

## Trends

A 2013 Harris poll found that a strong majority of Americans adults believe in God, but that number has dropped 8 percentage points since 2005 (74% vs. 82%). Some other findings in the poll:

- Belief in miracles: 72% down from 79% in 2005.
- Belief in heaven: 68% down from 75% in 2005.
- Believe Jesus is God's son: 68% down from 72% in 2005.
- Believe in the resurrection of Christ: 65% down from 70% in 2005.
- Virgin birth of Christ: 57% down from 60% in 2005.

- via CNSNews.com

**John 8:24:** "Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins."

## Sentence Sermons

"Let us endeavor so to live that when we come to die even the undertaker will be sorry."  
—Mark Twain

**Timothy 4:7:** "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness..."

## News & Notes

Please pray for those mentioned in the announcements after services and others listed on the bulletin board in the foyer of the church building.

Please be sure to pray for all the needy saints. *Be sure to pray for all the members at Westside! Please pray for the Ferrell family in Michigan. In previous Words of Life I informed the brethren about Susan Ferrell and her illness with a brain tumor. Shawn, Susan's husband, informed me Susan recently had very "clean" scan and resumed chemo on 3/11. She is having difficulties with the chemo, therefore, they are using a special regimen. Please continue to pray for Susan, Shawn and their three boys: Samuel, Micah, and Eli.*

*Christian Shadburne the young Christian brother in Bowling Green, KY has suffered a setback. His cancer has returned and is spreading. He will resume chemotherapy tomorrow (3/28). Please keep him and his family in your prayers.*

*"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." (James 5:16)*

Congratulate sister Wilma as she turned 92 years young this past Thursday! She is such a source of encouragement! Remember her and Virginia in your prayers.

**There are many needy saints! Can you help?! Let me know.**

If you know of any in need of our prayers please let us know so we can include them in the announcements and/or put their name on the bulletin board.

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**Times of Service:** Bible Study, Sunday 9:30 AM and Wednesday 7:00 PM; Worship, Sunday 10:30 AM and 5:00 PM

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Please direct questions and comments to the editor.

# Words of Life

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**"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."**

John 6:68



**Easter: "From heaven or from men?"**

Craig Thomas

Matthew 21:23-27 records a challenge to Jesus' authority by the chief priests. Jesus turns the tables on them establishing a vital truth concerning religious authority: Is it "From heaven or from men?" These are the only two choices: Will we teach and practice what God revealed or what man invents? Today, March 27<sup>th</sup>, millions are observing a religious holiday man calls "Easter." Is "Easter" of heaven or of men? Let's consider what we learn about "Easter" by reading God's word the Bible.

1) **"Easter" is not in the Bible.** Anyone who reads the Bible accepting it as a divine guide and the only rule of faith and practice would never know that March 27, 2016 is "Easter." By following the Bible alone one cannot learn even one thing about "Easter." It is true that the word "Easter" appears in Acts 12:4 of the King James Version of the Bible. However, the word the King James translators chose to translate as "Easter" is the Greek word *pascha* which they rightly translate as *Passover* the other 28 times it appears in the New Testament (NT). Every other reliable Bible translation does not make the error of the King James translators and they uniformly translate *pascha* as "Passover" in all 29 instances in the NT including Acts 12:4. Thus, "Easter," as celebrated by Catholics or Protestants, is unknown to the NT. No annual day to celebrate the Lord's resurrection is found in the NT. But the NT does specify a day to remember the Lord's death (1 Cor. 11:23-26; Acts 20:7), the "first day of the week." So, is "Easter" of heaven or of men?

2) **No "Easter" services in the Bible.** Great pomp and pageantry will be staged today, March 27<sup>th</sup>. But, it will not be patterned after what is found in the NT. Despite the fact God requires all to "worship in spirit and truth" (Jn. 4:24), according to the same rule (1 Cor. 1:10; 4:17; Phil. 3:16-17), and in conformity with NT teaching (Matt. 28:20; Jn. 16:13; Eph. 3:1-5; 2 Tim. 1:13); no church today can worship and celebrate "Easter" according to the inspired NT pattern, for no such inspired NT pattern exists for "Easter." So, is "Easter" of heaven or of men?

3) **The Bible does not reveal “Easter’s” time.** Why March 27<sup>th</sup>? Why not March 20<sup>th</sup> or April 3<sup>rd</sup>? Men can calculate the date on which Easter will fall for any given year. To which Bible passage do they turn that reveals this information? (cf. 1 Pet. 4:11; Isa. 8:20) None! It can only be learned from human tradition (Matt. 15:8-9). So, is “Easter” of heaven or of men?

4) **The Bible does not reveal “Easter’s” purpose.** Why do men and churches celebrate Easter? What is “Easter’s” stated purpose in the Bible? Since the Bible is our only authority in religion (1 Pet. 4:11), and makes the “man of God” “complete” and “thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:17) we must observe only those things commanded by the risen Savior in His word (Matt. 28:20; Col. 3:17; 2 Jn. 9). What passages of Scripture tell us the purposes and promises of celebrating “Easter”? None! So, is “Easter” of heaven or of men?

We expect many to disagree, disapprove and denounce this article. However, “if any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God” (1 Pet. 4:11; Prov. 30:6). The Bible is silent about the observance of “Easter.” “Easter” is entirely an invention of man. Let us submit ourselves only to what God revealed and not make our worship “vain” by “teaching as doctrines the commandments of men” (Mk. 7:7). “Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it.” (Deut. 12:32) Let us worship and serve God according to His word and remember that “If [we] do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in [us].” (Isa. 8:20)

Do you follow heaven or men? Remember what Paul said: “For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.” (Gal. 1:10) Is there light in you? Are you more interested in pleasing men than God? Come, join with us in returning to the Bible **alone**!

### **The Sword That Jesus Brought**

Larry Hafley

In Matthew 10:34, Jesus told his disciples, “Do not think I came to bring peace on earth, I did not come to bring peace but a sword.”

Recently, I heard the question asked, “What did Jesus mean when he said, ‘I did not come to bring peace but a sword’?” Immediately, my mind flashed to Hebrews 4:12, “The word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword.” Initially, however, I doubted that it fit the context of Matthew 10:34. After all, the word of God is not a literal sword.

But the more I thought about it, the more I realized that the sword of Hebrews 4:12 was parallel to the sword of which Jesus spoke in Matthew 10:34. Also, I thought about John 17:14 where Jesus, as he prayed for his disciples, the apostles, said, “I have given them your word.” Then, I remembered Ephesians 6:17 which says, “the sword of the Spirit is the word of God.”

With these passages in mind, I connected the text of Matthew 10:34-36. “And do not think I came to bring peace on earth, I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man’s enemies will be those of his own household.”

Though the Spirit’s sharp sword is designed to bring peace and harmony between men and nations, and between Jews and Gentiles, because of unbelief and disobedience, it has often brought division (Jn. 3:19-21; Eph. 2:11-16; 4:17-19; 5:11; 1 Pet. 3:1-7; 4:3, 4).

Becoming a Christian has set father against son, mother against daughter, mothers-in-law against their daughters-in-law, and husbands against their wives. Indeed, the word of God often has made a man the enemy of his own household. As long as people are able to read the word of God, and not only learn the truth, but also obey it, the word will continue to act as a sword, a sword that “pierces even to the division of soul and spirit.” As long as some obey and some remain disobedient, the sword of God, the word, will divide and separate and make enemies of whole households.

Although Jesus was not referring to this is Matthew 5:44, the lesson still applies to anyone who wears the name of Christ. Jesus said, “I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.” If, as Christians, we fail to show this love, and cease to do good to those divided against us, we fail in our duty to God. Worse still, we fail to lead the lost to God (Matt. 5:16).

### **Needs**

There remain many brethren in need of your help. For example, faithful gospel preachers in the U.S. and foreign lands are in dire need of financial support. Brethren in Zimbabwe are still suffering through another year of drought. They and their families faithfully labor in the gospel and suffer from material deprivations due to their stand for the truth, concern for the soul’s of men and love for the Lord and His Christ. Other brethren are in acute need of the basics of life (food, clothing, shelter, medical attention). If you would like to help please send me an e-mail (craigthomas82000@gmail.com) and I’ll put you in contact with a needy brother. Remember 1 John 3:17: “But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?”

