

# It Is Written

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## Attendance Problems

By Glendol McClure

I am persuaded that every local congregation has members who are unfaithful in their attendance. These saints would not think of missing work or an important appointment; yet they often think nothing of being absent when the saints gather for work and worship. Usually, we say such members have attendance problems. Is the problem really an attendance problem? Recently, another preacher and I engaged in a discussion about attendance. I would like to share with you for your consideration some of his comments.

*"Usually, a person's problem is not attendance. It is a symptom of a larger, deeper problem. Visitation and exhortation, with an attempt to identify the real problem would be all that I know to do. Most often, folks simply lack true faith and real conviction about the Lord, judgment to come, and eternity. They become so hardened in the ways of the world and have such worldly mind-sets, though they may not lead immoral lives, that the word is choked out of their hearts, 'And the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.' (Mark 4:19)*

*I believe Mark 4:19 is related to Hebrews 3:12,13 and that it describes the individual who, though he may not be a moral reprobate, is simply so given over to the cares, riches, and pleasures of this life that he becomes dull and insensitive to spiritual and eternal matters. This person's conscience may be as seared with a hot iron as is the conscience of the one described in 1Timothy 4:2. We may visit, exhort, even nag such people, but it will do no good, for they are hardened and oblivious to efforts to redeem and reclaim them. Encourage as you are able, but understand that you cannot spend all of your time chasing down those whose hearts are not receptive, being impervious and past feeling toward spiritual truth." I think he hit the nail squarely on the head!*

An attendance problem is really a symptom of a deeper spiritual illness—a heart problem. In the Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:1-23; Mark 4:1-20; Luke 8:4-15), Jesus taught in parabolic style using four different soils to represent the differing hearts of men—the listeners. Anyone who has done much gardening can easily understand the Lord's message in this parable. The member who is unfaithful in his attendance could be represented by any one or all three of the soils this parable describes—the WAYSIDE ground, the STONY ground, or the THORNY ground.

Let us heed the Hebrew writer's words: "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching. For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins." {Hebrews 10:25,26} How can saints who willfully choose to absent themselves from the assemblies, say they have truly fulfilled the command in verse 24? "And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works."

How can they "exhort one another?" How can they "draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith?" How can they "hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering?" The truthful and obvious answer is simple—they cannot. Willful absence is a willful sin for which there will not be another sacrifice!

I once heard a preacher express this truth by saying, "Willfully absenting oneself from the assembly is like removing a piece of coal from the fireplace. The fiery coal that is removed from the presence of the other hot coals will die out more quickly than had it been left in a heap with the others."

Such reasoning is absolutely accurate. The one who is alone will inevitably grow weaker and become a more vulnerable target for the tempter.

Willful absence from the assembly is a symptom of a dying love for the Lord, His word, His church, and other saints; it certainly can be classified as sinful. Let us strive to maintain an undying love, lest our love for God and His people become lukewarm. "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth." (Revelation 3:15,16) One can also begin to wax cold. "And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold." (Matthew 24:12) The Hebrew writer has given us a graphic picture of how God looks upon those who have allowed their love for and commitment to Him to fade. "Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?" (Hebrews 10:29)

## Keystone - The Resurrection of Christ

By Keith Greer

In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul made a strong case for the resurrection's vital importance to believers. Following are a few points to consider.

**Indisputable Proof of His Deity.** "And declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." {Romans 1:4}

His miracles, teachings, and claims, as well as His fulfillment of prophecy, all offered good evidence concerning His Deity. But His conquering of death and the grave undeniably proved to all that He one was God's Son.

**His Resurrection Day.** "Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it." {Matthew 28:1,2}

Under Moses' Law, the Sabbath was the Jewish Holy Day. When Moses' law was "nailed to the cross" {Colossians 2:14}, so was the Sabbath observance. Under the Lord's new law, the first day of the week-Sunday-belongs to Him. That is the day our Lord rose from the dead. Other passages {Acts 2:1-4; 20:7} show this day's special significance.

**His Receipt of the Role of Judge.** "Because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man who He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead." {Acts 17:31}

God ordained that Christ would judge all of mankind; and the evidence of this is His resurrection from the dead. Christ's overcoming of the grave provides us with divine assurance that we will meet Him in judgment {2 Corinthians 5:10; Romans 14:12}.

**The Parallel to Baptism.** "Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore, we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." {Romans 6:3,4} "Buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead." {Colossians 2:12}

Jesus died, was buried, and arose on the third day after His crucifixion. The alien sinner is buried in water, dies to sin, and rises out of the watery grave to walk in newness of life. Do you see the parallel? Because Christ rose from the dead, the sinner knows that his obedience will result in his forgiveness and salvation?

In my file, I have a chart concerning Christ's resurrection. The chart is in the form of an arch. The stones of the arch contain some great fundamentals of the Christian faith. One "keystone" binds all of these arch stones. That keystone is Christ's resurrection from the dead. If someone could prove that Christ's resurrection from the dead was a hoax, all of those Bible doctrines would collapse. Dear reader, there's no cause for alarm.