

The Gospel Preceptor

Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way. Psa 119:104

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Pomp And Majesty In Religion

Cled E. Wallace

Cardinal Hayes, popular “Prince of Catholic Church,” is dead. His body is merely a lump of clay, not unlike that of a dead hobo. Death is the great equalizer. The Grim Reaper is no respecter of persons. Millions pay idolatrous homage to the dead cardinal. Newspapers announce that “Majestic Pomp Marks Services for Prince of Catholic Church.” “In a mighty pageant of sorrow and majesty the Roman Catholic Church gave its last service Friday to the dead Patrick Cardinal Hayes—the pontifical mass of requiem.”

We naturally feel that restraint and subdued emotion which are a proper human reaction in the presence of the dead. But displays of “majestic pomp” over the body of a dead cardinal may well remind us of the distance the millions have wandered from the simplicity of the gospel. The pageantry of Catholicism is more pagan than Christian. It is the spirit of lawlessness which began in Paul’s day, grown up to the full stature of maturity. It was a gradual development, a disregard of, and a withdrawal from a revealed divine order in organization, doctrine and worship. The distinctive features of Romanism are centuries younger than the New Testament and exist in defiance of that all sufficient rule of faith and practice. Protestant parties in most instances have not gone into Rome’s excesses, nor have they embraced idolatry to the extent that Rome has. They have, however, in their creeds, unscriptural organizations, names and doctrines, surrendered or compromised the only principle which can be an effective weapon against the “pomp and majesty” of Rome.

There was a time when believers in Christ “continued stedfastly in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42). At that time they were neither Catholic nor Protestant in the sense in which those terms are used today. They were simply Christians, recognizing Christ as Lord and His will as law. This will was revealed by men who spake and wrote under the miraculous inspiration of the Holy Spirit. No pontifical honors were accorded the inspired mediums of the will of the Lord. When Cornelius, the Gentile centurion, fell down at the feet of Simon Peter, the apostle of the Lord immediately protested. “But Peter raised him up, saying, Stand up: I myself also am a man” (Acts 10:26). This is a closed rebuke to papal pretensions and may be considered a rebuke also to the little popes and dignitaries of Protestantism who love their titles and preen their feathers of authority.

The whole business of “majestic pomp” is contrary to the spirit of the gospel. It is a playing with baubles when there are fundamental verities being trampled upon and ignored. The disciples were reaching for such trinkets of pomp when they quarreled over places of prospective power in the kingdom. The rebuke of the Lord was effective. His kingdom is not of this world. nor is spiritual majesty akin to the unscriptural pageantry which characterizes Rome and her sectarian copycats. The Lord castigated those that made “broad their phylacteries” and enlarged “the borders of their garments” and loved “the chief seats in the ‘synagogues, and the salutations in the marketplaces, and to be called of men, Rabbi” (Matt. 23:5-7).

But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your teacher, and all ye are brethren.
And call no man your father on the earth: for one is your Father, even he who

is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your master, even the Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be humbled; and whosoever shall humble himself shall be exalted (Matt. 23:8-12).

Romanism ignores all this and Protestantism also loves its titular baubles of official distinction. And evidence is not rare enough that some simple Christians are casting goo-goo eyes on titles of vanity.

Paul's fear has been realized. The departure from original principles that he feared became history.

For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy: for I espoused you to one husband, that I might present you as a pure virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve in his craftiness, your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity and the purity that is toward Christ (2 Cor. 11: 2-3).

If this original and divine simplicity is to be preserved in any case, certain fundamentals must chart our progress. Too much emphasis on numbers, the rise of institutionalism in religion, enthusiasm over accumulated money and centralization of power are the things which destroy the simplicity of the New Testament order.

We look in vain in the New Testament for anything in the way of religious organization larger than a local church and smaller than the entire body of Christ including all Christians. This leaves denominationalism without New Testament sanction (Rom. 16: 16). Churches of Christ should resist anything in the way of encroachment on their independence. They have a right to select their fields of activity, choose their workers, raise their money and spend it without outside dictation. And if they never get in the yearbook, that fact will not occasion much damage to the cause of truth.

It Is Not That Hard—Unless

Charles Pogue

Jesus' familiar words in John 15:5, "I am the vine, ye are the branches have been incorrectly understood and misused by those fooled by the false theory of ecumenicalism. They claim the branches are the various denominations of men. It is not difficult at all to see the falsehood in this idea. Who is Jesus speaking to in the context? His disciples. In the immediate context, the word "ye" refers to them. *They* are the branches. That other individuals may be branches is understood by the next phrase in the verse—"He that abideth in me." There is absolutely nothing in this, or any other New Testament passage, even remotely suggesting the branches can be identified with the hundreds or thousands of the churches of men. The question is, why is that false interpretation placed upon the passage? We shall answer the question shortly.

In Mark 16:16 Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be damned." Those in the denominational world say because baptized is not included in the last part of the verse, it is therefore not essential to salvation. Jesus just said it was! Again, we ask the question why do men place a false interpretation on the passage?

The answer is very simple. Those in the denominational world have the preconceived notion that one is saved by faith alone without any actions on the part of the said believer. Though most would deny such is the case, their doctrine implies obeying the commands of God amounts to earning salvation via works. To state the real problem in simple language, men interpret the scripture based on *their* doctrines rather than understanding the doctrine of Scripture.

Peter stated in so many words, "baptism doth also now save us" (1 Pet. 3:21). Was Peter wrong? No. He was an inspired apostle writing inspired Scripture. Be it understood that it is not the water that washes away the sins, but the blood of Christ. Peter is relating *when* the blood washes those sins away. Baptism for the remission of sins is a *must*, and, a *must* to be *understood*.

In Paul's letter to the Ephesians, he states that Christ is the head of the church which is His body (1:22-23). In Ephesians 4:4 he wrote in clear language there is *one* body. If the church is Christ's body, and there is only one body, then there is only one church. Any person who has not been misled by false doctrine can understand these simple truths of scripture.

The plan of salvation is not hard—*unless*. Unless *what*? Unless a person is unwilling to put aside beliefs which totally contradict what God has revealed in His inspired Word. Maybe the person holds on to the doctrine of salvation by faith alone, or that one church is as good as another, because believing and obeying the truth is harder in his mind than the error he holds. Maybe admitting the truth would compel him to understand the jeopardy the souls of family members are in who have already passed away. Whatever his reasoning is, putting aside the errors he has been taught and accepting the scripture for what it says is a must. If one puts aside the false notions held by men regarding God's plan of salvation, the role of the church in that plan, or any other point of truth revealed in the pages of the New Testament it is very easily understood.

The Beginning Of The Gospel

Foy E. Wallace, Jr.

"Thus it is written. . . . that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47).

The second chapter of Acts is the hub of the Bible. The contents of the whole Bible center in this chapter. Everything in the Old Testament points forward, and everything in the New Testament points backward, to the second chapter of Acts. In it Old Testament prophecy and prediction are fulfilled and New Testament blessings and promises are enjoyed. The second chapter of Acts is called "the beginning" by both the prophets and apostles. Isaiah said: "Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." Quoting in substance this prophecy, Jesus said: "It is written, . . . that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." Several years after this first gospel sermon of the second chapter of Acts was preached Peter referred to that occasion as "the beginning." (Acts 11:15.) Let us, then, observe the notable events of this ever-memorable and eventful day.

Christ First Proclaimed

First, it was on this occasion that Jesus Christ was first proclaimed the Son of God and the Saviour of men. He had been confessed before this time, but not preached. Peter, in the select group of disciples, had made the great confession, "Thou art the Christ," but Jesus quickly charged them that they should "tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ." Also, in the presence of Moses and Elijah, the pioneers of law and prophecy, at the transfiguration of Christ, God declared him to be his Son, but again Jesus cautioned the disciples to "tell it to no man until the Son of man be risen from the dead." The facts of the gospel could not be preached before the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Did the church exist before the gospel could be preached? Then the house was built before its foundation was laid, for Jesus said: "Upon this rock [Christ, the Son of God] I will build my church." Hence, not until this eventful day of Acts the second chapter, when Jesus was first proclaimed the Son of God and Saviour of men, was the foundation laid and the church built upon it, thus fulfilling the word of the prophet: "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone" (Isa. 28:16).

The Holy Spirit Begins His Work Of Conversion

It was on this day that the Holy Spirit began his mission of conversion. Of the work of the Holy Spirit, Jesus said to his apostles: "When he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:8). During the personal ministry of Christ "the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified" (John 7:39). We know that Jesus had the Holy Spirit without measure, but not until the second chapter of Acts was it given to the apostles for the purpose of

revealing the plan of salvation, or to begin its work of conversion-convicting men of sin. (See John 16:8.) Hence, we can understand why the twelve at Ephesus who had been baptized unto John's baptism had not so much as heard that the Holy Spirit was given. (Acts 19:2.) They had not learned of the Holy Spirit's work in revealing the plan of salvation.

In verse 33 of Acts 2 we read: "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted [glorified], . . . he hath shed forth this [the Holy Spirit], which ye now see and hear." Thus, on Pentecost, in the second chapter of Acts, the Holy Spirit came and began its work of conversion. If the church existed as an established institution before this day, it was inaugurated without Christ proclaimed and without the Holy Spirit's presence and influence in the conversion of men.

The Law Of Pardon Announced

In the last commission of Christ to the apostles as recorded by Luke, Jesus is quoted as saying: "Thus it is written, . . . that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." But they were commanded to "tarry ye in the city" until they received "power from on high;" and "ye shall receive power," they were told, "when the Holy Spirit is come upon you." The power came, the first gospel sermon was preached by a Spirit-filled apostle. A caustic and stinging conviction penetrated the hearts of the hearers and brought forth the harrowing cry of faith: "Brethren, what shall we do?" The man with the keys of the kingdom in his hand announced the terms: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." They "gladly received his word" and "were baptized," and the Lord added them, the first additions, three thousand in number, to his newly established church. So came the Power, Spirit, and Kingdom on Pentecost; and thus the second chapter of Acts marks the beginning of the gospel.

Were John's Disciples Baptized Again On Pentecost?

Jerry C. Brewer

This is a question that is asked from time to time, and one that deserves scrutiny and a Biblical answer. The New Testament does not explicitly say they were baptized again, nor does it say they were not. However, the Bible teaches by implication, as well as explicit statement, and approved example, and the implication is that those baptized by John (and later, Jesus) were *not* baptized again. Consider the following points:

John's Preparatory Work

Understanding John's mission is vital to understanding our thesis that his disciples were not baptized again on Pentecost. When John's birth was announced, the angel told his father, Zacharias,

...thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. ...For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord (Luke 1:13; 15-17).

The key phrase in the above passage is, "to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." In his preparatory work, he would make disciples suited to inclusion in the kingdom (the church). He did that by baptizing for the remission of sins. "John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" (Mark 1:4).

Those whom John baptized constituted the prepared material for the church, and that included the apostles. It is not logical that Jesus would call men to be His apostles who had refused to be baptized under John's order. "And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the

Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him” (Luke 7:29-30). Had the apostles refused John's baptism, they would also have, “rejected the counsel of God against themselves.” The implication is that among those baptized with John’s baptism were the men who later became Jesus’ apostles. That conclusion is also implied in this account from John’s gospel:

Again the next day after, John stood and two of his disciples; and looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God! And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, “What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi (which is to say, being interpreted, Master) where dwellest thou? He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day: for it was about the tenth hour. One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ (John 1:35-41).

These men were looking for the Messiah. They had heard John preach that “the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 3:2), and that meant the Messiah was near. They heard, believed, and obeyed John’s message of, “the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins” (Mark 1:4).

It is sometimes objected that since Jesus had not died on the cross, there could be no remission of sins. But that flies in the face of Mark 1:4, and is easily explained in Jesus’ preaching. He preached the same message that John did, saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel” (Mark 1:15). Note carefully: Jesus said, “repent ye, and believe the gospel.” To those twelve at Ephesus, Paul explained that, “John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus” (Acts 19:4). Those 12 Ephesians had obviously been baptized “unto John's baptism” (Acts 19:3) *after* Pentecost when that baptism ceased to be in force.

John’s order was,

- 1) repent,
- 2) be baptized for the remission of sins, and,
- 3) believe on Christ Who *is to come*.

The remission of sins that John’s disciples received was the same as those in the Old Testament. It was *in prospect*. Their remission looked *forward* to Jesus' death. At Pentecost, the order was reversed, and remains so today:

- 1) believe on Him Who *has come*,
- 2) repent of your sins,
- 3) be baptized for the remission of sins.

No, John's disciples—and later those whom Jesus baptized—did not receive remission of sins at their baptism, but received it in *prospect*. When Jesus died, His blood covered them and their sins were remitted, as His cleansing blood flowed back to the beginning of time, remitting the sins of the faithful in the Patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations.

The Temples Of The Old And New Testaments

John’s work in preparing material for the spiritual temple of God (the church, Eph. 2:19-22) was analogous to that of David who prepared material for the temple in the Old Testament (1 Chron. 28:11-29:9). David’s work was preparatory to building the Old Testament temple and under Solomon it, “was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither; so that there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building” (1 Kings 6:7). The temple’s material was then simply set in place. John prepared the people—living stones (1 Pet. 2:5)—for the church and Jesus preached the same message. “Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The

time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel” (Mark 1:14-15). John baptized “for the remission of sins” and that’s why he was reluctant to baptize Jesus. He knew the Lord had no sins to remit. As David prepared the material for the temple Solomon built, John prepared the material for the temple (church) Jesus built.

As the material of Solomon’s temple was simply set in place, so was the material John had prepared. His (and Jesus’) disciples, who remained faithful, were set in the church on Pentecost and the 3,000 were added that day. When one “adds a room” to his house, he does so to a house that has been built. One does not “add” to something that does not exist and it is significant that the Holy Spirit gave Luke the phrase, “and the same day there were added about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:41). Added to what? To the church—the New Testament temple—that was erected on that day. If they had to be baptized again, then John baptized for no purpose.

He That Believeth And Is Baptized Shall Be Saved

Nana Yaw Aidoo

After the resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and prior to His ascension to the Father, He gave what is commonly known as the Great Commission. Mark recorded it this way; “And He said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:15-16).

From this text, it is evident that for one to be a Christian, or to be saved, he must have procured faith from the preaching of the gospel. The Bible says, “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). Then after faith, he must be baptized in order to be saved. Hence, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved”. Clearly, the Master put both belief and baptism before salvation and it does not take much to see this.

However, for years denominations have rejected what this passage teaches even though it is as clear as it gets. These people teach that all it takes to be saved is “faith only” in Christ. But friends, that is not what Christ said. He did not say all it takes to be saved is “faith only”. Rather, He clearly commanded both faith and baptism in order to be saved. Thus, to say all that it takes to be saved is “faith only” is to make a false statement and is to deny the essentiality of baptism in the salvation of the alien sinner, which is exactly the point of their teaching. Let me illustrate. If both Kofi and Ama are in a room and I say “Kofi only” is in the room, I have made a false statement and I have denied the presence of Ama in the room. Why? Because Ama is also in the room. Therefore, to say we are saved by “faith only” even though the Master mentioned baptism in addition to faith in order to be saved, is to make a false statement.

Now let us consider some statements that parallel what the Christ said;

“He that believeth and is baptized shall receive half of Bill Gates’ riches”. If this statement were made, would anyone receive half of Bill Gates’ riches before baptism? Absolutely not!

Here is another parallel statement; “He that eateth and digesteth shall live”. Would anyone live who eats but is unable to or does not digest the food? Is it not evident from this statement that in order to live, not only must the food be eaten but it must be digested also?

Everyone understands these examples pertaining to matters of the flesh. However, when it comes to the salvation of our souls, due to the influence of man-made teachings, people use all sorts of schemes to deny the plain words of our Lord in Mark 16:16. These people do this mainly because of a misunderstanding of the word “works”. Wrongly, they assume that the Bible proscribes all kinds of “works”. To be consistent, they would have to deny the essentiality of faith in the salvation of the alien sinner, because the Bible teaches that faith is a work (John 6:29; 1 Thess. 1:3). O consistency, Thou art a jewel! Friends, the Master put both belief and baptism before salvation and only a dishonest heart will fail to see it.

An even more shocking argument that is made to deny the necessity of baptism in the salvation of the alien sinner is that, in the second part of Mark 16:16, Christ said, "...but he that believeth not shall be damned". The argument is that, since Christ did not say, "...but he that believeth *not* (and is baptized *not*) shall be damned", then it means baptism is not essential in the salvation of the alien sinner. This is the extent people would go to teach man-made doctrines. These people claim to believe the Bible, but they don't. Consider this: Why should Christ have constructed the statement in that manner, when the person has not believed in the first place? Would anyone be baptized who has not believed? Notice this parallel: "He that eateth and digesteth shall live but he that eateth not shall die". Is it not evident that there would be no digesting without any eating? Does the construction of this statement diminish the necessity of digesting the food in order to live?

It is a sad day in Israel when men make such arguments so they can stay on the side of their preachers and churches, rather than on the Master's side. It is the will of the Father that the one in need of salvation, believes and is baptized. To allow yourself to be taught otherwise is to be a blind person, led by the blind; "And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch" (Matt. 15:14). Also, to teach anything other than what the Master has taught is to be full of darkness: "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa. 8:20).

Finally, the Master said, "What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder" (Matt. 19:6). There are some things that God has joined together, two of them being "belief and baptism in order to be saved". What will you do? Will you pit yourself against God or will you submit to His will by believing the facts of the gospel (John 8:24), repenting of all your sins (Luke 13:3), confessing faith in Christ before men (Matt. 10:32) and being baptized in order to be saved (1 Pet. 3:21)?

The Master still says, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved". Will you listen to Him?

Indications Of Bible Inspiration: Its Unity

Jess Whitlock

God wrote only one book and that book is the Holy Bible. "Every Scripture is inspired of God, and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Since the inception of the Bible this book has been attacked in every century and those attackers continue with us until this day. Peter directs us to ever be "ready to give answer to every man that asketh you a reason concerning the hope that is in you, yet with meekness and fear" (1 Pet. 3:15).

God's Word was written by about 40 different authors separated over a period of some 1,600 years (1500 B.C. to A.D. 100). Some of those writers were fishermen, some were scholars, some were shepherds, some were military leaders, and some were kings. These men wrote at different times and in different places. Some missives were penned in Hebrew, some in Aramaic, and others in Koine Greek. The 39 books of the Old Testament and the 27 books of the New Testament come together in one complete book with one central message. There are no contradictions and no discord from Genesis to Revelation. There is no other book like it on the face of the earth.

The late brother Johnny Ramsey taught me that one central theme of the Bible can be summed up in three simple declarations of truth: (1) Someone is coming, (2) Someone has come, and (3) Someone is coming again. That powerful truth unifies the Bible. No wonder the apostle Paul proclaimed, "For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2).

God is the one Author of the one book that He wrote. It was His choice to use human writers. Everyone of those writers was *inspired of God* in what they wrote (2 Tim. 3:16-17; John 14:25-ff; 17:17-ff; 2 Pet. 1:20-21).

Men today are sometimes said to be "inspired" to write music, to paint a portrait, or to

write poetry, etc. There is a marked difference between those men and the forty men that God used to give to us His Holy Bible. Imagine this, we collect forty men who are said to be “inspired” to write music. We take them to some large hotel in the metroplex. Each man is given his own room and supplies with which to write music. One man writes the music for the clarinet, another for the bass horn, another for the flute, another for the violin, et al. These men have no knowledge of what the others are writing. When their work is completed, we go to the concert hall. The sheet music is handed out to each respective musician. The band master raises the baton and the musical begins. There is complete harmony and not one discordant note is heard! You say that such is impossible. And, so it is for mortal man alone. Such is not the case with the Holy Spirit inspired authors. “For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet. 1:21).

The Church Jesus Built

Brad Green

The church we read about in the New Testament is alive and well. Jesus promised to build His church (Mat. 16:18) and recorded in Acts 2, we read of that promise being fulfilled. “And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (Acts 2:47). Those being saved and thus added to the church were they who “heard” the Word of God, “were pricked in their heart” (Acts 2:37), repented of their past sins and were baptized (Acts 2:38). The Bible teaches that salvation is “in Christ” (2 Tim. 2:10) and that there is only one way to get “into Christ.” “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:27).

The Bible also teaches that being in Christ, or in His body, is the same as being in the church (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18). Since there is only one body (Eph. 4:4), then there is only one church. Therefore, salvation is found only in the church of which we read in the New Testament—Christ’s church. With this knowledge, it is imperative that we be able to recognize that one church today and know how God adds individuals to that body.

The church Jesus built is easily recognizable. First, the church Jesus built wears His name. The churches of Christ salute you” (Rom. 16:16). Second, the church Jesus built can be recognized by Scriptural worship. God authorizes five acts of worship—singing (Eph. 5:19), praying (Acts 16:25), teaching/preaching (2 Tim. 4:2), partaking the Lord’s supper (Acts 20:7), and giving (1 Cor. 16:2). In addition, the church Jesus built does not use mechanical instruments of music in worship (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16) and partakes of the Lord’s supper every Sunday (Acts 20:7). A church which uses mechanical instruments of music in worship or partakes of the Lord’s supper on days other than Sunday (or only on “special” Sundays) is therefore *not* the church Jesus built. Third, the church Jesus built teaches the Scriptural plan of salvation. The Bible teaches that one is saved by hearing the Word of God (Rom. 10:17), believing (Heb. 11:6), repenting of past sins (Luke 13:3), confessing that Jesus is the Christ (Acts 8:37), being baptized into Christ to have past sins forgiven (Acts 2:38; 1 Pet. 3:21), and living faithful unto death (Rev. 2:10; 1 John 1:6-10). A church which teaches some other plan is therefore *not* the church Jesus built. The church Jesus built does not teach that one is saved by faith only (Jas. 2:24), that one can do nothing whatsoever to save himself (Acts 2:40), nor that one can say a “sinner’s prayer” in order to be saved (John 9:31). A church teaching any of these false doctrines is therefore *not* the church Jesus built.

Since salvation is only in the church of Christ, it is important to make sure that we are members of that one body. God reveals to us, in His Word, how to recognize His church and how to be added to that body. Thanks be to God for giving “us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue” (2 Pet. 1:3).

Lee Moses, who is one of our staff writers, preaches for the Berea church of Christ, Rives, Tenn., and conducts a weekly radio program, “The Gospel Hour,” each Sunday morning at 8:30 Central Time on 95.1 WCDZ. His program is streamed on the internet and may be heard at: <https://www.thunderboltradio.com/star-95-1>.

The Battle Over The Empty Tomb

Jerry C. Brewer

Mohammed is still in his tomb, as is Joseph Smith. The tomb of Jesus Christ is *empty*. Though His enemies consigned His body to the grave, God raised Him up in the crowning miracle of the New Testament—the very foundation of our faith. His empty tomb is mute testimony to the veracity of God's prophecy through Isaiah:

Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner *stone*, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste. Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place. And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it (Isa. 28:16-18).

During His last days on earth, Jesus pointedly asked the Jews, “Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? (Matt. 21:42). He was that “precious corner stone” laid in Zion and *they* were the builders who rejected Him and had Him crucified. But God said their “covenant with death” (His crucifixion) would be “disannulled” and their “covenant” and “agreement with hell” (their consignment of His spirit to *sheol*) would not stand. “Sheol” is the Hebrew word corresponding to “hades” in the New Testament, which is the unseen realm of disembodied spirits. The word “hell” in Isaiah's prophecy does not refer to the place of eternal punishment. His prophecy meant that God would wipe out their agreement to send Christ to His death by raising Him from the dead.

A study of His resurrection would be incomplete without considering it in the light of historical evidence, which is definite and abundant. In fact, more is known about the burial of Jesus than is known of the burial of any single character in ancient history. Men have long denied His virgin birth, vicarious suffering, atoning blood and His resurrection. But if his resurrection is established, all those other things must, of necessity, also be accepted.

There are certain facts concerning Jesus' resurrection that are granted by both the Christian and the infidel alike. Both grant that a man named Jesus lived, that He rose to great heights of prominence, particularly among common people. Both, His friends and foes, grant that Jesus suffered crucifixion on a Roman cross and was thought to be dead when removed from that cross, and that His body was buried in the new tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. Friend and foe also admit that a great stone was laid at the mouth of the tomb, that the seal of the Roman Governor was affixed to it, and that a Roman guard of somewhere between 15 and 60 men was stationed about the tomb.

There are two other important things that the friends and foes of Jesus both admit—that sometime after the third morning the body of Jesus disappeared—and that His disciples came to believe, with unshakable confidence, that their Lord had been raised from that tomb by the power of God. This is where the battle over the empty tomb begins. All admit the tomb was empty (Matt. 28:11-15). That then gives rise to the question, “What became of the body of Jesus?” The success or failure of an historical effort to establish the fact of Jesus' resurrection stands or falls on the problem of the empty tomb and what became of the His body.

Some infidels, particularly Muslims, contend that Jesus never really died—that he just lost consciousness on the cross and later revived and forced His way unnoticed from the tomb and past the guards. But that kind of reasoning does no credit to the mental ability of those who so contend. The soldiers declared Jesus to be dead and did not break His legs because He *was* dead (John 19:31, 37). The testimony of those soldiers would stand in court, but the testimony of an infidel living 2,000 years later would be laughed out of that same court. Roman law did not permit the removal of a body from the cross until the individual's death was certain, but Roman soldiers removed Jesus' body from the cross, certain that Jesus was dead when His body was taken down. In fact, the Bible says one of those soldiers, “with a spear pierced his side and, forthwith

came there out blood and water” (John 19:34). One thing is certain, no mere man who had been subjected to such exhaustion, excruciating pain and piercing could force himself out of a tomb. But the fact remains that Jesus’ tomb was—and remains—empty. That makes the missing body of paramount concern. What happened to it? There are actually only three dispositions that could have been made of Jesus’ body. 1) His body could have been removed from the tomb by His enemies. 2) It could have been removed by His friends, and 3) Christ’s body could have been raised from the tomb by the power of God.

Was the body of Jesus removed from the tomb by His enemies? The answer is, “No,” and for a number of reasons. First of all, His enemies had no motive for removing His body from the tomb. They had absolutely nothing to gain by it. In fact, Jesus’ body was exactly where they wanted it to be. The second reason His enemies did not remove the body was because they had no intention of doing so. Their intent was just the opposite. They stationed from 15 to 60 men around the tomb in order to make sure the body stayed there (Matt. 27:62-66). The third reason His enemies didn’t remove Jesus’ body is because they *did not* one time *claim* they did so. Instead, they claimed His disciples came and stole the body (Matt. 28:11-15). Fourth, the disciples did not claim Jesus’ enemies stole the body, but that there was a great earthquake and that Jesus arose from the dead (Matt. 28:2-7). Finally, if the enemies of Jesus had stolen His body, they would have known its whereabouts and would have certainly produced it to humiliate His disciples who preached His resurrection.

Was Jesus’ body then removed by His disciples? The enemies of Jesus testified that they did. But His disciples testified that God raised Jesus from the dead. Now these conflicting testimonies cannot both be true. Let’s look at this charge by the enemies of Christ.

First, the members of the guard were never charged for their violation of Roman military law. To be found asleep while on guard—as they claimed they were when His disciples allegedly stole the body (Matt. 28:13-15)—meant certain death under Roman military law. But there is not a word about them being tried and punished. It must be inferred that the guard’s superiors put absolutely no credence in that story.

Second, the enemies of Christ did not force his disciples to return the body. The disciples were under their power and could have been easily compelled to produce the body had they stolen it.

Third, theft of the body by Jesus’ disciples would have been a physical impossibility. The Roman guard was changed every six hours and for one to suppose that a guard of at least 15 men could all fall so soundly asleep at the same time, allowing a small band of unarmed disciples to sneak past them, break the seal, roll away the great stone and bear the body away without awakening at least one of the soldiers is preposterous.

In the fourth place, the disciples were without a reasonable motive to steal the body. What could they have done with it? They could not have made it come alive, and they would have known full well that to be caught with the body would have meant sure exposure and punishment.

Fifth, the disciples were without attitude or intent to steal the body. They did not actually expect Christ to arise until the general resurrection, and even after He arose they expected Him to become an earthly king (Acts 1:6). After Jesus’ crucifixion, Peter went fishing, Joseph of Arimathea prepared his body for burial, the women came to the tomb with spices the third day to anoint his dead body and Mary Magdalene exclaimed, “They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him” (John 20:13).

And finally, when Christ was arrested, all of His disciples fled. None were found at His trial except Peter and John and, until word of His resurrection was heard, His disciples seemed to stay in hiding. Therefore, how do we account for the sudden show of courage on their part when word of the resurrection was known? How do we account for the fact that on the day of Pentecost—only 50 days after the resurrection—Peter and the other apostles dramatically announced that Christ is the risen Lord in the very city where He was crucified? How do we account for the fact that the enemies of Christ did not one time confront those apostles while they preached the doctrine of the

resurrection on that day. Yes, Christ arose from the dead and established His church on Pentecost day as He promised (Matt. 16:13-19). And on that day, the Risen Lord's terms of salvation were announced for the first time (Acts 2:38).

Having shown that Jesus' body was not removed from the tomb by either his enemies or His disciples, that leaves but one reasonable explanation for the empty tomb—the body of Jesus was raised from the dead by the power of God. The pages of the New Testament supply many infallible proofs of His resurrection that may be divided into three categories. These are, the testimony of the witnesses; the faith that became both prevalent and powerful before the four gospel accounts were ever written; and the New Testament itself. Let's begin by looking at the testimony of the witnesses. There are essentially only three reasons a witness will lie on the witness stand, or give false testimony. They are, 1) fear, 2) avarice, and 3) ambition.

Now it's obvious that fear did not prompt the disciples of Christ to testify that he arose from the dead. In fact, they testified of His resurrection in the *face* of fear. They endangered their own lives and many of them died as martyrs to give testimony of Christ's resurrection. Furthermore, avarice, or desire for material gain, did not move them to testify of His resurrection. In fact, they testified of the resurrection in the face of sufferings, hardships, privation, and the loss of material possessions. The apostle Paul is a prime example of the things they suffered to testify of the resurrection (2 Cor. 11:24-33). They stood to gain absolutely nothing of a material nature by preaching the resurrection and forfeited what worldly goods they had in order to preach it. Neither did they give their testimony out of ambition. They testified of His resurrection in the face of the loss of all business, social and political positions. Paul is also an example of that. He gave up social and political standing among the Jews to preach the resurrected Lord (Gal. 1:13-14), and said he counted those things loss for Christ (Phi. 3:4-14).

The impartial judge of their testimony must also consider three things. First, the mental capacity of the witnesses; second, their opportunity to observe and obtain knowledge of that to which they testified and, third, the number of witnesses. None of the witnesses of the resurrection was mentally incapacitated or neurotic. Four of that number were rugged seamen, Matthew was a public Roman official, Paul was a scholar, and a number of them were women. One would be foolish to contend that such witnesses were without sufficient mental capacity to observe and remember facts. The historical record also tells us that all of the witnesses had firsthand opportunity to obtain information about Jesus' resurrection. And, finally, the witnesses of Christ's resurrection were entirely sufficient in number. If the fact of the resurrection depended upon the testimony of one man, that testimony would be suspect. The testimony of two witnesses is stronger than that of one, and the testimony of three is even stronger, but a limit is soon reached beyond which there is no need for more witnesses to testify. But look at the number given by Paul in First Corinthians 15:3-8:

For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

That is a vast number of witnesses who *saw the Lord after His resurrection* and their honesty, competency, and number may be relied upon in every detail.

The second proof that God raised Christ is the faith that became so widespread and powerful before the four gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were written. We know of the life, death, burial and resurrection of Christ through their accounts, but that knowledge was prevalent in the Roman world *before* those books were ever penned.

And, finally, the New Testament itself is proof of Christ's resurrection. Its transforming power is beyond the description of mere mortals and nothing in all the earth rivals its

influence. Without the resurrection of Christ as its foundation, it would never have survived the ages.

Upon the doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus, rests the hope of mortal man for life beyond the grave. If Jesus did not live, if He did not die a vicarious death, and if He was not raised the third day by the power of God, then all men are doomed eternally and without a single ray of hope for life to come.

Note: I make no claim of originality for this article. Its information was taken from various sources several years ago.

What's Missing From Your Tract?

David Ray

Have you ever been given a “how to get to Heaven” tract? Over the years I’ve had several given to me or left at my door, and I’ve found many of them lying around in public places. Recently I’ve even begun collecting them. Why? Don’t they all say the same thing? *Shouldn’t* they all say the same thing (i.e., what the Bible says)? Knowing God’s plan of salvation found in the Bible, and also knowing the discrepancy between this and what most professing believers teach on this topic, it’s always interesting to me to see what these tracts will say.

If you’ve ever studied the Bible plan of salvation with someone, you’ve inevitably dealt with the differences in what they believe compared to what the Bible teaches (viz., whether or not baptism is for the purpose of having one’s sins forgiven and being saved). Countless times, with people of every denominational and non-denominational background, I’ve run into these differences and asked (even begged) these folks to provide a passage or combination of passages that would teach the doctrine to which they hold. Sadly, to this day I still don’t know where in the Scriptures to turn in order to support and teach their version of how to be saved.

And so, I read another tract on the topic of salvation, and hope it will provide a verse to support what I know it will say. Alas, it is the same as every other one I’ve read, and goes something like this:

- All are sinners (**Romans 3:23**).
- There is a penalty for sin – it results in bondage & death (**Romans 6:23a**).
- Christ died to pay for our sins (**Romans 5:8**).
- We must accept the free gift of eternal life by accepting Christ as our Lord and Savior (**Romans 6:23b; 10:13; John 1:12**).
- In order to do this, you must receive Jesus as your personal savior right now by praying this simple prayer: *“Dear God, I know that I’m a sinner. I know you died on the cross for me. Here and now I give my life to you. Come into my heart and be my Savior. Amen.”*
- If you prayed and received Jesus Christ as your Savior....

The above steps are actually taken from two different tracts in my possession, whose content mirrors that of almost every other denominational tract I’ve ever read on this topic. The final step (No. 6) will usually either end in a request to fill out some information and mail the tract back to the particular group that left it, or simply to go to the church of your choice...*not* in order to be saved, but because you are already saved.

Did you notice what was missing in these steps? If not, maybe it would help to first notice what *isn’t* missing—scriptural support for **most** of the steps in the process.

Notice the steps again: Are all sinners? Certainly. The tracts provide the verse that says so (Romans 3:23). Is there a penalty for sin? Of course – Romans 6:23! And so on down the line. But then we come to, “Pray this prayer in order to accept Jesus as your personal savior.” And the Scripture that teaches this? Oops, they must have inadvertently messed up and left that verse out. Coincidentally, this is the case with **every one** of these tracts! No scripture reference is ever given for this “prayer in order

to be saved"! Can *anyone* provide us with this mysterious verse that teaches a non-Christian to pray in order to become a Christian? Surely it's there. Surely prayer is the point at which one is saved, right?

Actually, this is *not* what the Bible teaches. But never mind what I say; listen to the tract authors. After all, those who teach this, by their own claims, are "Bible-believing, Bible-following" folks, and surely have a scripture they're thinking of when they write these things. **But their silence is deafening.**

When I was younger and first starting seeing these tracts left in public places, I would leave them there after marking through the "prayer" passages and writing in the passages that teach the rest of the story (i.e., **Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Romans 6:3-6; 1 Peter 3:21**, etc.). Read these verses and ask why someone would leave out such clear passages on how to be saved. This question will have to be answered by those authors.

It's so shocking that something of such immense spiritual importance can be altered and then passed off as fact without a shred of biblical proof! And this is not something on which we can simply agree to disagree. Souls are on the line. There are so many people out there who believe they're saved when they're not, and the reason they're still lost is because they're allowing themselves to be guided by those false teachers who would pen tracts like these. This article is intended to encourage the "sheep" to open their eyes to what is so blatantly missing from these tracts and from this false doctrine in general – scriptural evidence. Why can't these authors give one single scripture to support their idea of how to be saved? Because *it doesn't exist*—and their own literature *proves it!*

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Creeds

Lee Moses

As a young child being reared in denominationalism, this writer clearly recalls the practice in worship of the recitation of creeds. Those assembled would recite various creeds, particularly the so-called "Apostles' Creed." Of course, one would assume that a creed called the Apostles' Creed would have been instituted by the apostles. However, the Apostles' Creed in its actual form was not framed until 550 years after the death of the last apostle, although other supposed Christian creeds had been written as early as the second century AD.

What is the purpose of a creed? A creed is defined as "a formal statement of religious belief." A creed is designed by a particular religious group in order to make clear what it is they believe and to define parameters of what is acceptable doctrine. Virtually all denominations have creeds by which they abide, although many of the "lay members" may not be aware of their own creeds. However, their creeds are what they are being taught from their pulpits and in their classrooms. The *Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia* attempts to justify creeds by saying, "In the Protestant system the creed is not to coordinate with, but always subordinate to, the Bible." But it is the case that the Protestant denominations which fled from Roman Catholicism and its binding of human tradition fell into the same trap when they decided to base faith upon anything other than the Bible alone.

Jesus promised the apostles that the Holy Spirit would guide them into "all truth" (John 16:13) and through the apostles gave to man "all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (II Peter 1:3). When men adopt a creed, they accept that which is different from the Bible. Either a creed will have less than the Bible, more than the Bible, or the same as the Bible. What Christ gave is completely sufficient; but if one accepts a creed which is less than the Bible, he no longer has that which is sufficient as his guide (Psa. 119:105). If one accepts a creed which is more than the Bible, he has added to the word of God and brought himself under a curse (Rev. 22:18-19). If one accepts a creed which is the same as the Bible, someone has wasted his time in trying to write a creed.

A curse awaits any who bring a doctrine different from the Bible (Gal. 1:6-9), yet creeds are intrinsically different from the Bible. The doctrine which Christ gave us is our only acceptable system of belief (2 John 9-10). Creeds deny that all can understand the Bible alike, or at least admit that those who adhere to their particular creed cannot understand it alike without being given a superceding system. We cannot accept the beliefs of any man as our authority. Only the word of God is “able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified” (Acts 20:32), and only by the word will one be judged (John 12:48).

The Bible Is Not A Confusing Book

Bruce Stulting

We live in a world where there is much religious confusion. Although there are many causes, the confusion and division in “Christendom” today is not the result of a confusing Bible. Most believers accept the Bible as The word of God and, as such, it is our final authority in religion. We must all recognize that “...God is not the author of confusion ...” (1 Cor. 14:33).

Unfortunately, many were raised to believe that the Bible is a confusing Book. Those so taught believe that to study such a book will lead to confusion. Yet, we are commanded: “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). Thus, unless you study the Bible you cannot know what it teaches. Consider Paul’s purpose for writing his portion of the Bible:

For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, if you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to youward: How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ (Eph. 3: 1-4).

From this and other passages, we learn that the writers of the Bible were inspired of God, and wrote only according to His will. “Knowing· this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” (2 Pet: 1:20,21).

The religious leaders in the first century opposed the teaching of Jesus because they did not know God’s Law. Though the priests and Scribes did their studying, Jesus could still call them blind leaders of the blind (Matt. 15:14). Jesus rebuked them, saying, “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life” (John 5:39-40). Their sinful attitude that led to their ignorance could have been avoided had they but remembered: “And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou riseth up” (Deu. 6:6-7).

The true church of the first century never claimed authority over God’s word. Not even in the days of the Apostles. Jesus stated, “All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth” (Mat. 28:18). Peter warned, “But there arose false prophets also among the people, as among you there shall also be false teachers, who shall privily bring in destructive heresies, denying even the Master that bought them” (2 Pet. 2:1 ASV). We know that more than 150 scholars translated the Old and New Testaments from the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts. We need not fear the translations. Our first concern should be to study, learn and obey God’s Word as revealed in the Bible. To suggest that the Word of God is confusing is to suggest that its author, God, is confused. *This we shall not do!*

The Bible is God’s message to man and is composed of the Old and New Testaments (Heb. 1:1-3, 9:14-18). The Holy writ is composed of 66 books. The Old Testament is composed of 39 books with the remaining 27 completing the New Testament. About 40 different men who were inspired by God wrote the Bible (2 Pet. 1:19-21, 2 Tim. 3:16).

The Lord promised that His Word would endure forever (Mat. 24:35). The Sinaitic and Alexandrian manuscripts of the New Testament and the Jewish manuscripts of the Old Testament disprove the claim that one group preserved the Bible for us.

The 66 books are included in the Bible, not because they were accepted and “approved” of by a council or church. They have never needed such “approval”, but were accepted because they were recognized by internal and external evidence to be the Word of God. The apocryphal books (Tobias, Judith, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, and 1 and 2 Machbees) are of doubtful dates and origin and have never been a part of the Bible. Unfortunately the apocrypha gained “official recognition” at the “Council of Trent” in 1545.

It must be recognized that the Bible is a gift from God, Christ and the Holy Spirit. It is not the product of any “church”. It is indeed strange that the Catholic church would claim to have given us a Bible and at the same time teach, “The Bible is a confusing book!” How can this same “church” teach that the Bible is not a sufficient guide? This is contrary to Paul’s statement to Timothy, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:16,17). Why will this “church” not permit married men to serve as bishops when the Bible teaches that Bishops must be married men with children? (1 Tim. 3) Why does she give her members only the bread of the Lord’s Supper (Eucharist) when her Bible reads, “*All of you drink of this ...*” (cup)? (Mat. 26:28). Why does she call some of her “clergy” father when her Bible reads, “Call no one on earth your father?” (Mat. 23:9). Why does she teach that *we* cannot understand the Bible when Paul commands us to study it? (2 Tim. 2:15).

God would never give us a Bible that we couldn’t understand. Paul wrote, “Whereby when ye *read* ye may *understand* my knowledge in the mystery of Christ” (Eph. 3:4). “Wherefore be ye not unwise, but *understand* what the will of the Lord is” (Eph. 5:17). We should, therefore, study the Bible to be wise (Psa. 119:104; 130, Col. 1:9; 3:16), believe it to be pure in heart (Acts 15:9), and obey it to be saved (Heb. 5:9), for we shall be judged by it (Jn. 12:48; Rev. 20:12).

Parallels Between The Ark And The Church

Kent Bailey

The theme of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation is a dramatic revelation of God’s scheme of Redemption for fallen humanity. A careful study of the epistle of First Peter demonstrates not only the reality of such a plan, but also the magnificent greatness of such. This scheme of Redemption is so magnificently great that the Old Testament prophets diligently inquired of the salvation that has been offered unto us (1 Pet. 1:10). The scheme of Redemption is so magnificently great that it took centuries from the human participation of sin in the garden of Eden unto the coming of Christ bringing about his earthly ministry, his rejection of the masses, his suffering and death on the cross, his burial and victorious resurrection from the dead, and ascension to Heaven (1 Pet. 1:18-21).

This scheme of Redemption is so great that one is so saved by the blood of Christ in being begotten by the gospel of Christ to bring about a penitent faith that leads one to confess Christ and be baptized for the remission of one’s past sins. When one accomplishes such, one has purified his soul in obedience to the truth, being born again not of corruptible, but rather the incorruptible seed of the word of God which lives and abides forever (1 Pet. 1:22-23).

Regardless of the horrible sufferings one must endure, if one will remain faithful during the “trials of faith” one will receive the end of his faith, even the eternal salvation of his soul (1 Pet. 1:7-9). The traditional view that faith will be lost in sight is not consistent with the Biblical definition of the term faith, and is not in harmony with what the divine record teaches about such. The noun faith means confidence and the verbal equivalent believe means to confide, trust, or rely upon. Such inherent components of faith cannot cease. Following his resurrection from death, our Lord

stated to Thomas, “because thou hast seen me thou hast believed” (John 20:29). The faith of Thomas was gained, rather than lost, in sight. Paul wrote, “have I not seen the Lord?” Seeing Christ did not result in his losing faith which afterward he mentioned in Second Timothy 1:12, “I know whom I have believed.”

The element of faith does not end where knowledge begins—the more knowledge one develops, the greater faith one will have. In First Peter 1:9 the phrase, “end of your faith,” was not relating to the termination of such. While indeed the term, “end” (*telos*, NT Greek) is correctly defined as being that of termination in some instances; *telos* is also correctly defined as being “the end of which all things relate, the aim, the purpose.” In First Peter 1:9 the inspired writer used the term “end” with reference to the end result, purpose, or design not termination.

The magnificent greatness of salvation in Christ is depicted in First Peter chapter 3. When one considers the magnificent greatness of salvation who can ultimately harm us if we are true followers of Christ (1 Pet. 3:13)? If one suffers for the cause of truth rather than being focused on the temporal aspects of life in this world, one needs to be focused upon giving an adequate defense of his faith (3:15).

Our faith is anchored in the Lord God; not in humanity. We must be ready to give an answer (*apologia*, NT Greek). The term *apologia* is defined as a defense. We are to be ready to give a defense of the truth that inquires of a reason (derived from *logos*, NT Greek). According to *Thayer* (380-382), along with *Arndt and Gingrich* (478-480), this term has a variety of definitions. The context of First Peter 3:15 points to that of being a ground, reason, or evidence of our hope and faith.

Not all suffering is pointless. Such is demonstrated in the ridicule and rejection of Noah and his preaching as well as in the vicarious sufferings of Christ on the cross for our salvation. The magnificent greatness of salvation is noted in the parallel regarding the ark and the church of Christ (1 Pet. 3:18-22). In noting a comparison in salvation from the great flood and in salvation that is found in Christ the parallels are striking!

In the days of Noah God authorized the construction of only one ark (Gen. 6:14). There were no life boats of “arks of your choice.” In the beginning of the gospel age Christ built only one true church (Matt. 16:18-19). He did not build a multiplicity of denominations and/or para-church institutions.

In the days of Noah God authorized the ark to be constructed out of only one type of wood—gopher wood (Gen. 6:14). When the one true church was established it was built out of those who had been purchased by the blood of Christ (Col. 1:13-14).

When Noah constructed the ark, God authorized *only one door* (Gen. 6:16). Christ’s way is the *only* entrance into his church (John 10:1-9).

On the inside of the ark there was only one family wearing one family name—that belonging to Noah (Heb. 11:7). The church of Christ is God’s one true family wearing the name of Christ (Eph. 3:14-15; Acts 11:26).

Noah and his family within the ark were saved from the evil sinful world by God using the great world-wide flood to transport them to a new life (Heb. 11:7). Those within the church of the Lord have been translated by Christ by means of baptism to a new life in him (1 Pet. 3:21).

All of those who were saved from the great flood were within the ark; all of those outside were lost and condemned (Gen. 6:17-22). All of those who are saved in Christ are within the church of Christ; those accountable outside are lost (Acts 2:47; 20:28; Col. 1:13-18; Eph. 1:22-23; 2 Thess. 1:7-10). God invited all individuals in Noah’s day to escape condemnation in the flood (Gen. 7:1).

God invites all sinners today to escape condemnation of the Judgment by coming into Christ (Rev. 22:17). Do not neglect, reject, or despise God’s offer of salvation in Christ.

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The Proper Division Of The Word

Ron Cosby

Studious preachers of old taught their listeners to rightly divide God's word—a conviction that came from the Bible itself: “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). “Rightly dividing” implies that students may improperly segment Holy Writ. Experience demonstrates that this is done too often. However, the faithful disciple will avoid appealing to the wrong portion of Scripture for his spiritual guidance. Recognize that there is an Old Testament and a New Testament. Today, those seeking to be right before the throne of God live according to New Testament statutes, not Old Testament.

What is the proper use of the Old Testament? Old Testament law has never been, nor will it ever be, God's law for the Christian. It was abrogated, annulled, or abolished as law about 2,000 years ago by the cross and authority of our Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 5:17; Rom. 7:1-6; Eph. 2:12-15). It was law only for the Israelites (Exo. 20:1-5), though provision was made for Gentiles who sought to live under its precepts. It served its purpose, fully and completely (Gal. 3:19-28; Heb. 10:1-4; 9:1).

Upon hearing these Scriptures, some falsely conclude that there is no value in seeking out of, or knowing, the Old Testament. However, great benefits may be gained from its precepts, as long as one properly divides Holy Writ. New Testament writers enumerate several advantages of its use. Paul tells us that the Law was, “...written for our learning, that through patience and comfort of the scriptures we might have hope” (Rom. 15:4). He also taught that it serves as an example to warn us: “These things happened unto them by way of example; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come” (1 Cor. 10:11). And, the Old Testament aids in making us, “wise unto salvation” (2 Tim. 3:15). From these, we, therefore, learn to seek out of the things “written aforetime,” but not as law and statutes for right doing for those of us who live this side of the cross.

What is the proper use of the New Testament? It is the law of God for those seeking to be righteous today (Rom. 3:28; Gal. 6:2; Jas. 1:25). As law, its truth guides the sinner unto the remission of his sins (Luke 24:47; Matt. 26:28). When James calls it the “perfect law of liberty,” he indicates that it is the only law that sets one free from sin. It liberates instead of placing the penitent transgressor in bondage.

Our Lord's new law requires the sinner to believe (John 8:24; Mark 16:16). In the new law, Christ also requires the sinner to repent (Luke 13:3; 2 Pet. 3:9). Furthermore, He requires the sinner to confess Him as Lord (Rom. 10:9-10; 1 Tim. 6:12-13). Lastly, He requires the sinner to be immersed in water unto the remission of his sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:20-21).

Being “obedient from the heart to that form of teaching whereunto ye were delivered” makes one “free from sin” (Rom. 6:17-18). On the other hand, rejection or neglect of any of these injunctions is a rejection of God, costing one his soul (Luke 7:29-30; 2 Thess 1:7-9). Go not to the Law of Moses for instructions on remission of sins, but to the Law of Christ (Gal. 5:4).

As law, the New Testament guides the Christian in proper worship (John 4:24). Christians who were converted out of Judaism followed the apostles' doctrine given by Christ, not the statutes of Moses, in worship, as they gave of their means, partook of the Lord's Supper, prayed, studied, and praised God in song (Acts 2:42; 20:7; Heb. 2:12; Eph. 5:18-20; Col. 3:16-17). Likewise, Gentiles who were converted out of idolatry followed the apostles' statutes. They gave of their means upon the first day of the week (1 Cor. 16:1-2), partook of the Communion (1 Cor. 11:17-34), prayed (1 Cor. 14:15), studied (1 Cor. 14:26), and praised God in song (1 Cor. 14:26). Go not to the Law of Moses for instructions on how to worship, but to the Law of Christ (John 4:24).

As law, the New Testament guides the Christian in godly living (Titus 2:11-12). Following the Spirit-guided writers of it will produce the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:20-24), and the virtues of the faith (2 Pet. 1:5-11). No doubt students ought to use the Old Testament as an example of obedience, but not as law on right living, else we would avoid working on Saturday (Exo. 20:7-11).

As law, the New Testament guides the Christian in zealous service (Titus 2:14; Eph. 2:10; Rom. 2:9-10; 1 Cor. 15:18). In their service to God, priests of the Law of Moses offered animal sacrifices daily. Not so with the Christian. He presents his body and soul as a daily offering (Rom. 12:1-2; 1 Cor. 6:20).

Both the Old Testament and the New Testament are inspired of God and their proper use produces rich rewards for those seeking to do heaven's will (John 7:17). However, seeking to "be justified by the law" of Moses justifies no one, and such endeavors to justify the Christian severs the child of God from Christ (Gal. 5:4).

The "Faith Healing" Racket

W. P. Jolly

Of all the modern systems of deception, there is none quite so mean and plain crooked as the so-called "healing" campaigns. Please consider the following:

In New Testament times all healing that was done was accomplished at once, *without delay*. Such is not true of the modern "healers" today. People are asked, "Don't you feel a little better than you did?" or questions of like nature. Some people have even been known to throw away their crutches one day and then be found using them again the next. *They simply are not healed.*

If these men have power to heal they ought to heal everybody that asks to be healed, including the totally deaf and the totally blind. This ought to be performed in a moment of time, *immediately*, even as it was done by the apostles of Christ. It certainly should not require hours of crying, praying and general hysteria in order to get the job done. If these self-styled "healers" *can't* do these things then they ought to quit making such broad claims and thus eliminate all the public confusion which they have wrought.

If these men fail and then cast the blame upon the sick person for his "lack of faith" they are really saying in effect that they have nothing to do with it after all and that the healing is actually accomplished by the faith of the afflicted one. Now if this be true, of *what use is the "healer"?* If the cure depends upon the sick man's faith, then for what purpose are these "healers" going about the country anyway? The sick man could bring about his own cure by faith, in the privacy of his own home. And in addition to this, he would not need to spend money on the "faith healer." The truth is friends that this sort of thing is a dirty, low-down, devilish, deceptive *fraud*. Listen: When the disciples of the Lord failed to heal a man on one occasion, they asked the Lord why they couldn't heal him. Here is the Bible record: "And Jesus said unto them, because of your unbelief" (Matt. 17:20). Yes, it was because of *their* unbelief. The sick man's faith or lack of faith had nothing to do with it. It is not one bit harder for God to raise the dead than it is for Him to work a miraculous cure on a sore toe. Show me *one dead person* who has been raised in one of these "healing" campaigns. Show me *one cork leg* that has been replaced with one of flesh and bone. Show me *one glass eye* that has been replaced by a real human eye. Don't be deceived, for "Many false prophets are gone out into the world."

The miracles of the New Testament days were for a special purpose and that purpose was to confirm the word. "And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following" (Mark 16:20). The word was confirmed, or proven to be of God by the performing of miracles. When the word was firmly established and confirmed, the need for further confirmation ceased. A thing once confirmed is forever confirmed. Consider the fact that the Apostle Paul brought a dead man back to life (Acts 20:9-10). The same apostle left one of his co-laborers in the gospel at Miletum *sick* (2 Tim. 4:20). If Paul could raise the dead, why did he leave Trophimus at Miletum *sick*? He did it simply because he could not abuse the power which God wrought through him. This power was to be used on special occasions to prove to a skeptical world that his words were the words of the true and living God. His mission was to preach the gospel, not to heal the sick. His beloved son in the faith Timothy was burdened with his "often infirmities" but we find no record of Paul ever going to him and healing him. Paul could not even remove his own "thorn in the flesh" though he prayed that it be taken away.

The divine record testified that miracles were to cease. Hear the New Testament:

Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away (1 Cor. 13:8-10).

We now have that perfect revelation of God to man, the New Testament scriptures. Hear the claim: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). What else could the Christian want or need??

New Testament Baptism

Dub McClish

Perhaps there is no teaching of the New Testament over which more controversy has raged than the subject of baptism. This is not the case because the New Testament is ambiguous on the subject, nor because men are incapable of understanding its teaching. As we explore this subject it shall be our premise that God is the author of baptism through the teachings of the Bible. In the final analysis, it makes little difference what any man says on the subject, but it makes all of the difference what God says. If the teaching of the New Testament on the subject of baptism is unimportant, then how can anyone logically contend that the teaching of the New Testament on any subject is important? The Lord, through His Word, must be allowed to define both the action and purpose of baptism.

The “What” of Baptism

In the minds of most people, baptism is an act that may be administered in any of three ways: sprinkling water on the candidate, pouring water on the candidate or immersing the candidate in water. Some English dictionaries state that baptism is administered by any of these three actions (Neilson, 216). However, we must remember that modern English dictionaries merely reflect the *current* usage of words, rather than their original meanings.

Consider the following evidence in the New Testament, apart from the original meaning of the word *baptism*. The baptism of John, (which involved the same action as the baptism commanded by Christ and administered by His apostles both before and after the cross), required “much water” (John 3:23).

The most detailed account of an actual baptism is found in Acts 8:38–39: “And they both went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And...they came up out of the water....” The apostle Paul twice uses the term *burial* to describe what takes place when one is baptized (Rom. 6:14; Col. 2:12). The foregoing evidence obviously points to only one action—immersion.

A study of the Greek word translated *baptism* yields the same conclusion. *Baptize* and its related forms was not an English word, originally. It was transferred into English directly from the New Testament Greek word, *baptidzo*. One may consult any standard lexicon of the Greek New Testament and learn that *baptidzo*, means to dip, plunge, submerge, or immerse when used literally (*Analytical*, 65; Baur, 131; Thayer, 94). When used figuratively (e.g., Mark 10:38), it means to overwhelm. If this Greek word were translated, rather than merely transliterated, our English New Testaments would read “immerse” everywhere they presently read, “baptize.”

For those who truly believe the Bible to be the inspired Word of God, the description and definition of baptism in the New Testament is sufficient, regardless of what mere men may say on the subject. However, it is worthwhile to notice a sampling of what religious leaders have said the subject. The reader is asked to please understand that we do not cite the following for the purpose of embarrassing anyone or to “prove” some to be right and others wrong. The words of men prove nothing independent of the Word of God. Our only purpose is to exalt the truth of God’s Word. Consider the

following:

- Martin Luther (“Father of the 16th century Reformation,” founder of the Lutheran Church): “The term *baptism* is a Greek word; it may be rendered into Latin by *mersio*—when we immerse anything in water, that it may be entirely covered with water” (Brents, 280).
- John Calvin (16th century reformer, a founder of the Presbyterian Church): “The word *baptize* signifies to immerse, and the rite of immersion was practiced by the ancient church” (Brents, 280–81).
- John Wesley (founder of the Methodist Church): “*Buried with him*—alluding to the ancient manner of baptizing by immersion” (Brents, 334).
- Catholic Dictionary: “In Apostolic Times the body of the baptized person was immersed, for St. Paul looks on the immersion as typifying the burial with Christ, and speaks of baptism as a bath.”

All of the above quotations have two things in common: (1) They are unanimous in their definition of baptism as immersion; (2) They all come from members of religious bodies that have substituted sprinkling and/or pouring for immersion. Loyalty to their scholarship requires them to refute their own practice, however. None can rationally argue that New Testament baptism was or is anything other than immersion. To adopt any other view requires a denial of explicit New Testament teaching.

The “Why” of Baptism

There are two basic schools of thought on the purpose of the baptism commanded by Jesus Christ: One holds that baptism is an act of obedience of one who has *already been saved*, providing access to denominational membership after salvation has been granted through faith alone. In this view, baptism is part of one’s obedience to Christ *because* he is already a Christian. The other view contends that baptism is the final act of obedience to which one submits in *order to be saved* or forgiven of his past sins. In this view a person is not saved until he is baptized, at which time the Lord adds him to His church *because he is saved*. What does the Bible say? Jesus told the apostles that as they preached the Gospel, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). Note the order: (1) believe, (2) baptized, (3) saved. The order is not: (1) believe, (2) saved, (3) baptized. In this verse, Jesus definitively makes baptism a condition of salvation, as plainly as He makes faith.

When the apostles began to fulfill the command to “go preach,” they told believers, “Repent ye, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins” (Acts 2:37–38). What relation does repentance sustain to remission (forgiveness) of sins? (Notice that baptism is in the same relation to forgiveness of sins as is repentance.) To be consistent, those who argue that forgiveness *precedes* baptism instead of *following* it must also hold that forgiveness *precedes* repentance instead of following it. However, there is not a single instance in all of the Bible of God’s granting or promising forgiveness prior to repentance. *Remission of sins* appears *after* baptism and as a consequence of it in this passage, even as *salvation* appears *after* baptism in Mark 16:16. Ananias commanded Saul of Tarsus: “...be baptized and wash away thy sins... (Acts 22:16). This statement makes no sense at all if Saul’s sins were forgiven *before* he was baptized.

The objection is sometimes raised that to insist that immersion in water is a Scriptural condition of salvation equals a doctrine of “water salvation” or salvation by means of water. If that is the case, then such Scripture passages as Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38, 22:16, et al., must be blamed for the teaching, rather than those who believe what these verses clearly state. However, such verses attribute no merit to water as a spiritual cleansing agent whatsoever. These verses do not identify the cleansing agent.

They only tell us the *act in which the cleansing* occurs. It is plain from elsewhere in Scripture that the blood of Christ is the only agent capable of cleansing or forgiveness (Heb. 9:22; 1 Pet. 1:18–19; Rev. 1:5, et al.). The old song has it exactly right: “What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.”

When does this washing occur or how does one gain access to the precious cleansing blood of Christ? Besides the references already cited, consider also Romans 6:3: “Or

are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?" It was in His death that Jesus' shed His cleansing blood for the sins of mankind (1 Tim. 2:6; Heb. 9:26–28; et al.). By what means is the sinner able to participate in the death of Christ, where He poured out his atoning blood? The inspired apostle answers conclusively: We are "baptized into his death." This statement is in perfect harmony with every other Scripture on baptism.

The purpose God has revealed in his Word for baptism is not that of Christian obedience, done because one has already been saved. Rather, it, along, with a confessed faith in Christ and repentance of one's sins, is the act in which one comes to participate in the spiritual benefits of the death of Christ. It is therefore the act from which one comes forth to live a new life (Rom. 6:4). It is the act upon which the Christ adds one to the church of Christ, because he has been saved and the church is God's depository of saved people (Acts 2:41–47; Eph. 5:23). Only when one understands that salvation/forgiveness of sins is not granted until one is Scripturally baptized, can one appreciate the apostle Peter's pronouncement that baptism saves us (1 Pet. 3:21).

Summary

The Scriptures teach that the baptism the Christ ordered to be preached to all men is a burial in water. It brings one into salvation/forgiveness of sins through the blood of Christ. It is our earnest plea that all men return to what the Bible teaches on this and every other subject in religion and morals, both in their teaching and practice.

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The Traditions Of Catholicism

O. C. Lambert

When the power of Catholicism was broken by the Reformation and their prohibition of Bible reading could no longer be enforced, she resorted to a campaign of disparagement of the sacred book. Though not entirely effective, it has no doubt deterred millions of Catholics in obeying the command of Jesus to "search the Scriptures." They make Paul falsify when he said, "The holy scriptures...are able to make thee wise unto salvation" (2 Tim. 3:14). The Bereans were commended for searching the Scriptures daily, a useless thing to do if the following quotations from Catholic authorities are true.

Do Not Need The Bible

"It is that of having for a foundation authority in all ages, for a means of deciding all doubtful points, not a book alone, or a book with authorized interpreters, simply the authorized interpreters of the faith such as the Apostles were, with a book, perhaps, to help them, but still not absolutely needing that book for the discharge of their office any more than the Apostles did for theirs" (*Plain Facts*, 33). "They (Apostles) consigned to unwritten tradition many revealed truths, and thus made the Church from the beginning independent of the writings" (*History of the Church of God*, 253).

“The Bible was not intended to be a Text Book of the Christian religion” (*Catholic Facts*, 50).

Bible Does Not Contain The Teachings Of Jesus

“The very nature of the Bible ought to prove to any thinking man the impossibility of its being the one safe method of finding out what the Saviour taught” (*Question Box*, 67). “The Bible does not pretend to be formulary of belief, as is a creed or catechism. There is nowhere in the New Testament a clear, methodical statement of the teachings of Christ” (*Question Box*, 66).

Catholic Doctrine Not In The Bible

Concerning the Immaculate Conception: “Of course if one is to take nothing as belonging to the Christian faith but what is plainly or unquestionably stated in the Bible, one will not believe or accept it” (*Plain Facts*, 85). “So in the New Law Catholics believe some things not in the Scriptures” (*Question Box*, 75). “By what right do you teach doctrines not found in the Bible? ...Because the origin of our faith is not in the Bible alone, but the Church which gives us both the written and 2) unwritten word.” (*Question Box*, 75)

Bible Reading Makes Unbelievers

“The Reformation produced, indeed, an exaggerated individualism, which by declaring every man equally competent to find out the doctrines of the Saviour from his own private readings of the Scriptures, has led many to the utter denial of Christ and His doctrines of faith and morality” (*Question Box*, 95).

Concerning Daniel 2 :12: “From this, as it stands in English, we should plainly gather that only some of the dead were to arise to Judgment; and it is a good instance of the impossibility of arriving at certain conclusions of faith by simply taking the translated Bible as we have it in our vernacular, and the futility of attempting to do so” (*Plain Facts*, 132, 133).

Where Catholics Get Their Teaching

“And history shows only too plainly that the Church in their sense, of the term, has varied in its doctrine, taught dogmas at various times and at various places at the same time, inconsistent with each other, and therefore to a considerable extent erroneous” (*Plain Facts*, 34).

“When the Church studies the ancient monuments of her faith she casts over the past reflection of her living and present thought and by some sympathy of the truth today with that of yesterday she succeeds in recognizing through the obscurities and inaccuracies of ancient formulas the portions of traditional truth, even when they are mixed with error” (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, XV, 10).

“This infallibility is to control the vagaries of Tradition, for Tradition, of its very nature, tends to exaggeration, as we find in the legends of ancient peoples. Exaggerated, they destroy themselves, but in the bosom of God’s Church these truths forever retain their character unchanged and unchangeable” (*Explanation of Catholic Morals*, 69).

“Instead of attempting to repress totally a practice which was misguided indeed, but which showed an instinctive reliance on higher powers, the Church in many instances took the religious customs with which the people were familiar, and made these Christian customs” (*Externals of the Catholic Church*, 205).

“It is interesting to note how often our Church has availed herself of practices which were in common use among pagans...Thus it is true, in a certain sense, that some Catholic rites and ceremonies are a reproduction of those of pagan creeds” (*Externals of the Catholic Church*, 156).

“We need not shrink from admitting that candles, like incense and lustral water, were commonly employed in pagan worship and the rites paid to the dead. But the Church from a very early period took them into her service, just as she adopted many other things indifferent in themselves, which seemed proper to enhance the splendor of religious ceremonial. We must not forget that most of these adjuncts to worship, like music, lights, perfumes, ablutions, floral decorations, canopies, fans, screens, bells, vestments etc. were not identified with any idolatrous cult in particular; but they were

common to almost all cults” (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, III, 246).

“The use of the ‘aqua lustralis’ with which the Romans sprinkled themselves or were sprinkled by the priest shows that the same symbolism existed among the heathen.”

“A like custom, beautiful and natural; in itself, though of course it may degenerate and often has degenerated into superstition, has been adopted by the Church, water and salt are exorcised by the priest and so withdrawn from the power of Satan”

“The use of holy water among Christians must be very ancient, for the Apostolic Canons forged in the fifth century. (*Catholic Dictionary*, 43) contain a formula for blessing water that it may have power ‘to give health, drive away diseases, put the demons to flight,’ etc. But there does not seem to be any evidence that it was customary for the priest to sprinkle the people with holy water before the ninth century.” (*Catholic Dictionary*, 403)

“St Patrick labored with great prudence. He did not rudely assail or alter customs and ceremonies which might be tolerated; many of them even were converted to Christian purposes. As the pagan temple, when purified and dedicated, was employed for Christian worship, even so pagan practices, divested of their superstitions, might be retained as Christian. This was the wise policy ever recommended by Christianity, and was ably carried out by Patrick. The days devoted from old time to pagan festivals were now transferred to the service of the Christian cause.”

“The feast of Samhain, or the moon, coincided exactly with All-Saints Day. The fires of Mayday, in honor of Baal, were transferred to the 24th of June, in honor of John the Baptist...The convert in the baptismal font where he was immersed, saw the sacred well at which his fathers had worshipped” (*Life of St. Patrick*, 73).

“It has been and always will be the intent and tradition of the Apostolic See, to make a large allowance, in all that is right and good, for the primitive traditions and special customs of every nation” (*Gr. Ency Letters*, 308).

“*The Church assimilates and sanctifies Roman Civilization.* From its foundation the Church had gradually absorbed the best of the life, the organization, the institutions, the laws, the learning, and whatever else of good and worthy there was in the Roman Empire. What the Church thus took to herself she transformed and sanctified, so that, though Roman in its source, it was Christian in its form, influence, and tendencies. To the treasure of ancient civilization the Church joined the great and luminous truths of God’s revelation. Thus doubly armed with the great legislative and intellectual acquirements of antiquity and the practical and saintly precepts of Christianity, the Church began to build up from Teutonic and Roman elements the most perfect nations and the grandest civilization that the world has ever known. So numerous were the difficulties of this formidable task that any other institution save God’s Church must have lost courage and despaired” (*History of the Church of God*, 379).

It is easy to see that an institution modeled after the Roman Empire in its laws and governmental machinery, and which is a crazy-quilt patchwork of paganism in its doctrine and belief would have little use for the Bible!

The Voice Of Conscience Is Not The Voice Of God

Gayle Oler

It is not so that “the voice of conscience is the voice of God.” Conscience is often wrong, but God never is. This statement has so often been made that it has found itself in quotation marks in modern writings, and has probably come to be considered as Scripture by some.

The plain fact is that the voice of conscience is frequently the voice of the devil. When men follow their consciences, they differ as widely as the poles. Trying to go to heaven a hundred different ways and under every kind of name, they all declare that they are following the guidance of conscience. But there is only one way to heaven, “and in none other is there salvation, for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given

among men, wherein we must be saved” (Acts 4:12 ASV).

Conscience says, “One way is as good as another,” but God says, “Stand ye in the ways and see; and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein and ye shall find rest for your souls” (Jer. 6:16 ASV). Conscience is wrong, but the Bible is right.

Conscience says, “Join the church of your choice.” God says, “Yea, they have chosen their own ways and their soul delighteth in their abominations: I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them...” (Isa. 66:3-4 ASV).

Conscience will agree that it is all right to wear names, choose churches and doctrines, and different kinds of worship and life, and that one’s choice is about all to be considered. God says, “They did that which was evil in mine eyes, and chose that wherein I delighted not” (Isa. 66:4 ASV).

Conscience subordinates the will and way of God and consults only the mind and preference of man. God never intended that man should use his conscience as a criterion in religion. Jesus Christ is our guide. “Unto him shall ye hearken.”

No inspired writer ever condoned this “church of your choice” idea or ever voiced one slight approval of the doctrine that one church is as safe as another. The doctrines of “many ways to heaven,” “nothing in a name,” and that everyone ought to join the church of his choice is a far cry from the voice of God. It is the plain voice of the devil.

Any conscience that will approve of wearing a name God has not given, in a church He has not planted, and of worshipping in a way He has not commanded leads a man to do that wherein God delights not.

There was a time when Paul thought the voice of conscience was the voice of God, and admitted that he had lived before God in all good conscience (Acts 23:1). After he learned better, he confessed that he was the chief of sinners while faithfully following the dictates of his own conscience (1 Tim. 1:15).

”Everybody is doing it, so I guess it is all right,” is the voice of conscience. A big crowd in religion cannot be wrong to such a mind. “I know I am saved because I feel perfectly satisfied,” is the way the conscience talks that has completely ignored the word of God.

That kind of conscience approves the use of instrumental music in the worship and infant sprinkling in practice. It approves the use of an unscriptural name and church. It is the very instrument that got the Israelites in trouble with God. “They hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in their own counsels and in the stubbornness of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward” (Jer. 7:24 ASV). It is wiser to follow the word of the living God than the fallible dictates of conscience. Which do you really follow?

Acts 2:38 Briefly Examined

Guy N. Woods

Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men *and* brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:37-38).

Here, for the first time, under the Christian dispensation, did men inquire of their duty; and here, too, is the first time the question is answered as it applies to the reign of Christ. Whatever may have been the correct answer applicable under former dispensations, it is indisputably certain that Peter gave the only answer applicable to his day and ours.

Circumstances combine to make this passage truly significant. Peter, the speaker, along with the other apostles, had been invested with “the keys of the kingdom” (Matt. 16:19). The prophets had foretold that “the word of the Lord” should “go forth from Jerusalem” (Isa. 2:2-3). They, too, had designated that this would occur in “the last days.” All prophetic utterances touching the establishment of the kingdom pointed to this day, and here culminated the events that were to result in the first promulgation of

the gospel of Christ. If there were no other reasons, this is sufficient to invest this passage with profound significance.

It is obvious that the Pentecostians were asking what to do in order to obtain remission of sins. This, at least, was Peter's impression of the matter, a conclusion we may arrive at by combining the question asked with the reward promised—viz., “Men and brethren, what shall we do...for the remission of sins?” Peter's answer was designed to supply this information. Thus, if we regard Peter's reply simply as the answer to this query, we learn that they were commanded to do two things “for the remission of sins”: (1) Repent; (2) be baptized. (It should be noted that those who propounded the query were *already believers*).

If Peter had stopped with this and said no more, his answer would have been complete and the world would know that it is the duty of sinners “pricked in their heart” to *repent and be baptized* “for the remission of sins.” But the inspired speaker saw fit to accompany the commands with an explanation. He qualified the command to be baptized with the words, “in the name of Jesus Christ” to show that it is by Christ's authority that men are to be baptized. “In the name of Jesus Christ” simply means by “the authority of Christ,” since one can act in Christ's name only when authorized to do so. Thus, Peter's answer involved the following: (1) Repent; (2) be baptized on the authority of Jesus Christ Himself.

Christ, therefore, through Peter, authorizes *believers* to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins. This conclusion may be arrived at in another way: Strike out that portion of the passage which has been the occasion of so much controversy—“for the remission of sins.” This done, Peter's answer to the question, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” is simply this: “Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.” Thus, the conclusion is the same, whether we regard Peter's answer as a duty expressed without regard to the consequences which followed, or whether it be taken (as Peter did) as the answer to the question of what one must do to obtain remission of sins.

From these considerations, it is certain that, as far as our duty or salvation is concerned, Peter's words in this passage definitely establish the essentiality of both repentance and baptism to the end proposed—the remission of sins. It is scarcely necessary to point that repentance alone is not for remission of sins, nor is baptism when unattended by faith and repentance.

Peter did not say, “Repent for the remission of sins”; neither did he say, “Be baptized for the remission of sins.” Repentance and baptism in this passage are, accordingly, joined and, therefore, equally related to their object: remission of sins. This fact is conceded by all scholars.

Said Dr. Alexander (Presbyterian): “The whole phrase 'to (or toward) remission of sins' describes this as the end to which the multitude had reference, and which, therefore, must be contemplated in the answer. The beneficent end to which all this led was for the remission of sins.”

To the same point, Dr. Hackett (Baptist) says, “In order to the forgiveness of sins' we connect naturally with both preceding verbs. This clause states the motive or object which should induce them to repent and be baptized. It enforces the entire exhortation, not one part of it to the exclusion of the other.”

Denominational debaters, however, contend that baptism does not stand in the same relation to remission of sins as does repentance. While conceding that repentance, in this passage, has as its object “the remission of sins” they, nevertheless, insist that baptism is “because of” remission. To this conclusion, there are at least two unsurpassable objections.

- (1) Whatever the design of baptism is in this passage, repentance bears the same end or aim. If baptism be “because of” remission, then so is repentance. To command me to repent “because of” remission is absurd, since it is universally granted that repentance is a condition precedent to remission. But let it be admitted that repentance is for (in order to) the remission of sins, and no amount of illogical juggling of words will hide the fact that baptism is for the

same purpose and in exactly the same sense.

- (2) Moreover, the denominational theory contradicts an obvious fact in the case. The Pentecostians were asking *what to do to be saved*, not something to do because they were already saved. The conclusion is irresistible. Peter, in response to the query there raised, made repentance and baptism conditions precedent to the remission of sins.

So skilfully did Peter interweave the answer to the query that it is beyond the cavils of men to so arrange the passage or pervert it to make it mean other than that originally intended.

To illustrate, draw a pencil line through the controverted statement, “for the remission of sins.” We then have this statement: “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ.” Why did Peter utter these words? Obviously, in answer to the question, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” Do for what? Surely, to escape the consequences for their act 53 days before. How did Peter answer them? “*Repent and be baptized every one of you.*” Thus, whether Peter's answer be contemplated as a solution for the grave difficulty in which the Pentecostians found themselves, or simply as an answer to the question, “What must we do to obtain remission of sins?”, the answer is the same: “Repent and be baptized.”

They were not told to repent for one purpose and be baptized for another. Repentance and baptism in this passage stand precisely in the same relationship. They are different acts, but in this sentence their object is the same—remission of sins.

Back To The Church Of The Bible

Roelf L. Ruffner

“And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread” (Acts 2:42).

Who are the “they” in this verse? They are Christians, members of the church of Christ (cf. Rom. 16:16). When this verse was written, in the First Century A.D., there were no Baptists, Methodists, Pentecostals, Nazarenes, Charismatics, Catholics, etc. Almost 200 years ago men and women started coming out of the denominations of their day. They simply wanted to be Christians only like the New Testament describes.

Today those who call themselves “Christians” but are members of denominations are plagued by corruption and internal discord. Financial abuse is often found in the upper echelons of power. Pedophilia and homosexuality are tolerated in the clergy and often covered up by leaders of religious groups. Religious charlatanism and hucksterism abound in separating the gullible from their money. Some denominations are even denying the divinity of Christ, the virgin birth of Jesus, eternal punishment or Hell and the inspiration of the Bible.

All of these heresies are but the consequence of a rejection of the word of God. As Jesus said of the denominationalists of His day, “Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition” (Mark 7:9). These folks teeter on the edge of the abyss of unbelief. Paul, speaking of his pagan world, but applicable to many churches today, wrote, “Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations and their foolish heart was darkened” (Rom. 1:21). They have tried “reform” and “renewal” many, many times to no avail (cf. 2 Tim. 3:13).

Yet the clarion call of preachers of the Gospel for 2,000 years has always been – “Go back to the Bible.” “Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the way, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls” (Jer. 6:16). “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Rom. 1:16).

This was also the Lord Jesus’ prayer for all His followers of all ages. “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they

all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (John 17:20-21).

The only way to accomplish Jesus prayer for unity is to go back to the church of the Bible. But what is the church of the Bible?

The Church of the Bible Has The Bible As Its Standard.

Every religious group or denomination has a guide book or rule to follow. The Latter-Day Saints, or Mormons, have the *Book of Mormon*. The Methodist Church has John Wesley’s *Methodist Discipline*. Many Baptists follow the *Baptist Standard Manual*. The Moslems adhere to the *Koran*.

Most denominations pay lip service to the Bible. But the *church* of the Bible takes the Bible **only** as its rule of faith and practice. Why is this? There are basically two reasons:

- The Bible is inspired of God, inerrant and all-sufficient. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:16,17).
- The Bible is the source of all truth. On the night of His betrayal the Lord Jesus told His apostles, “Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak, and he will shew you things to come’ (John 16:13).

If His followers use any other standard than the Holy Bible, they cast aspersions on its divine inspiration.

If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book. And if any man shall take away from the words of this book, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book (Rev. 22:17,18).

In our troublesome times humanity needs a source of absolute truth to guide it. “O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps” (Jer. 10:23).

“What Saith The Scriptures?”

Harrell Davidson

From a reader of *The Gospel Preceptor* comes this question, printed as it was written: “Revelation 22:18 the verse has been used by several people, in church of Christ to apply to the whole bible, we know that not all verses are relevant, what are your view over this, even in the issue of one cup this verse has been applied where it is not appropriate.”

Thanks for your question and or statement. First of all, I would like to make some comments regarding the truth.

Attitudes toward truth today are lamentable. In the Lord’s church there is less interest in truth than ever before in my lifetime. In this missive I am going to give some false views (fatal error) regarding the truth as well as Scriptural views.

Truth is absolute. By this I mean that it does not change. The Fount from which it comes is pure and it is incorruptible and undefiled and does not change. Philosophy says that truth is relative. They mean by this that truth changes and more so with every generation. We thus have the need for new Bibles every year or two. It may be wrong today to lie, cheat, steal or commit adultery etc., but in a decade or two these all may be accepted as a proper way to live. The truth is still the same—absolute—objective and never subjective. It is the truth whether anyone knows it or not. I could write many

pages on this aspect alone, but what I am attempting to do is to elevate the truth to its proper level for reasons that will follow.

There are many religious doctrines that are false that are being taught in the world. Great numbers laugh at the truth; even among those who have attained high academic degrees. These doctrines are taught so that people will live by them. They make fun of the truth. One holds one view of truth another a different view and they are both contradictory. Why should one man accept a religious doctrine which is nothing more than a human doctrine? Many things could be said regarding this, but there is only one major thing of importance to be said and that is we should hold to a doctrine because it is true. It comes from God. One philosopher said that the only reason that one should hold a certain doctrine is because it is found to be true. If there is truth in religion there should be the compelling notion that one should change their views when they find out that what they have believed is false. Universities are constantly trying to turn people away from God. I believe that the USA is in great danger. Many of the people who should be helping are actually hurting by not making Christianity what it ought to be. There are many in the church that have turned away from the truth with the idea that not all truth is absolute and you can believe what you wish to believe.

Jesus said, "Ye shall know the truth and *the* [eph.hdd] truth shall make you free (John 8:32). The seed is the word of God Luke 8:11. Peter said, "... you have purified your souls in obeying the truth..." (I Pet. 1:22). Knowing and obeying the truth is absolutely necessary to the saving of one's soul, I do not equivocate on this, but am ready to defend this in public. Since truth is so important it is good that we look at some incorrect and some correct views of truth.

It is a fatal error to hold that truth can be diluted by mere human doctrine and still be acceptable to God. It is hard for me to believe that people could believe that. Since my parents and grandparents were members of the church, and as a child I was taught the Bible is true always and error will not change that. I realize that I had a helpful situation in my life, but today the church is not like that. Jesus said that it was a sin to add to this Book Rev. 22:18. This is a plain and simple statement. If you do not speak what the Bible speaks you will be held accountable before God. The Bible is inspired, it is complete, sufficient and is authoritative. It does not need any help from me or you or anyone else in the world. It is already exactly what it ought to be.

It is a fatal error to hold that men can take away from the truth and achieve the result that it will still be acceptable to God. They argue that they are not changing anything, but we are just dropping out a few chapters here and there. Jesus further said something about taking away. "And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book" (Rev. 22:19). You have to *try* to misunderstand those simple words. At times men are prone to not study all that the Bible says on a subject because they might find where they are in error. As a result, they read only that which will accommodate their views or lifestyles or drop the Bible from their lives altogether. Many years ago, there were many Gospel preachers who were willing to meet in public debate those who hold error, but a terrible thing has happened. We have fewer who are willing to do this, but we have many who do not care enough about the truth anymore to defend it. This ought not to be. Moses said not to add to or diminish ought from the Word (Deut. 4:2). It is clear that the Word of God is perfect and God will *not tolerate* me changing anything in His Word! Neither is He going to tolerate you or anyone else in the world, whether they have read the Bible or not, He will not tolerate our changing it. It does not need our help in any way to make it truer. It is a false view to think that we have the right to add, diminish or change anything in it. As that truth now stands it is able to furnish man completely unto every good work (2 Tim. 3:17).

Now to your specific question regarding Rev. 22:18. Would you agree that we should abide by and teach verse 19 which says: "And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book?" The book of Revelation was written to the seven churches of Asia (Rev.1:4). It was the revelation

of Jesus Christ (Rev.1:1). There is an application to us also.

Next, look at Galatians 1:6-9 where the Scriptures forbids teaching or preaching another or perverted gospel. There is no evidence, to my knowledge, of any other congregation having this same problem, yet it is applicable for us in the 21st century.

Moses was the Inspired writer of Exodus and through his hand God brought ten plagues on Egypt! What do we learn? Paul wrote that things written “aforetime” were written for our learning (cf. Rom. 15:4). That being true, we may very well quote and teach the passage in question—Revelation 22:18—and learn from it that God means exactly what He says. There may not be physical plagues like Egypt or spiritual ones exactly like Revelation but there will surely be a spiritual one—hell—for the devil and his angels. The main thing that I would like to leave with you is this. Whether preaching or teaching, it must be done in context context context. Otherwise it is only a pretext. Thanks for your question.

Brother Davidson answers readers' questions in this column each month. If you have Bible questions, you may email them to him at harrelld@charter.net.

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“Prove All Things”

B.C. Goodpasture

Men are prone to go to extremes. This has always been true. Paul seems to have been guarding against this tendency when he wrote, “Despise not prophesyings; prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 Thess. 5:20-21). In his day, there were those who claimed to “prophesy” by the Spirit, and did; and there were those who claimed to “prophesy” by the Spirit and did not. The result was that, at least some “despised” all “prophesyings” by reason of the false claims of the pretenders. Such a wholesale rejection of all “prophesyings” was unreasonable and unsafe. It was wrong. It is not right either to reject the true because some is false or to accept the false because some is true. Paul indicated the safe course: “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” If there had been no evil mixed with the good, the admonition to “prove all things” and to “hold fast that which is good” would not have been necessary.

What is the meaning of the word “prove”? It signifies to try, to put to the test. The word is employed elsewhere in the New Testament in this sense (Luke 14:19). It means that we should examine everything we hear before we receive it or reject it, as the case may be. At this point, Adam Clarke wrote: “Whatever ye hear in these ‘prophesyings’ or preaching, examine by the words of Christ, and by the doctrines which from time to time, we have delivered unto you in our preaching and writings. Try the spirits...the teachers...by the Word of God.”

In the words of the prophet, “To the law and to the testimony! If they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isa. 8:20). The conduct of the Bereans was in keeping with the spirit of the command under consideration, for we read, “Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica in that they received the word with all readiness of the mind, examining the scriptures daily, whether these things were so” (Acts 17:11). The people of Berea put what they heard to the test, using the Scriptures as their standard of examination. They acted rightly and wisely.

Why will people not do the same today? It is common for the message of a modern preacher to be accepted, without thought, testing, or investigation by those who are his friends religiously, and just as common for the same message to be rejected, without consideration, by his prejudiced religious enemies. These two unreasonable extremes are two of the most unmitigated curses of Christendom.

Let it be observed that this passage which *allows the right* also *enjoins the duty* of proving, testing, and investigating what is heard. It does not permit one to be an indifferent and passive listener. This some seem to prefer. They attend the services,

not to be taught, not to bring into use any faculty or discernment or testing, but to be impressed, and that without effort on their part.

“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits, whether they be of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). All professed Christians should endeavor to be “fullgrown men, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil” (Heb. 5:14).

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Handling Aright God's Word

Dub Mowery

In “rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15), we need to carefully examine every passage of scripture on a given subject. In the four gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John there are some events and teachings of Christ that are recorded in only one of the books. Sometimes the same thing is recorded in two or three books, and a few of the works and teachings of Christ are recorded in all four books. For instance, it is necessary to study all four books in order to obtain a complete picture of the events on the night Judas betrayed Christ (Matt. 26:47-56; Mark 14:43-52; Luke 22:47-53; John 18:1-12).

Mark 14:47 says when Judas led the multitude with swords and staves from the chief priests that, “One of them that stood by drew a sword, and smote a servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear.” Neither this passage, nor its immediate context reveals who cut off the high priest’s servant’s ear, his name, or immediate response to this incident.

Turning back to Matthew 26:52-54, we find Jesus’ response to the individual who cut off the ear. “...Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest now that I cannot pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scripture be fulfilled, that thus it must be?”

Turning to Luke 22:49-51, we find that all those with Christ were willing to take up swords against the multitude and that Jesus touched the ear of the high priest’s servant and healed it. But it is not until we turn to John 18:1-12 that we learn the identity of the one who cut off the ear—Simon Peter—and the servant’s name—Malchus. These four accounts of Judas’ betrayal of Christ serve to illustrate the necessity of taking all that is recorded in the Bible on a subject before drawing a conclusion. The same is true with our approach to the subject of our souls’ salvation. It is essential that we include all scripture pertaining to redemption in the New Testament.

In John 3:16, Jesus said, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Some people claim, “There is enough gospel in that one verse to save the world!” If that’s so, why did God give us 41,170 other verses in the Bible? Who can say one passage of scripture is more important than another? Many assume from John 3:16 and Romans 5:1 that a person becomes spiritually saved the moment he believes. But that concept is not Biblical.

A careful examination of God’s word reveals that there’s much more involved than mentally “accepting Jesus as Savior.” Jesus asked, “And why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46). Obedience to the gospel of Christ on man’s part is essential to salvation. That’s stressed in Hebrews 5:8-9: “Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.”

Submitting to the gospel terms of salvation in the Bible does not constitute “meritorious works” (Eph. 2:8-9; Luke 17:10). But there are essential works that God commands in order for us to be saved. Even our belief is a work of God (John 6:29).

When Peter entered the house where the Gentile Cornelius and his family were gathered, he said, “of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness is accepted with him” (Acts 10:34-35). “Working righteousness” is another way of saying, “obedience to God’s commandments.” David defined God’s commandments as “righteousness” in Psalms 119:172.

Our faith is incomplete without obedience (Jas. 2:21-24). In order to be saved, we must, 1). Hear the inspired word of God (Rom. 10:17; John 20:30-31). 2). Believe in God and Jesus as the Christ (Heb. 11:6; John 8:24). 3). Repent of our sins (Acts 17:30-31; 2 Cor. 7:10). 4). Confess our belief in Christ as God’s Son (Acts 8:37), and 5). Be baptized in water for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16).

You cannot be saved by any of these alone. But when they are taken as a whole and you do all of these things God requires, handling aright His word, He will save you from your sins.

The Seed Principle

Michael Hatcher

Early on in the Sacred Record, God firmly established the seed principle. As early as the third day of Creation, God stated that, “And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good” (Gen. 1:12). *After his kind is the seed principle.* Moses writes this same principle regarding the whales, living creatures in the water, and fowl (1:21); living creatures, cattle, creeping things, and beast of the earth (1:24-25). From a biological standpoint, Moses reveals to us the Law of Bio-genesis (*bio* meaning life and *genesis* meaning beginning).

This principle or law is very well known to all individuals. We often speak of this law under the terms of sowing and reaping. If someone wants to reap some corn, they do not go out and plant (sow) watermelon seed. Good old common horse sense tells us that whatever seed you sow, that is what you will reap. Thus, if you sow (plant) watermelon seeds, you will reap a harvest of watermelons.

This simple principle destroys the theory of Evolution (although it would be better described as the *hypothesis* of Evolution—and a poor one at that). How many of you upon seeing a human baby look around for two monkeys as being the parents of that human baby. Yet, that is exactly what evolution states took place. For evolution to take place, two non-humans had to cohabit and produce a human offspring. The Law of Bio-genesis proves that event does not happen; we know that does not happen. Thus, the Macro-Evolutionary model of man’s existence did not and could not happen.

Another area which this seed principle is important to understand is dealing with God’s Word. In the parable of the sower (Matt. 13; Mark 4; Luke 8), the sower scattered the seed which then fell upon different types of soil. Jesus enumerated four different types of soil: wayside, rocky ground, thorny ground, and good soil. Of the four soils (which Jesus explained as being different types of hearts) only one brought forth fruit: that seed which fell upon the good soil. In explaining this parable to His disciples, Jesus said, “Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God” (Luke 8:11).

When God’s Word is planted within the heart of an honest and good person, it will bring forth a Christian. This is what took place in the first century and will take place today in exactly the same way. On the day of Pentecost recorded in Acts 2, Peter and the apostles preached God’s Word to the Jews assembled on that occasion. We find that 3,000 obeyed the Gospel that day, being baptized for the remission of their sins and thus being added by God to the church. Some today might want to ask which church. There existed only one church—it was the church Jesus established (Mat. 16:18), of which He is the head (Eph. 1:22-23), and which He is going to save (Eph. 5:23). A little later we see that Barnabas and Saul (the apostle Paul) were assembling themselves with the church—that same one church of Christ (Rom. 16:16). Those members of the church were called Christians. “And when he had found him, he

brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch” (Acts 11:26). We thus see that when God’s Word is planted in the good and honest heart it will produce a Christian, nothing less and nothing more.

How does one become a Baptist, Lutheran, Catholic, Methodist, et al.? Since God’s Word produces only a Christian and nothing else, then to become one of these one must either add something to God’s Word or he must take something away from God’s Word to become a member of a denomination. To make one a Baptist, one must be taught and accept Baptist doctrine. The same is true whether one is discussing Baptist, Lutheran, or any other denomination. One must be taught and he must accept that denomination’s doctrine to become such. If he is taught the Bible and nothing but the Bible, he will not become a member of a denomination—he will be a Christian, a member of the church of Christ.

One other aspect of the seed principle regards our life. Paul puts it this way: “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting” (Gal. 6:7-8). Numerous passages teach that each person will be judged by Christ and His Word based upon what they do in their lives. One day you will stand before the judgment seat of Christ and He will place your life on one side of the scales and His Word on the other. If you have lived up to that standard (you have sown to the Spirit), then you will receive an eternal reward with God in heaven. If, however, your life does not measure up to that standard (you have sown to the flesh), then you will be eternally separated in a devil’s hell to be tormented forever. Never deceive yourself into thinking you can sow one thing and reap something else.

Answering The “Hows” Of The Spirit

Doug Post

Did God speak in times of old? *Yes!* (Heb. 1:1–2). Does God still speak? *Yes!* But the question that remains is *how?* God speaks to me. After all, the Bible says God has “spoken to us in these last days through His Son.” Of course, it would be proper, fair, and reasonable to press me on the matter. You would want to know if I mean that God speaks *directly* to me or if I am claiming that God speaks to me *indirectly* through His Word. Obviously, you would go to various other passages showing me that God speaks or reveals His mind to me through His Word (1 Cor.2; cf John 12:48).

Similarly, if I say the Holy Spirit leads me (Rom.8:14) you would do well to question me on whether I mean that He *directly* leads me or *indirectly* leads me through His Word, and press me on the question, “*How* does the Spirit lead?” Of course, that would be fair and reasonable of you, because you know that the Scriptures lead us through their teaching, their reproof, their correction, and their instruction in righteousness, and that they make us complete (2 Tim. 3:16-17). The Scriptures are lamp to my feet and a light to my path (Psa.119:105; 1 John 1:7). Jesus said the words He spoke were spirit and life (John 6:63). We learn that the Word of God is the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17), the very means by which the Spirit wields His influence. And, we know that we get understanding, clarity, and guidance from the inspired Scriptures (Psa.119:104, 130).

If I say the Holy Spirit strengthens me, again you would press me on what I mean. Do I mean He *directly* strengthens me or *indirectly* strengthens me through His inspired Word? Paul specifically says to be strong (Eph.6:10). Where? In the Lord! How? In the strength of His power—the word or gospel of Christ (cf. Rom.1:16). We are to put on *truth* (the Word—John 17:17); we are to put on righteousness (the Word—Psa.119:172); we are to put on the gospel (the Word—Rom.1:16); we are to put on the shield of *the faith* (the Word—Gal.1:6-9, 23); we are to put on salvation (the Word of salvation—Acts 13:26; Ja.1:21); and all of this is the Sword of the Spirit—the Word of God (Eph.6:17). To be strengthened in the Lord is to be strengthened by the Lord’s Word.

The Word of His grace strengthens us (Acts 20:32).

Likewise, if I say God dwells in me, you would press me on the matter asking, "How does God dwell in me?" *Directly* or *indirectly*? Of course, *indirectly* through or by means of His Word (John 14:23; 2 John 9; Eph.3:17 "the faith"; Gal. 3:2; 1 John 3:24. Etc.). Of course, from these passages we understand we dwell in God which is, obviously, *indirectly* rather than literally or *directly*. Therefore, this "dwelling" concept is one describing relationship—a relationship between God and the person who keeps His Word, continues abiding in His Word, and quite simply, continues obeying His Word. Therefore, a relationship that is based upon the Word of God, or is "through, or by, the Word."

Salvation By "Faith-Only" Denies God's Word

R. L. Whiteside

On Pentecost, those who accepted Peter's preaching were commanded to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus, the Christ, unto remission of their sins, and about 3,000 rendered prompt obedience. And so in other cases. In reports of the cases of conversion under the preaching of these inspired men, there is not a hint that sinners were saved the moment they believed. "And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number that believed turned unto the Lord" (Acts 11:21). If they were saved the moment they believed, they were saved before they turned unto the Lord; but healing, or salvation, follows the turning to the Lord (Isa. 55:7; Matt. 13:15; Acts 28:27).

No arguments of the faith-only advocates can do away with the plain statements of our Lord and His inspired preachers on the necessity of obedience. The fact is that in their arguments they array Scripture against Scripture. Our Lord makes this plain statement: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21). To say, "Lord, Lord," shows some degree of faith; but it is a dead faith, for there is no obedience to God's will. Such faith profits nothing—puts no one into the kingdom of heaven.

The writer of Hebrews says of Jesus, the Christ: "Though he were a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Heb. 5:8-9). No one can misunderstand that plain statement, nor twist its meaning into something that it does not say. Some are so set on evading its force that they seek to array some other passage against it, and that is not fair dealing with the word of God. If a man does not obey the Lord Jesus Christ, He is not the author of salvation to such a man.

Coming This Summer!

"...To The Saints Which Are At Ephesus"

A Commentary on Paul's Epistle To The Ephesians

By Jerry C. Brewer

This commentary on Paul's epistle to Ephesus will be offered at a pre-publication price to subscribers of *The Gospel Preceptor*. Watch for this offer in future issues.

"Circuit Riding" Editor

The editor preached two sermons for the Eastside church in Lexington, Okla. on the Lord's Day, Jan. 20. The good brethren at Eastside are supporters of our work, and have been since our travels to Kenya. Our dear friend and brother, Pat Craig, whom we have known and loved for more than 50 years, is Eastside's preacher. It was a joy to be with all of the brethren there.

We began a series of lessons on the book of Galatians each Wednesday evening for the church in Yukon, Okla. Jan. 30, based on *...Unto The Churches of Galatia: A Commentary on Paul's Epistle To The Galatians*, which I wrote in 2004. One our staff writers, David Ray, preaches for the Yukon church. David and his father, Mernie Ray, were instrumental in establishing a sound church in the Oklahoma City metropolitan area several years ago. Yukon also supports our work, standing fast in the one faith.

On Feb. 9, we will be in Indianola, Mississippi for the *Delta Enrichment Seminar*, a one-day event, during which I will present four lessons. The theme is “Renewing The Spark.” Topics will be, “Sparking The Disciples” (Acts 8), “Bible Unity And Inspiration,” “What The Church Is,” and “God's Two Kinds Of Law.” I will also preach on Sunday morning, Feb. 10. Our beloved friend and brother, Gene Hill, with whom we have spoken on a number of lectureships, is the preacher at Indianola.

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Now or Not?

Dub McClish

A pesky stumblingblock to proofreaders is catching the “correct error”—the word that is spelled correctly, but is the wrong word. Failure to note these flaws can result in everything from nonsense to saying the opposite of one’s intent. Consider: “That which for some time was prevalent among men is **not** appearing among women.” The author meant to say, “is **now** appearing,” but the not-for-now slip reversed his meaning. Thus the mistaken use of only one letter in one word can have a profound effect.

In Biblical matters examples abound wherein men **intentionally** substitute their own

not for God's *now*, thus contradicting the very Word of God Almighty, for example:

- “This is **now** bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh” (Gen. 2:23). Adam spoke these words upon observing that God had made Eve of one of his ribs. The evolutionist's version of this statement of fact is, “This is **not** bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh, but she evolved from a lower form over millions of years.” The humanists and materialists thus deny even a hint of “intelligent design” (never mind the infinite Designer and Creator) by changing only one letter of one word in the only accurate account of the origin of womankind.
- “But **now** we have been discharged from the law” (Rom. 7:6), referring to the Law of Moses. Men have changed God's now to their own not: “But we have **not** been discharged from the law.” Judaizers in the first century did so, seeking in vain to bind circumcision on the church (Acts 15:1). Roman Catholicism has borrowed heavily not only from paganism, but also from the Law of Moses, including its exclusive priesthood, vestments, holy water, incense, and candles. The 16th century reformers likewise made (and their progeny make) the same fatal error, thus justifying such things as infant “baptism,” sprinkling, tithing, sabbath-keeping, and instrumental music. It could not be more plainly stated: The authority of Moses' Law died when Jesus died (Col. 2: 14; Heb. 9:15–17; et al.). Those who submit to its authority **in one point** are obligated to submit to **all of it** (Gal. 5:3), but in doing so, they fall from God's grace (v. 4).
- “The like figure whereunto baptism doth also **now** save us” (1 Pet. 3:21a). Millions have been convinced by their teachers and preachers that the New Testament teaches, “Baptism doth also **not** save us”—it is **not** necessary to the sinner's salvation. One must choose between an inspired apostle and mere men who deny what he plainly stated. Not only did Peter, but also the Lord, Ananias, and Paul also placed baptism **before** salvation (Mark 16:16; Acts 22: 16; Rom. 6:3–4; Gal. 3:27).

Upon only one wrong letter of one word may hang one's eternal destiny—hardly an insignificant error.

Separation Is Coming In Judgment

W. R. Craig

The kingdom—the church—is compared to a great fish net.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth (Matt. 13:47-50).

When the net was drawn upon the beach, they sat down and divided the catch into good and bad, and the bad were cast away. “So shall it be in the end of the world.” How? The angels shall come and sever the wicked from the righteous. The wicked shall be cast into the fire. The comparison is in the “separation” of the wicked from the righteous. It is not of the “catching” of every kind, as we are so often told, but in the separation of the good from the bad who are “already in the kingdom” at the end of the world. A child of God may act as to be cast out of the net—the kingdom. The lesson in this parable is the careful separation of the good from the bad among members of the church in judgment.

Baptism And Israel's Deliverance

Jerry C. Brewer

The deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage illustrates how we pass from sin's dominion to that of Jesus Christ. They had heard Moses, believed him, and changed their minds (repented) and followed him to the banks of the Red Sea. In like manner, we hear Christ, believe Him and repent of our sins.

But although the Israelites had believed and followed Moses, they remained under Pharaoh's dominion so long as they remained on the Egyptian side of the Red Sea. If a Baptist preacher had been leading them instead of Moses, he would have said, "Now, you folks don't have to cross over this Red Sea. You've already believed, so you're safe from Pharaoh's army. Just sit down here on the banks of the sea, because there's no way you can be harmed. Being baptized in the cloud and in the sea isn't necessary."

But Israel's deliverance was not complete until they had passed through the sea and were "baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea" (1 Cor. 10:1-2). The waters of the sea stood on either side of them and the cloud overshadowed them. That was their immersion (baptism) "unto Moses." Their baptism in the cloud and the sea separated them from their old life of slavery and placed them under Moses' leadership, free from Pharaoh's dominion.

So it is with us. Paul said God, "hath delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son" (Col. 1:13). So long as we believe and repent, but remain unbaptized, we are under Satan's dominion and citizens of the kingdom of darkness. Peter said, "...baptism doth also now save us" (1 Pet. 3:21), just as Israel's baptism, "unto Moses" saved them. When we are baptized into Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38), we leave Satan's kingdom and enter into Christ's.

"Branch Churches"

Jerry C. Brewer

There is perhaps no Bible teaching that is more generally denied by denominational preachers than the unity, or oneness, of the church. The Scriptural teaching that Christ established only *one* church and that sinners are saved *in that one church* is especially distasteful to most people. The reason, of course, is that most people would rather have their own way than observe what God teaches in the Bible.

The denominational industry rejects Bible teaching on the oneness of the church by the popular—but erroneous—contention that all denominations are "branch churches" which make up the one church of Christ. Now, branches of anything necessarily imply the main thing from which they come. A branch river implies a main river and branches of a tree imply a body or trunk. If there are such things as "branch churches", then what, and where, is the main church from which they come? The natural branches of the same vine do not produce a half a hundred different kinds of fruits. Some produce more fruit than others, but in kind and nature, they are the same.

And that leads to this conclusion: If denominations are all branches of the same church, under the same head, and animated by the same spirit, they would produce the same results. If they were all branches of the church of Christ, they would make their converts simply "Christians" instead of the different denominational names they wear.

Denominational preachers pervert the beautiful parable of "the vine and the branches" in John 15 by saying the branches represent different denominations. Jesus said, "I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered" (John 15:6). This text does not say denominations are "branches" of the church, but the meaning is clear when the Lord says, "If a *man* abide not in me..."

And those words indicate who the branches are. They are individuals—not denominations. When Jesus uses the pronouns "he" and "ye" in referring to the branches, no chance is left to misunderstand. He says, "If a *man* abide not in me"—not a denomination. Careless reading and preconceived notions are responsible for much false teaching. The branches to which Jesus refers are individual Christians who compose the church of Christ. Denominations, with their conflicting creeds, names, forms of worship, traditions, and organizations of men are foreign to the New Testament, and there is no denomination anywhere in the world that can cite Biblical authority for its existence.

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Some FALSE Concepts OF TRUTH

Spring Contending For The Faith Lectureship

February 22-24, 2019

David P. Brown ~ Lectureship Director

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 22ND

6:30 pm	<i>Congregational Singing</i>	John West
7:00 pm	<i>It Is False That Some Things Can Be Removed From The Truth And God Accept It</i>	Danny Douglas
8:00 pm	<i>It Is False That Scriptural Fellowship Can Exist Without Adherence To The Truth</i>	Bruce Stulting

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 23RD

9:00 am	<i>It Is False That Arriving At Truth Has Nothing To Do With Reasoning Correctly</i>	Geoff Litke
10:00 am	<i>It Is Unacceptable To God For A Preacher To Teach Anything But The Truth</i>	Wayne Blake
11:00 am	<i>It Is False That One Thing Is The Truth To One Person But False To Another</i>	Lee Moses

LUNCH PROVIDED BY SPRING CONGREGATION

1:30 pm	<i>It Is False That Truth Does Not Need Defending</i>	David P. Brown
2:30 pm	<i>It Is Unacceptable To God To Believe That Truth Is Humanly Unattainable</i>	Michael Hatcher
3:30 pm	<i>It False That People Have The Right To Be Wrong About Truth</i>	Bruce Stulting

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 24TH

9:30 am	<i>It Is False That Truth Is Not A Powerful Force In Today's World</i>	Michael Hatcher
10:30 am	<i>It Is False That Truth Is Not The Exclusive Avenue To God's Forgiveness Of One's Sins</i>	Lee Moses

LUNCH PROVIDED BY SPRING CONGREGATION

1:30 pm	<i>It False That Truth Can Be Diluted And God Accept It</i>	Danny Douglas
2:30 pm	<i>It Is False That Truth Can Be Perverted And God Accept It</i>	Wayne Blake

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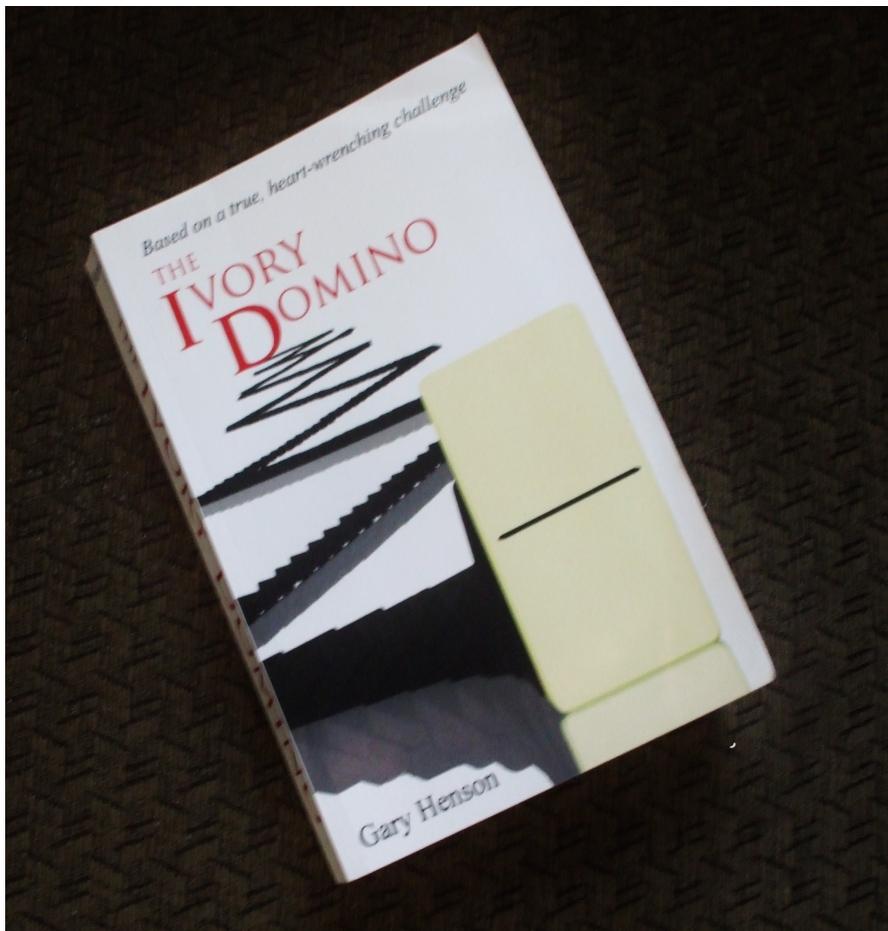
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Preacher: Bruce Stulting

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A Most Valuable New Book!



This new book by Gary Henson is a *must read* and *share* for anyone who loves the Truth and the souls of those enslaved by Catholicism.

Gary has preached the gospel for about 50 years and in *The Ivory Domino* recounts his own struggle to leave the errors of Roman Catholicism and step into the light of God's Truth.

From His Website - <https://theivorydomino.com/>

“With a heart overflowing with confidence during his senior year, high school student and football player, Gary, had no idea what nightmare awaited him. His religious faith—which he held dearly—was about to be put to the test by a kind old man with unfathomable wisdom and Bible knowledge. From the halls of religious schools to enormous libraries, this young man would not stop until he uncovered the truth.”

Written in the vein of Michael Shank's *Muscle And A Shovel*, whom Gary said, “inspired me to write this book,” *The Ivory Domino* is published by Cobb Publishing and may be purchased from them at www.cobbpublishing.com, or from Amazon Books.

Having known Gary for many years, I know him to be a sound gospel preacher, and, without reservation, I recommend this book to our readers.

Jerry C. Brewer, Editor & Publisher
The Gospel Preceptor