

Living to Win

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Personal from. . .

Ronald L. Dart

Christian Mysticism

I have often been puzzled why some Christians become involved in mysticism. It is utterly foreign to me, but it has a strong appeal to others. Mysticism seems to be based on the idea of knowledge that is only available to a few initiated ones. Here is the question: Is all the information that is important available to everyone (exoteric) or is it limited to a chosen few (esoteric)?

Jesus does seem to say that there is esoteric knowledge. Right after he gave the Parable of the Sower and the Seed to the crowd, his disciples came and asked why he spoke to them in parables. Jesus' answer has always fascinated me: "Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given" (Matthew 13:11).

So there is inside knowledge. There are mysteries, and it is not given to everyone to understand them. But then, the obvious question is, "Why not?" Jesus went on to say, "For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath."

It would be a mistake to overlook who this was aimed at. It was, in fact, the Jewish religious establish-

ment. But what does he mean, whoever *has*? Has *what*? Jesus goes on to explain: "Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and *their eyes they have closed*; lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."

It is striking to me that he says, "their eyes they have closed." It isn't that God closed their eyes, they did. Does that suggest why they could see something and not perceive it? Or hear something and just not get it? It is possible, of course, for a people to lose the

"want to" for reasons of their own. Then Jesus adds this: "But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them."

Here lies the point. What were the disciples seeing that the prophets had not? What had hitherto not been seen and heard? It was the words and works of Jesus. So we aren't talking about esoteric knowledge. It was right there for everyone to see. But they had long since closed their eyes and ears to God.

The story behind this parable is something a thinking person ought to tumble to fairly quickly. It is obvious what Jesus meant by the whole thing. So we aren't dealing in anything mysterious if you haven't blinded yourself to it by your prejudices or by self-justification.

There are still some puzzling passages. For example: "Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves. No man can come to me,

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Changing Lives

CEM gives away far more tapes than they sell. If a person cannot afford to buy tapes or the YEA books, we give them *FREE*. We are changing lives of the young and mature. The YEA books are anchoring young people to Christ as never before. Would you like to play a part in this? Your donations make it possible for us to freely give these items to those who cannot afford them.

New Rules for Gifts to Charities

By Larry S. Watkins

Greater diligence will be required for tax deductible charitable contributions in 2007. All cash contributions must be substantiated by a canceled check, credit card receipt, or a detailed receipt from the non-profit recipient. Under the old IRS law, cash donations less than \$250 received special treatment. Since a personal log of cash donations will no longer suffice, to insure your donations are tax deductible, make donations to charities by check or credit card.

A new rule effective in 2006 states: used items such as clothing, housewares, and furniture will only be permitted if the items are in "good used condition or better." Since the law does not spell out what that means, one way to substantiate the usability of items would be to take and date photos before giving them to such places as the Salvation Army.

The above rule does not apply to a single item when the claimed value is more than \$500. This claim must be supported by an appraisal from a qualified, unrelated party and accompanied by IRS Form 8283, *Noncash Charitable Contributions*, filed with your tax return.

Distributions from an IRA can go directly to a charity and be *excluded from taxable income*. However, such distributions are not deductible. This year's IRA rollover can't be more than \$100,000, and the one doing the rollover must be at least 70 years old. Without extension of this law, this opportunity expires after 2007. Seniors could come out ahead this year by making *charitable contributions from their IRAs* because of the interaction of various Tax Code provisions. These charitable contributions count toward the IRA's required minimum distribution in 2006 and 2007 while reducing the owner's taxable estate. Also, taxpayers receive a *tax benefit* in states that tax required minimum distributions and don't allow for tax-deductible charitable contributions. Donors must obtain written confirmation from each charity specifying the amount and date of the donations. Contributions must come directly from the IRA custodian to the charity. For clarification on this or other estate planning questions, please contact Larry Watkins at lsw@cemnetwork.com or call 1-888-BIBLE-44.

A Pentecost to Remember

By Pam Dewey

The young and the young at heart will get a "taste of Bible Times" at the CEM Memorial Day/Pentecost Family Retreat. A Bible Times Bazaar will be held outdoors (weather permitting) Pentecost afternoon. Children 12 and under will find a variety of fun and educational Bible-themed games, crafts, and other activities especially planned to help them truly celebrate Pentecost. Boys and girls can get their photograph on the front of the fictional *Sinai Shofar* newspaper, billed by name in the caption as an "eyewitness" to some of the events surrounding the giving of the Ten Commandments, with a souvenir copy to take home. They can make their own tambourines at Miriam's Tambourine Studio. Or perhaps they'd enjoy getting a real taste of the flavor of Bible times at the Tasting Booth where such Middle-Eastern treats as hummus and pita will be featured! Those of all ages who would like to are encouraged to come in costume to add to the festivities and celebration.

These and many more special activities will be hosted by an enthusiastic team of costumed Bible characters who hope your children head home after the weekend with many happy memories that have proven to them that God's Holy Days can be special times that they can really look forward to with anticipation. We also hope that you will get ideas and enthusiasm to take back to your home area about making every Feast season a celebration and special for all ages.

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except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be *all* taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me” (John 6:43-45).

This is a difficult passage, but there is one shining light in it. Those Jews who had heard and learned of the Father gravitated naturally to Jesus. Those who had learned nothing naturally tended to hate him. So in a way, it was suggestive of the good soil of the parable (see Matthew 13:18-23). Describing those whose hearts and minds were open to God, Jesus said: “But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.”

So it does, after all, depend on what kind of people we are. Some will have gone too far down the wrong road, and Jesus could come and feed 5000 of them, teach them, heal them, and they still could not grasp what is right in front of their eyes. But nevertheless, there is in man an insatiable thirst for meaning in his life. It is what Viktor Frankl called, a *drive* to meaning. I take that to mean that it is as innate as the sex drive and just as demanding.

The question we must now answer is where that meaning is going to come from. Is it from experiences with the spirit world? Experiences with God? There are those who claim that a spirit spoke to them and gave them special insights. But how can they be so

sure? John said we should try the spirits (1 John 4:1-3), but how do we do that? By what standard do we judge them? Against what do we measure them? The answer is clear enough if we haven’t dismissed some of the important witnesses. Take Isaiah for example: “When men tell you to consult mediums and spiritists, who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living? To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn” (Isaiah 8:19-20 NIV).

In a very real sense, Isaiah is telling people to look to the Word of God. The Law was the sum of the Scriptures available in his day. And it was *written*. The expression, “the testimony,” is quite specific. It is the singular title given to the Ten Commandments. So, I gather that we try the spirits against the written Word of God. And one more thing which I will come to.

Where does our knowledge, our insight, our special meaning, come from? Is it from philosophy? From Wisdom? Paul tackles this question head-on and concludes it comes from the Word of God, written and personal in Jesus Christ.

Paul hid nothing. But the mindset of people who heard him made all the difference. The Gospel was not hidden, it was just that men did not want to deal with it. They had closed their eyes and the god of this world had blinded them to the reality of Christ.

But what do you do when the drive to meaning, the innate desire for meaning to life, yours and others, comes up against a brick wall? Well, you can manufacture your own

meaning. You can begin to listen to your own feelings. Maybe they represent the spirit speaking to you. You can find a guru and follow him, someone who claims hidden meaning he can reveal to the chosen few. It is an odd truth that many people, not satisfied with the real that is right in front of their eyes, try to look below the surface. They end up finding stuff that isn’t really there.

I think it is this drive to meaning that leads some into *Christian Mysticism*. The real is not enough for them. They have to have a deeper meaning. A more personal meaning. But it is important to remember that meaning must always be tested against what is real. Nothing could be more real than the Ten Commandments. Nothing could be more real than the teaching and example of one Jesus Christ. The struggle with life can be hard enough with these to go by, but it is a battle that can be won. And the battle has to be won on a real playing field against real challenges.

Mysticism is a retreat from the real. In effect, it abandons the struggle for real life and seeks meaning mystics think is denied to others. To some extent it involves a desire to be better than others. Esoteric knowledge is that which is specialized or advanced in nature, available only to a narrow circle of “enlightened,” “initiated,” or highly educated people. Thus, it has an appeal to vanity.

In Jesus Christ, there is no mystery. What is important to know is right there. It is real.

Sincerely,

Ronald L. Dart

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Celebrate Memorial Day/Pentecost at CEM's Family Retreat!

The third annual Family Retreat begins at 6 p.m. Friday, May 25th at Paris Landing State Park, Buchanan, TN. Y'all join us for a CEM sponsored drop-in with fresh-made sandwiches and fixin's. Enjoy fellowshiping with old and new friends. Children and teens should register for YEA classes/seminars and pick up their colorful booklets. No one should overlook registering for the door prize.

Three one-hour insightful seminars will begin at 9 a.m. and three more at 10 a.m. Many interesting and intriguing subjects will be explored. You're in for a mind expanding treat.

Everyone loves to celebrate. God's Feasts should be no less than a celebration. So cool, one-hour YEA classes/seminars will begin at 10 Sabbath morning with a theme, *Celebrate 50!* for all five age groups. Children and teens will learn why we celebrate the Feast of Pentecost and the Jubilee year. We've pulled out all stops to make these classes and seminars fun, memorable, and relevant. We urge everyone between the ages of three and 20 to join us.

Bronson James, of the Church of God, International will speak at the 2 p.m. worship service. At 7:30 p.m., as Pentecost arrives, join us for one of the most popular of all CEM sponsored events—the Pie and Ice Cream social.

Again Sunday morning (Pentecost) will begin with two or three seminars each hour from 9-11. At 10 a.m. all five age groups will enjoy another dynamic, fun-filled YEA class. The Holy Day worship service begins at 11:30 a.m. in the Conference Center with Ron Dart speaking. Bronson James will treat us with special music. At 2 p.m., bring your enthusiasm and anticipate a unique Pentecost celebration at the pavilion(s). A "Bible Times Bazaar" with booths, "Bible characters", and other characters will entertain the young and young at heart. A scavenger hunt will entertain and challenge teens during the Bazaar. CEM will sponsor a hamburger and hot dog cookout with fixin's and fellowship at 6 p.m. at one or both pavilions. An enjoyable Family Dance with refreshments will begin at 8 p.m. at the Conference Center. More activities for young people are being planned for Monday. Check out our website at www.borntowin.net for more information.

More thought provoking seminars will begin at 9 a.m. Monday followed by a "brainstorming session" conducted by Jim O'Brien at 10. Ron Dart will close this Family Retreat with a final farewell at 11:30. For reservations call 1-800-250-8614 and give CEM Group Number 3078. We're looking forward to seeing you there!

Calendar of Events

May 25-28, 2007 **Memorial Day/Pentecost Family Retreat** in Paris Landing State Park, Buchanan, TN. An inspirational, uplifting experience for the entire family—sermons, seminars, YEA classes, Bible Times Bazaar, cookout, and other events. For reservations call 1-800-250-8614 and give the CEM group number 3078.



Radio Update

Riverside, CA
KPRO 1570 AM
M-F 1:30 pm
Sun 7:00 am

Memphis, TN
WMQM 1600 AM
M-F 7:30 am
WLRM 1380 AM
Sun 4:00 pm

Roswell, NM
KCKN 1020 AM
S-F 8:00 pm

Roanoke, VA
WKPA 1390 AM
M-F 10:30 AM
Sun 7:00 AM

Lynchburg, VA
WKBA 1550 AM
M-F 10:30 AM
Sun 7:00 AM

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PS. This is only a small part of the story. For a complete discussion, request a *FREE* CD or cassette tape titled, *Christian Mysticism*. Just check the appropriate box on the enclosed card and return it to us. We are slowly losing our capacity for doing cassettes, so if you don't tell us which you want, we'll send a CD.

Christian Educational Ministries

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*That the man of God may be proficient
and equipped for every good work.*