

# GLAD TIDINGS

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

Vol. X

September 23, 2001

No. 38

## Will we be relevant in the twenty first century?

By: Jerry Fite

**A**s we have entered the twenty first century, there are some who are wondering if “the Churches of Christ” will survive and be relevant in a postmodern world. Randy Harris, a teacher of theology and ethics of Abilene Christian University, has addressed this question in the most recent publication of “New Wine-skins”.

He asserts, “*We cannot be sure we have gotten it all exactly right*”, and our generation “*is not going to understand love for God in terms of getting it right, but rather experientially and relationally*”. He sees a group among “Churches of Christ” who are destined to lose their identity: “*One group, defending tenaciously the position that we do indeed have it all right will become increasingly marginalized, strident, then irrelevant and just fade away.*”

Where does God’s Word reveal that we can never be sure that we have gotten it all right? This is man’s concept devoid of the oracles of God (I Peter 4:11). Jesus certainly was not thinking in these terms when he asserts, “I am the way, the truth, and the

Life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). Must we live our lives with the nagging doubt of ever coming to the Father because we cannot be sure that we have gotten it exactly right when we chose the way of Jesus? And, if we can not be sure we have gotten it exactly right, we cannot with certainty condemn the way of Mohammad who claims the same Father as Jesus. If we are to be relevant in the twenty first century when the Muslim religion is on the rise, must we cease from Scriptural arguments against this false religion?

Jesus says to all who those who believe upon Him, “if ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples; and ye shall now the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:31-32). Notice Jesus says the relationship of discipleship is experienced by getting something right. The infallible standard is: “abide in Jesus’ word.” Jesus says those actually abiding in Jesus’ word will “know the truth” and be made “free” from sin.

Jesus teaches us that if we love Him, we will keep his commandments (John 14:15). Jesus sees one expressing his love for God by keeping God’s command-

ments. Does this not demand that we “get it exactly right”? Jesus did not say that we show we love Him by “desiring” to keep His commandments, or “get close” to keeping the commandments. Love for Him demands that we “keep” his commandments. This is the standard God demands of all who claim to love Him.

Certainly, no one claims to get it all exactly right. That is why we confess our sins, repent and rise up to do exactly what God demands. It is one thing to admit our short comings to God’s standard, and quite another to say that we can never determine what God’s exact standard is.

Priscilla and Aquila acted upon the principle that people can get it exactly right, for they took Apollos aside and “expounded unto him the way of God more accurately” (Acts 18:26). Did they make the Lord’s church irrelevant? In each generation there will be those who desire to get all things right. How can we, with the same mind set, not then be relevant? By holding to the gospel that never fades away, how can we fade away?