

WHERE ARE YOU FROM AND WHERE ARE YOU GOING

Bill Irby, Minister, West Hobbs Street Church of Christ

On May 14, 1607 English settlers landed at Jamestown, Virginia. Some accounts indicate that they came ashore where they did, some sixty miles from the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay, because the deep-water channel allowed them to tie up their ships to the trees on the shore. Ginger and I returned from the lectureship at the fine Cold Harbor congregation there and we noticed that some of the automobile tags pointed out that this year marked four hundred years of Virginia's existence. The Jamestown settlers arrived a good bit before those in Massachusetts. However one look at the history of it, it is clear that Virginians can look back and see a connection to the early days of this country.

Virginians think that there is something special about our heritage. This, I realize, is open for debate. Nonetheless, I enjoy thinking about my material heritage, where I came from and who my ancestors are. Many people have a similar interest. But the truth is, the place of one's birth is altogether a matter of chance, not choice. Obviously, we are born where our mother happens to be.

It may be fun to think about where we came from. Where we are going is the most important question. I am in Alabama now and happy to be here. But this is not the heritage and destiny I have in mind.

Let's think for a moment about our spiritual heritage and our spiritual destiny. Jamestown allows us to connect with the early days of the English culture on these shores. There are passages in the New Testament that can serve as a spiritual connection to the early days of the church of Christ. In Matthew 16 Jesus promised to build His church. In Acts 2 the apostles preached the gospel that launched the church. The letters of Paul and others provided the guidance we need to make that spiritual connection sound and sure (2 Timothy 1:13).

This connection is possible because God has made us able to understand His Word (Romans 10:127). God's Word is the seed (Luke 8:11) that matures into Christians. Every New Testament Christian can metaphorically stand on the Word of God and look back and see where he came from. Further, we can look forward and see where we are going.

The folks who landed in Jamestown might not have wanted to stay if they had known what was before them. My reading of history is that it was no picnic. So it is with the church. There is a certain level of difficulty associated with any life lived according to principle. The successful member of the military must endure the hard aspects of that life. It is just the same with a farmer, a teacher, a doctor, or for that matter a careful mother or father. Any life of principle and accomplishment requires the twin duties of effort and sacrifice.

The decision to become a Christian after the pattern revealed in the Bible is a decision that thrusts a person into a life of principle, and thus a life of effort and sacrifice. Think of it in terms of where we are from and where we are going. As Christians we are *from* the Word of God (Luke 8:11, 1 Peter 1:18-25). We are *going* down the road of faith in Christ (1 John 1:5-10) toward our ultimate destiny of a home in Heaven (2 Timothy 4:6-8).