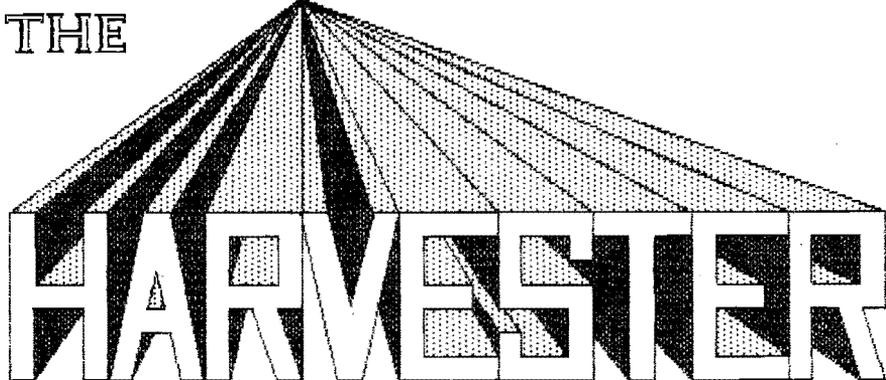


THE



# 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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## SANITY CHECKS

In my secular work as an engineer, I am sometimes called upon to estimate the requirements to build a particular design. Which components are needed? How big should they be? What stresses are involved? To answer these questions, I gather as much information as I can about the problem, and then I apply the formulas, equations, and engineering principles I learned in college.

But after I have done this, I am still not done. There is one more step to perform: I must look at the answers I get, apply my experience and common sense, and see if the results are reasonable. This is called a "Sanity Check". If

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my answers are too far different from what I expect, then I know I probably made a mistake somewhere along the way.

One of my college professors had a striking way of expressing this principle. He gave our class two laws we could use to analyze any system:

- 1) You can't push on a rope.
- 2) Some of it, plus the rest of it, equals all of it.

As silly and as obvious as these two rules may seem, the need to apply them is very real. It is easy to get caught up in the details of analysis, and overlook the big picture.

I believe that this same need exists when we study the Word of God. It is altogether too easy for us to get caught up in the detailed reasoning and arguments about a particular subject, and ignore the larger picture. Let's consider a couple of examples:

*"The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would shew them a sign from heaven.*

*He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red.*

*And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowring. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?*

*A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And he left them, and departed!" (Matt. 16:1-4)*

The Pharisees and Sadducees were using their God-given intelligence and common sense to look

at the heavens and predict the weather. Christ rebukes them here because they were not applying these same abilities to the study of the Scriptures.

Even when they did study God's law, they didn't apply "sanity checks" to their answers.

*"Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor!*

*Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold?*

*And, whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty.*

*Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift?*

*Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon.*

*And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein.*

*And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon.*

*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.*

*Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel!" (Matt. 23:16-24)*

I'm sure that, if we could ask them why they understood the law this way, they would have very reasonable answers. No doubt they would quote the works of respected Jewish scholars who went before them, who in turn quoted others, who quoted from the Law of Moses, each one adding his own contribution of reason

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Ray McManus  
 3265 Fowlers Ferry Rd.  
 Gadsden, AL 35901-9130  
 Phone: (205) 442-4181

and logic to the others. Were they wrong to do this? No, as the previous example shows. But they should have applied a few "sanity checks" to their answers. It is obvious from Christ's criticism that they made a wrong turn somewhere along the way. The weighty matters of the law (judgement, mercy, and faith) had been lost in their focus on the detailed reasoning.

We face a similar hazard in our study of God's Word today. We can easily become so concerned with a detailed study of the letter of the Law that we fail to consider the weighty matters: loving God, and loving our brother.

When we study into matters of fellowship and determine with whom we can break bread, do we apply the sanity checks in God's Word to our answers? Do we consider the condition of the New Testament churches with which the Apostles worked?

When we are drawn into conflict in the brotherhood, are we zealous to pursue the fight against Satan at any cost? In our zeal, do we forget to turn the other cheek, or to go the second mile? Do we pray for our enemies? What if, in the eyes of God, this person we are treating as an enemy of the cross is really our brother in Christ? Would we be comfortable on Judgement Day explaining our behavior?

We should never allow any situation to give us

an excuse for un-Christian behavior. When our answers contradict the basic principles of brotherly love, it is time to retrace our steps. Detailed and deep study of the Scriptures is a good thing. Zeal is a good thing. But the weighty matters of the law are far more important. They are our sanity check to ensure we are on the right track.

BOBBY D. RAMSEY

10841 East Placita Metate

Tucson, AZ 85749

## SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. Jephthah, a judge of Israel, was born of a harlot. True or False?
2. God tells his people in Leviticus to be partial to the poor. True or False?
3. In his dream Jacob saw the Lord also on the ladder. True or False?
4. Job, who claimed God as his creator and giver of life, also states his affliction came from God. True or False?
5. In Psalm 150 every verse contains the word "praise". True or False?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH . . .

and remember last month's questions?

1. Who are the fathers of the only two sets of twins named in the Bible? **ISAAC AND JUDAH** (Gen. 25:24 and 38:27)
2. How many sons did Aaron the priest have? **FOUR** (1 Chr. 24:1)
3. God will forgive and cleanse a person if he does what? **CONFESS HIS SIN** (1 Jn. 1:9)

4. What is the shortest verse in the Bible?  
JESUS WEPT (John 11:35)
5. What type of oil was used in the lamps of the tabernacle? OLIVE (Lev. 24:2)

### WHAT DOES IT MEAN . . .

What does it mean, "*we shall be saved by his life*" (Rom. 5:10)? It means there existed only one person, Jesus Christ, who could become the Saviour of my soul (Acts 4:12). Without His death on the rugged cross and the shedding of His precious blood and His resurrection from the power of death, I would have no chance to see the beauties of heaven (1 Cor. 15:20-22).

What does it mean, "*for we are saved by hope*" (Rom. 8:24)? It means I am not like the animal in the field which will someday die and that's it. If I live and pattern my life after Jesus Christ such that I am one of His disciples, I have solid expectations of receiving eternal life after I physically die (Heb. 6:18,19). I know there is life beyond the realm of the grave (John 5:28,29) and God is allowing me this opportunity to prepare for it.

What does it mean, "*for by grace are ye saved*" (Eph. 2:8)? It means God did me a huge favor which I can never repay with money or good deeds (Rom. 11:6). With his Son's blood, God the Father forgave my every sin! He wiped my slate clean so I could start anew (2 Cor. 5:17). God let me walk out a free man while His only Son paid the awful price (2 Tim. 1:9).

What does it mean, "*according to his mercy he saved us*" (Titus 3:5)? It means God loved me unconditionally. Even when I was the vilest

of sinners, when I wilfully disobeyed the commandments of the Lord and I was the least deserving creature on earth, God saw some value in me. In spite of my defects, God still let his Son die for me (Rom. 5:6-8). I will never be worthy enough to accept this gift of love from my Creator, yet I would be foolish to let it pass and be wasted (Rom. 6:23).

What does it mean, "*receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls*" (Jas. 1:21)? It means I cannot discover the seeds of eternal salvation anywhere else but in the holy Bible (Rom. 1:16). There is no need to listen to the vain philosophies of men or to follow the traditions of my ancestors (Col. 2:8) when I can be certain of finding all the right answers in God's Word (John 5:39).

Friends, are you a part of the 'body' which Christ will save (Eph. 5:23)? Do you know what it really means to be saved by becoming a part of that 'body'? The scriptures reveal the following information:

1. The 'body' is Christ's church (Col. 1:18,24).
2. Only the Lord can add you to His 'body' (Acts 2:47).
3. The Lord WILL add you (as He did the early disciples) when you --
  - a. Hear the Gospel (Rom. 10:17)
  - b. Believe in Christ (Acts 16:31)
  - c. Repent of your sins (Acts 3:19)
  - d. Confess Jesus Christ (Rom. 10:9-10)
  - e. And are baptized (Mark 16:16)

Have you done your part yet?

RAY

Gossip is letting the cat out  
of the bag a claw at a time.

# GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>Dates</u>	<u>Place &amp; Time</u>	<u>Speaker</u>
April 3 - 5	Fairview Church Oxford, AL	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
April 5 - 10	West Broad Street Wedowee, AL	Wilbur Bass (Auburn, AL)
April 6 - 10	Westwood Church Ashland, KY	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
April 13-18	Oak Grove Church Pulaski County, KY	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
April 24-26	Pleasant Ridge Church Woodbury, TN	Danny Grider (Somerset, KY)
April 27 - May 1	Verona, KY	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)

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## R E A D Y O U R B I B L E

- 1. Slowly, with mind alert.*
- 2. Carefully and with prayer.*
- 3. Expectantly and with anticipation.*
- 4. In a spirit of enjoyment.*
- 5. Eager to respond inwardly.*
- 6. Seeking a personal message.*
- 7. Repeating aloud verses which strike fire.*
- 8. Keeping a definite time each day for reading.*
- 9. Copying out a key verse to carry with you for re-reading through the day.*