

# The Washington Messenger

Volume 2 – Number 12

**April 07, 2013**

## Washington church of Christ

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### Order of Services

**Sunday, April 7, 2013**

Song Leader	Derald Sanchez
Prayer	Scott Thomas
Preaching	Bob James
Lord's Supper	
Prayer for the Bread	Tom Dolan
Prayer for the Cup	Pete Ferencze
Prayer for the Collection	Brian Jeffries
Assisting at the Table	Bob Celentano Jr.
Morning Closing Prayer	Ralph Ruggiero
Evening Opening Prayer	Bob Celentano
Announcements	Matt Grimaldi

### Schedule of Weekly Services

Sunday Morning Bible Classes	9:30 am
Sunday Morning Worship	10:30 am
Sunday Evening Worship	6:00 pm
Wednesday Evening Bible Classes	7:30 pm
Thursday Morning Bible Study	11:00 am

### So Near ... and Yet So Far

The Bible records an interesting interview between Jesus and one of the Scribes. This Scribe had been impressed with the answers which Jesus had given when the Pharisees and Herodians tried to *"catch Him in His words"*. (Mark 13:13.)

When Jesus had spoiled each of their weak attempts by silencing each group, this scribe with due respect asked Jesus the question, *"Which is the first commandment of all?"* (Mark 12:28).

When Jesus replied that to love God supremely was the first and to love thy neighbor as thyself was the second, the Scribe was in perfect agreement. He evidenced this by declaring, *"Well, Master, thou has said the truth"* (Mark 12:32.) He then concluded that to comply with the commandments of God *"is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices."* (Mark 12:33). This conclusion led Jesus to say to him, *"You are not far from the kingdom of God."* (Mark 12:34).

In the rest of this chapter the manner in which Jesus indicts the Scribes for their attitudes and actions imply that this Scribe, who was not far from the kingdom of God, refused to become a follower of Christ.

What a tragic ending to an event which began with so much promise, for when the event was over he was so near ... yet so far away from the greatest privilege of his life. This unidentified scribe is just one of many persons in the Bible who teach by their experiences the valuable lesson that, when the blessings of God are involved, to be just near is as unrewarding as to be far away. In both instances the end result is the same!

For forty years Moses had been leading Israel towards the land of promise. These had been eventful years, with Israel reaping the results of their unbelief when because of fear they refused to enter the land from Kadesh. (Numbers 13). God was so provoked to anger by Israel that He would have destroyed them, and raised up another nation from Moses. (Numbers 14:11-12). But Moses interceded on behalf of Israel so earnestly that God would relent. It could be said to be ironic, that these same people for whom he had interceded, would by their actions and continuous murmuring provoke Moses so in the desert of Zin that he would disobey God, and be denied entrance into the Promised Land. But, we read of this happening in Numbers 20, when Israel murmured for water, and God gave Moses and Aaron instructions for obtaining the water from the rock there in the desert.

This record should help us to see that any departure from God's commands, no matter how minor we consider them to be, can remove us far away from God. Moses spoke to the people instead of the rock, and smote the rock twice with the rod ...

these infractions caused God to say, *"You shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them"* (Numbers 20:12)

In Deuteronomy 34 we see Moses ascend Mt. Nebo to the top of Pisgah, and God showed him all the land.

*Then the LORD said to him, "This is the land of which I swore to give Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, 'I will give it to your descendants.' I have caused you to see it with your eyes, but you shall not cross over there."* (Deuteronomy 34:4)

Moses died there in the land of Moab, with the Canaan in sight. But Canaan was denied to him because of his disobedience. He was So Near ... and So Far Away!

The New Testament also contains records of persons who came close to accepting the greatest of all blessings, but for various reasons turned aside. In Mark 10:17, a young man came running to Jesus, asking Him what he needed to do to inherit eternal life. After he learned the "one thing that he lacked", he went away sorrowful because he was seemingly unwilling to comply. His desire for eternal life faded in his love for material things. *"One thing thou lackest"* – So Near ... and So Far Away.

The apostle Paul was faced with a situation that many who teach God's Word in an effort to persuade men to accept Christ may identify with. Two men of notoriety, one a governor and the other a king, were near to making that great decision ... but yet remained so far away.

Felix, the governor, heard Paul's reason of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, and he trembled. He was visibly moved, but not moved enough, for he responded "Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you." (Acts 24:25). King Agrippa, upon hearing the same gospel proclaimed by Paul, acknowledged the possibility of his becoming a Christian." (Acts 26:28). We have no record of their obedience to the gospel at a later time ... both seemingly were So Near ... and So Far Away!

These two instances should show the importance of complete obedience to obtaining the blessings of God.

The lesson from the Scribe who Jesus said was "not far from the Kingdom of God" teaches us that we must actually enter the kingdom. Jesus, the King, has decreed that, *"unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."* (John 3:5)

When a person hears the gospel of Christ (Romans 10:17) ... believes it (Romans 10:10) ... repents of their sins (Acts 17:30) ... and is baptized in water (Acts 8:36; 10:48), for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38), this regeneration takes place and he enters the Kingdom of God.

Are you in the Kingdom of God? Or are you So Near ... and So Far Away? It would be the great tragedy of our life if we would be like the rich young ruler and allow the "one thing we lack" to bar us from the joys of the Kingdom of God.

...Bob

## EVENTS AND NOTES

WE WILL NOT HAVE THE THURSDAY MORNING STUDY THIS WEEK

THERE WILL BE A MEN'S BUSINESS MEETING. TODAY AT 4PM

UPCOMING EVENTS THAT WE ARE AWARE OF ARE ...

- ⤴ NORTHEAST FC CAMP, JUNE 30<sup>TH</sup> – JULY 5<sup>TH</sup>.
- ⤴ BOB AT WEST POINT ON SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 28<sup>TH</sup>. STAN WILL DELIVER THE LESSON HERE
- ⤴ WASHINGTON LADIES' RETREAT – SEPTEMBER 6<sup>TH</sup> & 7<sup>TH</sup>.
- ⤴ OUR FALL GOSPEL MEETING WITH JOE WORKS OF THE FAIR LAWN CONGREGATION ON OCTOBER 11<sup>TH</sup> – 13<sup>TH</sup>.

ANYONE DESIRING A FAMILY OR AN INDIVIDUAL BIBLE STUDY PLEASE CONTACT ME (BOB JAMES).

### ***Our Prayer List...***

- ⤴ Doug Focht ... Everett Guyton ... Georgia DeLorenzo ... Donna Banghart ... Glenn Montgomery's father ... our young people here at Washington ... our young people away at college ... the men and women in military service ... leaders of our nation ... leaders of our congregation ... our congregation.

*"This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him."* (1 John 5:14-15 NIV)