

# What Is A “Jesus-group”?

by J. T. Smith

An argument was made by Mike Willis in his new Book “*We Have a Right: Studies in Religious Collectivities*” (which may be obtained from Truth bookstore and CEI bookstore) about the “Jesus-group.” Brother Willis argued that Luke 8:1-3 and John 12:1-8 authorize brethren today to do what Jesus and His apostles did. His argument is an effort to provide Scriptural authority for the Guardian of Truth Foundation organizing and promoting a lectureship each year in Bowling Green, KY. This is not the first time brethren have used these passages to try to promote human organizations doing the work of the church.

In the above mentioned passages tell of Jesus and the apostles as they worked together to preach the gospel. In Luke 6:13 we read, “And when it was day, He called His disciples to Himself; and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles:” “These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: ‘Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. <sup>6</sup>But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. <sup>7</sup>And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand’” (Matthew 10:5-7). “Jesus and the twelve” are mentioned many times in the four gospels. They were involved in preaching and worship: Thus the idea for the “Jesus-group” argument.

## Funds Provided for the Thirteen

There are a number of things we know about these men and their work. We know, according to Luke 8:2-3, that they received funds from individuals. “And certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary that was called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, <sup>3</sup>and Joanna the wife of Chuzas Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, who ministered unto them of their substance.” (ASV) We also know according to John 13:29 that Judas took care of the funds that were provided. “For some thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus said unto him, Buy what things we have need of for the feast; or, that he should give something to the poor.” In view of this evidence we have a *group of brethren* who are doing *evangelistic and benevolent* work who have a *common fund* (treasury) that is provided by individuals. Today, brethren establish organizations funded by individuals, doing evangelistic and benevolent work and use this New Testament example as their authority for doing so. There are, however, several differences between the organization that brother Willis is trying to defend and the Bible example he is using.

As is set forth by the title, this is what is meant by the “Jesus-group.” He was the one that called them. He was the one who had sole authority over the funds. He was the one who directed the use of the funds. Jesus and the twelve were not a “board of directors” that made decisions for the work that was to be done as the Guardian of Truth Foundation has. Jesus was the One who directed that group of brethren. I suppose brethren could have an *arrangement* like that today. And, that is what it is – an arrangement not an organization. However, it is not a distant relative to a forty-second cousin to the Guardian of Truth Foundation or any other ORGANIZATION that I know of that brethren have today.

Brother Willis has an article on *Truth Magazine's* web cite in which he charges me with promoting the new Sommerism because I am opposing their Lectureship in Bowling Green, KY. Brother Willis continues to equate *Gospel Truths* with Guardian of Truth foundation because I incorporated *Gospel Truths* for mailing purposes. I have explained a number of times that *Gospel Truths* is simply a part of my work as an evangelist. He will not accept my explanation of what I am doing and knows more about my motives of why I am doing it than I.

To label a person with some derogatory title is a sure way of turning people against you without so much as giving one a favorable hearing. But that is the thing to do when you don't have a Scriptural reply. All of the examples in the Bible and out of the Bible of a Jesus-group or other examples of individuals working together will not give authorization for Guardian of Truth Foundation (admitted by them to be an organization) and their Lectureship.

I am reminded of a story that Jim Needham told. He said a dog got into a farmer's meat house. He ran the dog off and as it was going down the road he began to yell “mad dog, mad dog.” His neighbor heard him and got his gun and killed the dog. Enter Mike Willis – Need I say more!