

# A Basket of Figs

October, 1999

Dedicated to the idea that the decree makes the difference. Jeremiah 24:2,3

## It is SO Boring!

Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Ephesians 5:14-16

"History is so boring." She was in the eighth grade in a tiny Christian school. What made it worse was that she was the preacher's daughter, and her mother had very settled ideas about what school should be. "It should be interesting," she had informed me many times. I had been determined to make it so--I would have been willing to stand on my head if necessary.

Over the years I have heard that objection many times as a school teacher, with only the subject changed. It no longer causes me to panic, because I learned something years ago: the person that says it is complaining unknowingly about themselves--only those who are mentally asleep are ever bored.

This writer has never been bored in more than sixty-five years of life. I cannot imagine being bored. Even as a small child in church when I chose not to listen to the sermon, I always found something for my mind to do. Our church had a place on the wall where the hymn numbers and the amount of the Sunday School offerings were posted. I used to add them up in different ways and discovered some interesting mathematical principles that fascinated me about numbers. Later I would read the hymns and look at the maps in my Bible. Even later I became fascinated in the words of the minister and would follow the scripture lesson, and browse through my Bible. I was never bored.

There is a difference between thinking and being conscious. Some people think they are thinking, but they never do. After more than 40 years in the ministry and in teaching on all levels, this writer has found that there is a terrific resistance to real thinking.

I suppose the television age has compounded the problem, but there are enough exhortations in the scriptures that should cause us to realize that the condition has always existed. Some

people would rather run five miles than do serious mental work. People have always had a tendency to live on the surface, in a stream of consciousness, rather than contemplation and meditation.

It is not that minds are incapable of thinking. After all, by age four most people have learned to speak the language of their parents. Our children have learned English, but if we had been Japanese they would be speaking Japanese; if Russian, they would have been speaking Russian. It kind of boggles the mind to think that the minds of ordinary people have such capacity.

Over the years I have come to believe that mental sloth is the single most important reason that people go to hell. Life just slides by them--important and valuable things just pass them by, floating on the river of life, but they are too mentally lazy to reach out and grasp them. They are bored, after all, just as hogs would be bored in the treasure house of Solomon.

No wonder the Scriptures have so many warnings such as Hebrews 2:1: "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip." Among other things "slip" has the meaning of "drifting by."

One thing is certain: people who find the world of the mind boring during this life, certainly won't be bored in Hell. It sounds pretty lively from the descriptions in the Bible. It is in the world of the mind and soul that escape from hell comes: in the words of life that brings to us the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Bored people will never find that life.

## **Worship in Spirit and Truth**

But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. --John 4:23,24

True worship does not consist in ceremonies and outward form, and cannot be discernable to the senses. Phonies in religion make much of ceremonies, for the flesh can perform rites. The true worshippers worship internally, and everything that the church does must be to this end: worship from the heart, according to the truth.

This does not mean that the worship is invisible, for the Lord has commanded us to meet together, to call publicly upon the Lord, sing the praise of the Lord, hear the reading of Scripture, listen to the preaching of the Gospel, and to give tithes and offerings, which are done in

all the churches. But these things are abominable to the Lord if our hearts and minds are far from God, and even worse if they are done with the intent to deceive men and pretend piety.

The woman that Christ met at the well of Samaria (in John 4) tried to involve Christ in a discussion about the proper place of worship, whether it should be at the temple in Jerusalem, or at the one in Samaria. The Jews were right in that discussion, of course, because of the commandments of Moses, the servant of God. But the question was about to become moot, because the Son of God declared that there was to be introduced a new emphasis in the true worship of Jehovah. The rites and forms of Israel, along with the temple at Jerusalem, were about to pass away to make way for a new order.

It would no longer be required to worship only at Jerusalem, and the new temple of God would not be in one place, for the temple of God would be twofold: both in the hearts of Christian people, and in the properly constituted gatherings of the people of God.

**In the former sense**, Paul declares that the body of a Christian is the “temple of the Holy Ghost. In arguing that the Christian must not commit fornication, a sin against his body, Paul says emphatically: “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.” --I Corinthians 6:19, 20 Christians must live in sexual purity, for the body of a Christian is occupied by the soul, which has been renewed by the Holy Ghost, and is therefore holy.

The Christian is called to “be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ...” Ephesians 5:18-20 The body of the Christian is a holy temple for the soul, where spiritual sacrifices of thanksgiving and praise are to be offered to God constantly.

**In the second sense** the church, properly constituted and gathered together, is the temple of God. Peter speaks of it this way: “Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, all evil speakings, As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of The word, that ye may grow thereby: If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.” --I Peter 2:1-5

Thus the place of public and true worship is the church of Jesus Christ, made not of bricks and mortar, not built upon men and their pride, but made of individual Christians who are

made alive in Christ. As living stones they form a living building where “spiritual sacrifices” are to be offered to God.

This means that the proper heart attitude of a worshipper, who comes to church, is one of faith, humility and love. In order to worship aright, the worshipper must put away malice, and guile and hypocrisies. He must not cover the anger and hatred in his heart by a pious face or pious utterances, but must put away the sin of his heart. He must put away envy and be content to serve the Lord in the place where God has put him. He must put away the evil speakings that go along with envy, malice, and hypocrisies.

Jesus said the same thing: "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." --Matthew 5:23-24

God will not receive the offerings of those whose hearts are far from Him, but are instead filled with envy, malice, hatred, and hypocrisies. All these must be put away when we come to the church to sing the praise of God, for he has commanded us to love one another. What we do to be prepared for worship is to be carried into our lives the rest of the week, for our repentance is to be real, not feigned.

But the worship is also to be done in truth. On this place Turretin says that “in truth” means “with a true and real adoration, in opposition to the legal shadows and figures and the hypocrisy of external actions with which the carnal Jews were content.” (Vol. III, page 37)

A man can perform rites insincerely, with indifference, or in unbelief. Rites in themselves can do nothing for the worshipper, unless they be performed “in truth.” In the Old Testament, people performed rites, but most of them did not know what the rites meant. They offered sacrifices, thinking they enriched God, or that God somehow needed sacrifices as the pagans deities did (Psalm 50).

The church was not to perform rites in this manner, is the point that Jesus is making. What ceremonies that are used are to emphasize the spiritual nature of God: His invisibility, and His other glorious attributes. Therefore the true worship of God must be from the heart, inward and spiritual, without hypocrisy or deceit, according to the truth that is in Jesus Christ. All else is idolatry and deceit, and is abominable to God.

Even the great Solomon knew this: “The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination: how much more, when he bringeth it with a wicked mind?” --Proverbs 21:27

# What Do You Mean, "God"?

We can only worship God aright when we understand His Name. The eternal life that Jesus came to give consists of the knowledge of the Name of God. (John 17:3,6) This does not mean simply a title, for names mean nothing apart from the attributes that define the person. This writer has two relatives named "Matt" in Colorado Springs. There is confusion sometimes in the minds of my wife and I, until we know which "Matt" we mean, and that is only to be known by what we attribute to the individual. The young men are very different, and their names stand for different attributes.

Thus, worship of God is meaningless, unless we understand God's attributes that distinguish Him from idols, from dead gods that dead people worship. These attributes must be in our minds, if our worship is to be in truth, and not vain and empty.

**I. Independence.** God is the Creator of all things, who made all things from nothing. He is not dependent upon anything that He made.

But the LORD is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting king: at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation. Thus shall ye say unto them, The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens. He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion. -- Jeremiah 10:10-12

And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail. Hebrews 1:10-12

God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; --Acts 17:24-25

**II. Because He is Independent, God is Unchanging.** If God could change, He must change either from Himself, which means He is not Perfect. If something else could change Him, then He would not be Independent. A changing, evolving god is some-

thing other than the God of the Bible. Such a god is a dead god, who cannot do good, nor can he do evil, for such a God is simply the figment of a rebellious man's imagination. Men like such a god, for they think that it leaves them room to be independent from God. You cannot have it both ways; if God is Independent, then man is not; if man asserts his own independence, he declares war on the God of the Bible and brings himself to ruin.

Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. --James 1:16-17

And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the LORD of hosts. For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed. Malachi 3:5,6

God is the same in all ages: His wrath and judgment will always be poured out upon the ungodly, and He will show mercy to those who are His.

**III. Because God is Independent, He is without limits. This means He is infinite, without any limits of time and space.** He dwells in all time and space, but is not enclosed in any time and space. He simply cannot be put in any box of time and space. His greatness is unsearchable: you cannot reach any limit of His being, His justice, His mercy, His love and grace, or His wrath and glory.

"Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable." --Psalm 145:3

"For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." Isaiah 57:15

"Doubtless thou art our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O LORD, art our father, our redeemer; thy name is from everlasting." --Isaiah 63:16

The church recognizes that the attribute of infinity and eternity applies to Jesus Christ: therefore, we worship Him as God. But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in

Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." --Micah 5:2 **Jesus Christ is both man and true God, for He was begotten (came forth) of the Virgin Mary in Bethlehem, but the One who was born thus in Bethlehem was also begotten (goings forth) from eternity.**

Art thou not from everlasting, O LORD my God, mine Holy One? we shall not die. O LORD, thou hast ordained them for judgment; and, O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction. Habakkuk 1:12

Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen. --I Timothy 1:17

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. --John 1:1-3

"I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last." --Revelation 22:13

He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names. Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite. --Psalm 147:4,5

But the LORD shall endure for ever: he hath prepared his throne for judgment. --Psalm 9:7

His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed. -- Psalm 72:17

Thy name, O LORD, endureth for ever; and thy memorial, O LORD, throughout all generations. --Psalm 135:13

**Simplicity.** God has no parts. This follows from His independence and infinity. He cannot be divided, for then each "part" would be infinite, and therefore another God. He is not part love and part justice. The sinner will find the simplicity of His wrath in the day of judgment, for there will be no mercy mixed with it. Neither will the righteous find any wrath mixed with God's love and mercy, for He is altogether holy and true. This truth is beautifully set forth in the following Scripture:

God's essence is the same as His attributes. This is the reason that Scripture calls Him "light," and "love" and "greatness," and so forth. God is not one thing, and Ho-

liness something else. God is not one thing, and love something else. To deny attributes to God, or to separate them from God's essence, is to fall into the error of Islam.

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: 6:5 And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. --Deuteronomy 6:4,5

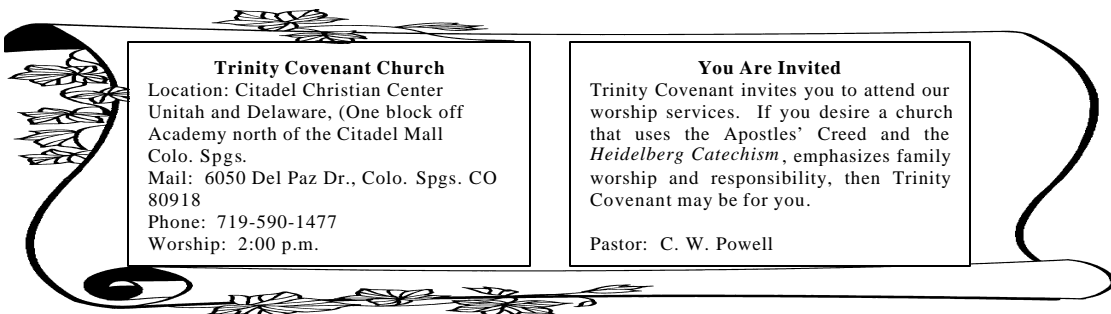
One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. --Ephesians 4:5,6

What do you mean when you say "God"? Do you attribute to that Name what the Bible attributes to Him? Are you thinking about the same God as the One the Bible reveals? Or do you think of some dead god who doesn't exist?

### Now in the Citadel Christian Center

Beginning October 31, Trinity Covenant Church is moving services to the Citadel Christian Center on the corner of Delaware and Uintah, one block north of the Citadel Mall in Colorado Springs. This is a wonderful opportunity for us to have more room, and affords us an opportunity to grow. We thank God, and ask you to join with us in the worship of the Lord.

We will send *A Basket of Figs* free of charge to anyone who requests it. We will be glad to send it to your friends and relatives. It is our desire that these little papers be used of the Lord to bear witness of the truth as it is in Christ. Our only request is that they be read: you do not even have to agree with everything! Unless otherwise indicated, all articles are written by Pastor Powell, and they may be freely duplicated as long as duly credited. We do not solicit funds, nor will we give or sell our mailing list to anyone.



<p><b>Trinity Covenant Church</b> Location: Citadel Christian Center Uintah and Delaware, (One block off Academy north of the Citadel Mall Colo. Spgs. Mail: 6050 Del Paz Dr., Colo. Spgs. CO 80918 Phone: 719-590-1477 Worship: 2:00 p.m.</p>	<p><b>You Are Invited</b> Trinity Covenant invites you to attend our worship services. If you desire a church that uses the Apostles' Creed and the <i>Heidelberg Catechism</i>, emphasizes family worship and responsibility, then Trinity Covenant may be for you.  Pastor: C. W. Powell</p>
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