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son.*" When Paul said "us" he meant himself and the church at Colossae. Therefore, the kingdom and the church are one and the same.

Today many do not believe the kingdom has come and are still awaiting its arrival. This would mean that none of the disciples, Paul, or the brethren at Colossae were in the kingdom. Yet, we have seen that they were. If you are waiting for something to arrive that is already here, you just might miss it all together.

- by Terry Sanders

Would God Ever Require Unlawfully Married People to Separate?

What should we say about a situation where a person desires to obey the gospel, but they

have been divorced for an unscriptural reason (Matt. 5:32; 19:9) and are now remarried? There has been lots of controversy on this subject, but it is clear that the basic concept of repentance necessitates a severance of the unscriptural marriage. Without this, the adultery continues (Romans 7:2,3) and forgiveness is impossible.

Some brethren have gone to great lengths in attempts to justify the unscripturally divorced and remarried couple remaining together. Very often an emotional appeal of this nature is made: *"I just can't believe that God would require such a difficult thing." "How could a loving God demand it?" "What about the children?"*

These questions can be easily answered by referring to an historical situation that developed in the days following the return of the Jews from Babylonian captivity. They violated the law of God by inter-marrying with people from other nations (Ezra 9: 1-4; Deut. 7:3). What were they instructed to do to resolve this sinful situation? Separate from those mates! Note:

"And Ezra the priest stood up, and said unto them, Ye have transgressed, and have taken strange wives, to increase the trespass of Israel. Now therefore make confession unto the Lord God of your fathers, and do his pleasure: and separate yourselves from the people of the land, and from the strange wives." (Ezra 10:10-11)

The difficulty of this action was compounded by the fact that children had been born to many of these unions (Ezra 10:44). But God's will was clear, and his faithful people saw that it was taught and obeyed.

So, the emotional arguments notwithstanding, we see that God has in the past required separation from unauthorized marriages. Why would it be different now?

- by Greg Gwin