

THE



“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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WHY DOESN'T GOD SPEAK DIRECTLY NOW?

Do you ever think it would be easier to speak to people about the gospel if God would just appear in front of them to confirm his existence and power? Do you wish God would just show himself to you and tell you what to do? Maybe you say you would do more for God if you could see deliberate miracles being performed that were unquestionably from God. Maybe you have talked with your loved ones and shared the gospel message with them. You might have talked about the events in the Bible, and they might have read the book cover to cover. You might think those people would definitely be-

THE HARVESTER
141 County Road 474
Woodland, AL 36280
ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



lieve if they had just one more push by seeing God appear before them. This is an attitude that is shared by the rich man in the parable from Jesus that is recorded in Luke 16:19-31. The story is referred to as the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. In the story, the rich man had plenty of possessions and food, while Lazarus was poor and sick. Lazarus was starving outside the gate of the rich man, but the rich man had no sympathy for Lazarus. When both the rich man and Lazarus died, the rich man went to a place called “torments” while Lazarus went to a place called “Abraham’s bosom” or “paradise”. There is a great gulf between paradise and torments, and there is no way for either soul to cross this divide. The rich man says he has five brothers back on earth, and they are in a sinful state. He asks if Lazarus can return to earth as a ghost or image of himself to explain to the rich man’s brothers that they should turn from their wicked ways. Abraham says the brothers have Moses and the prophets, let them believe them. The rich man insisted that if his brothers saw someone rise from the dead, then they would believe. Abraham says if the brothers do not believe Moses and the prophets, then they still would not believe even if one rose from the dead.

Do you believe what Abraham said in this parable? At the time Jesus was telling this story, the only forms of scripture recorded so far were the historical stories of Moses and the writings of the prophets. If someone did not believe Moses and the prophets, then they did not believe the inspired scripture that was available to them at the time. Do you think people need more to believe today than the inspired scripture we have in the form of the Old and New Testaments in the Bible?

Let’s take a look through the Bible at a few ways God has spoken to humans throughout the history of the world. First, God spoke directly to Adam when he told Adam he could eat almost any fruit in the garden, but God specifically said not to eat the fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (Gen. 2:16-17). This was a direct command, and God was very

clear in his message. Adam still ate the fruit. God spoke directly to Moses and the children of Israel for a while (Deu. 5:2-5), and during that time, there were sins being committed even by the children of Israel, the chosen people of God. At the time when Moses was going up to receive the ten commandments from God, the people were afraid (Exo. 20:18-21) and asked Moses not to let God speak to them directly (Deu. 5:23-31). They asked this because the appearance of God was very intense, and they were frightened by it. Later, based on that request, God committed to using prophets as his primary communication medium with men so that they did not have to be frightened by his presence (Deu. 18:15-22). The priesthood was established, but only the high priest would enter the most holy place in the tabernacle (Heb. 9:1-10). Throughout the Old Testament, there were miracles that were performed that proved God's power to the people. Even with all of these interactions and interventions from God, humans in the Old Testament still often failed to follow God. Jesus came to earth to fulfill the old law and begin a new covenant (Mat. 5:17-18). Jesus did away with the priesthood and allowed us as Christians to use him as our intercessor with God (Heb. 7:22-28). Hebrews 1:1-2 says God previously spoke by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us through his son, Jesus Christ.

The amount of direct or indirect communication humans have with God does not directly translate into obedience. Throughout time there have been people who obeyed and other people who denied God. Abraham's statement in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus still holds true today. The people living now must have faith in the scriptures, just as people who lived throughout the history of the world needed to have faith in whichever medium God chose to communicate with them at the time.

SCOTT CARPENTER
(Huntsville, AL)

JOINT PARTICIPATION

All true Christians have fellowship with each other. We share God as our Father in heaven, Jesus as our Lord and Savior and the Holy Spirit living within us. We share a common salvation and the same eternal home that Jesus has gone to prepare for us. When you walk in the light and I walk in the light, we have fellowship.

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. (1 John 1:7)

I may be a neighbor to you or you may live a great distance from me - it doesn't matter; we have fellowship because of the things we have in common.

Fellowship also includes joint participation. When you work side by side with other Christians in serving God or your fellow man, you share this common work together. When you assemble in your local congregation and sing, pray, and share in the scriptures, you have fellowship together.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. (Col. 3:16)

When you share in the Lord's Supper together, you have fellowship (communion).

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread. (1 Cor. 10:16-17)

This joint participation is desirable and necessary as we encourage each other in our Christian walk.

And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one an-

other: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. (Heb. 10:24-25)

However, there are activities in which you may jointly participate with people of the world that are inconsistent with you being a Christian. Some of the Corinthian Christians were apparently participating in the idolatrous feasts that were common at that time.

What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing? But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils. (1 Cor. 10:19-21)

It was totally inconsistent for the Corinthians to participate in the idolatrous practices and also participate in the Christian practices. In the same way, as a faithful Christian today, you cannot participate in the evil practices of the world.

For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. (Eph. 5:8-11)

Do not participate in the evil practices of the world; do not have fellowship with them.

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? (2 Cor. 6:14-15)

As a Christian, do not yoke or join yourself with an individual or group or activity that is inconsistent with your Christian life. Righteousness and lawlessness don't mix. Light and darkness cannot exist together. A close union between a be-

liever and an unbeliever won't work. The believer lives by the truth given by Jesus Christ; an unbeliever lives by the principles of the world. There are many possible applications of this admonition to include a marriage of a husband and wife where one does not believe or a business partnership between a believer and an unbeliever or membership in a club that has anti-Christian principles or activities.

You should not jointly participate with anyone named a brother in Christ who is practicing unrighteousness.

I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. (1 Cor. 5:9-11)

You want this individual to repent so you withhold your joint participation or fellowship from him. You don't even eat with him.

In the early church, there was a false doctrine that Jesus Christ didn't really have a physical body.

For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He

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The Harvester

141 County Road 474 * Woodland, AL 36280

Phone: (256) 449-9221* Email: raymcmamus@hotmail.com

Web Page: www.churches-of-christ.org

that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds. (2 John 1:7-11)

The false doctrine that Jesus did not have a physical body rejected the truth about Christ's suffering and death on the cross. Anyone bringing such a false doctrine must be rejected lest through your joint participation with them, you share in their evil deeds.

While true Christian fellowship is something we have because we walk in the light, fellowship is also joint participation. I encourage you to seek frequent joint participation with other faithful Christians. I also encourage you to reject any joint participation that is inconsistent with your faith in Jesus Christ.

ED ANDERSON
(Sierra Vista, AZ)

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. What was the reason that Jacob and his family began a new life in Egypt?
2. What did Samson do to the Philistines' crops after discovering his bride had been given to someone else?
3. What was the name of Ruth's son?
4. Who said to Mary, "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb!"?
5. What did Jesus say you should do if someone asks you to go with them for a mile?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH

...and remember last month's questions?

1. Who closed the door of Noah's ark? GOD (Gen. 7:16)

(cont. on pg. 8)

GOSPEL MEETINGS

DATES	PLACE	SPEAKER
Nov. 2 - 4	Estesburg Eubank, KY	Sam Dick (Cave City)
Nov. 8 - 11	Oak Grove Eubank, KY	Joe Hill (Hagerhill, KY)

(cont. from pg. 7)

2. "Hatred stirreth up strifes", but what does love cover?
ALL SINS (Pro. 10:12)
 3. What was the new name given to Daniel while in captivity?
BELTESHAZZAR (Dan. 1:7)
 4. What was Jesus' first miracle? CHANGING WATER INTO WINE (John 2:1-11)
 5. To what preservative does the Lord compare his disciples?
SALT (Mat. 5:13)
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THE ARTIST

Your love of beauty oh Lord I see
In the red, orange, and blue of the morning sky
The green of the landscapes
Speckled with the drops of paint called flowers
The black of night adorned with lights of white
Pale yellow now sits the moon
Your palette of many colors
Paints the picture I now see
Oh My God
Far too wonderful are you for me!

SAM DICK
(Cave City, KY)