

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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"AMEN"

The Greek word translated Amen (Ameen) appears 188 times in the New Testament and Septuagint. It is translated "verily" 120 times. A word that was found on the lips of our Lord and which appears 188 times in His inspired word is worthy of our study. Especially is this so when the meaning of the word is being perverted and men are substituting hand-clapping for it.

Definition: Vine's Expository Dictionary points out that when it is used as a reference to God it means that "God is faithful." When used in reference to his precepts, promises, and warnings it means "sure." When the word is uttered by God it means "it is and shall be so." And when used by men it means "so let it be" (Vine, p. 53).

When a man says Amen he is adopting as his own that which has been said. The word is never used in a light or frivolous manner and always carries a solemnity with it. It is limited to the religious atmosphere. It is an expression of faith that God holds the thing true, or will or can make it true (Hastings Bible Dictionary, Vol. 1, p. 80-81).

As with many Bible words and concepts, liberal trends are having their effect upon this word. The usage and definition of Amen are in a state of evolution and are not being used entirely as they were in the New Testament. This usually happens to Bible words and concepts when men do not have the proper respect for the original. Look at the "evolution" of such words as baptism, Christian, fellowship, saint, etc.

Some Instances Where Amen Is Used: 1. When a curse was pronounced by the priest upon a woman guilty of adultery under the law of jealousies she was to respond by saying "Amen, Amen" (Numbers 5:11-31). 2. Moses pronounced twelve curses upon the tribes of Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali. After each curse Israel was commanded by God to respond "Amen" (Deuteronomy 27:15-26). 3. When Ezra read and explained the law and blessed the Lord, all the people answered "Amen, Amen" (Nehemiah 8:1-6). 4. Nehemiah rebuked the ones who imposed usury on the people and made them restore what they had taken. All the congregation said "Amen" (Nehemiah 5). 5. "Amen" was used when a profound spiritual statement was uttered (Matthew 28:20; Romans 1:25). 6. It was common for others to say Amen at the close of a prayer to express "let it be so" (1 Corinthians 14:16). 7. Amen was expressed by one to confirm his

own prayers and thanksgiving (Matthew 6:13; 1 Kings 1:36). 8. It was frequently used by New Testament writers at the conclusion of the books and letters they wrote.

There is no indication that Amen was used as a filler or to punctuate one's sermon. Nor was a sentence interrupted in order to say Amen. (This writer heard a Pentecostal preacher say Amen 23 times within one minute on his radio program. For the whole broadcast it numbered in the hundreds). Such usage does not edify and is not doing things decently and in order.

There is no record where Amen was used in a secular (non-religious) way. It is a word which belongs to the spiritual realm. Nor is there any record where a preacher's sermon was interrupted with frequent Amens from the audience.

Is Clapping The Hands The Same As Saying Amen?

A practice which has been prevalent in denominations has found its way into religious services of brethren. This is the practice of applauding after a sermon or lecture on a religious topic. This writer first heard it at the Freed-Hardeman College lectures in 1977. He heard it most recently at the 1987 Florida College lectures. A small group of people (this writer does not know who they were or whether they were brethren) applauded on two different occasions following lessons in which the Bible was taught.

To most Christians, clapping belongs in the secular realm and is associated with sports and entertainment. There is good reason for this since clapping (applause) is never mentioned in the New Testament. Young's Analytical Concordance records seven references in the Old Testament of people clapping. One time it was commanded (Psalms 47:1).

If clapping is another way of saying Amen it is difficult to imagine the woman applauding when a curse was pronounced upon her for committing adultery. She was commanded to say "Amen, Amen" (Numbers 5). Could Israel have acceptably applauded when the 12 curses were pronounced on the six tribes? Since God commanded them to say Amen, would He have been just as pleased if they had clapped their hands? (Deuteronomy 27). Would it be acceptable for us to close our prayers with a round of applause (1 Corinthians 14:16)? Would it have been appropriate for the New Testament writers to have clapped their hands at the conclusion of their books and epistles instead of saying Amen?

Booing and Hissing? If one may applaud a sermon to show approval (as one may show approval in this manner at a ball-game), then why could not one equally boo or hiss to show disapproval if he disagrees? One seems just as appropriate as the other. In a matter of time our services would be filled with applause, wolf whistles, cat calls, boos, and hisses. The right for one is the right for the others. If the silence of the New Testament authorizes applause then it also authorizes the boos, hisses, and jeers. Is this really what

we want? Has worship become so casual to us that there is no difference in our behavior (and degree of solemnity) at worship or at a sports event?

Since the New Testament is silent about applauding and nothing is said to indicate that clapping is an acceptable substitute for saying Amen, and since it is also silent about booing and hissing (etc.), we believe we have concluded rightly that God does not approve of either practice in worship or in a religious context.

- Dick Blackford, via Searching The Scriptures, October, 1987

Answering Prayers

A little boy heard his daddy pray for the hungry, the tired, and the poor. When his daddy finished his prayer the little boy said, "I wish I had your money, daddy!" "Why, what would you do with it?" the father asked his son. "I would answer your prayer!" the little boy answered.

- Submitted

Share A Quote ...

"There is not an exigency [need - GFS] in the kingdom of God that is not provided for in the law of God and there is not a more arrogant and impudent assumption practiced in religion than the one that the Kingdom of God is left incomplete and deficient, and that the wisdom of uninspired men can supply the deficiency."

- Benjamin Franklin, in *Gospel Preacher*

The Plain Truth

Jesus once told his disciples, "I came forth from the Father and have come into the world; I am leaving the world again and going to the Father." His disciples said, "Lo, now You are speaking plainly and are not using a figure of speech." (John 16:28-29). These disciples were entering the days wherein the most straightforward, clear and open teaching would be given to them. Their minds had been in training during the personal ministry of Christ. They needed to understand the precise meaning of the words delivered from the Father. Truths that had eluded them or for which they had been unprepared must be understood in order to effectively communicate God's message to the world.

In previous days, Jesus had spoken in figurative expressions of truth rather than in plain speech (cf. John 10:6). Jesus was known for His many parables, earthly illustrations

containing heavenly meanings, where literal details of the familiar were symbolic of great spiritual truth. Many of His statements could rightly be called proverbs (such as, "Physician, heal yourself!" in Luke 4:23).

The inspired ("God-breathed") Scriptures indicate that the plan for salvation was promised to mankind but not fully made known until the apostles of Christ were given the completed revelation of God, the faith (Jude 3; cf. Galatians 3:23). Peter could then write about, "these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven" (1 Peter 1:12; cf. vss. 10-11). In reference to the arrival of the gospel, the apostle Paul indicated: "which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit;" (Ephesians 3:5). The long anticipated arrival of the Messiah who came from God with truth, life and light was no longer a mystery; the hidden wisdom was now made known!

It would be entirely incorrect to assume that the Christ, the Master Teacher, intended to obscure the heavenly Father's words, clouding the message of eternal salvation with such mystery that the prescription bringing forgiveness to people remained obscure, hidden from view. Jesus came in order that mankind "may have life, and have it abundantly." (John 10:10). His words were clear and certain, providing for spiritually needy mankind "everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence." (2 Peter 1:3). Would the heralds of the "good news" have been effective spokesmen by sounding forth an uncertain message?

Bible student, beware of such fruitless manuscripts such as, "The Secret Teachings of Jesus" or "Jesus, A New Vision." The Holy Spirit of God has delivered His very mind in understandable words (1 Corinthians 2:6-16; cf. Ephesians 3:4). The level of knowledge and discernment that was available to Christians who were instructed by the specially chosen apostles of Christ fully enabled them to "approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ;" (Philippians 1:10). Their preaching enabled Christians to "be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding," and to "walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;" (Colossians 1:9-10). Thus, Paul could say of Christians, "Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, (Colossians 2:6-7).

The plain truth? God revealed it through the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:10)! Everything pertaining to life and godliness? We possess it! Secret teachings of Jesus? Hardly! A cryptic gospel? Never!

- Gary Smalley

- * "A properly trained conscience is God's built-in warning system!"
 - * "Christians are like coals of a fire: together they glow, apart they grow cold!"
 - * "Does your spiritual house need spring cleaning?"
 - * "Fear is the darkroom where negatives are developed!"
 - * "Everyone wants to harvest, but few want to plow!"
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What Must I Do To Be Saved?

HEAR THE GOSPEL

(Romans 10:14-17; John 20:30-31; Romans 1:15-17)

BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST

(Acts 8:37; John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6)

REPENT OF PAST SINS

(Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; Acts 17:30)

CONFESS CHRIST

(Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:37)

BE BAPTIZED

(Romans 6:3-4; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-39; 1 Peter 3:21)

LIVE A FAITHFUL LIFE

(Revelation 2:10; 2 Peter 1:5-11; John 15:1-8; Hebrews 10:23-25)