

The Gospel Preceptor

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

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Man—Creature of Choice

Jack Thompson

And if it seem evil unto you to serve Jehovah, choose you this day whom ye will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served that were beyond the river, of the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah (Josh. 24: 15).

These words of admonition were given to the Israelites by Joshua at the close of his life of service. Moses stated almost the same thoughts at the close of his leadership of God's chosen people (Deut. 30:15-20).

God has always placed a choice before mankind. From the very dawn of this creation, Jehovah placed man on the earth with the right to make his own decisions. When Adam and Eve were created and placed in the garden, the Father told them what to do and what not to do, but the choice was left to them. They could choose to serve God without exception and receive the blessings promised, or they could choose to disobey and receive the curses of Jehovah. God has set certain things before us from which to choose. We must choose between good and evil, truth and error, salvation and condemnation, life and death, heaven and hell. Either we choose to please God or we choose to please self and displease the Father.

In the beginning, Adam and Eve made the wrong choice, and as a result sin entered into the world. Because of sin, God sent forth His own Son, born of woman, who lived a life of spotless perfection and died upon the cross of suffering to bring unto us the way of salvation. The Hebrew writer tells us that Christ tasted death for all men (Heb. 2:9). The Lord is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9). Yet God forces no one to choose His ways nor to accept His pardoning love and mercy. Man must make the choice. Christ desires that we obey Him and receive eternal salvation (Heb. 5:8-9). We ask a question here—In what does man have the right to choose? Does man have the right to choose how he is to obey and serve God? May we choose to do anything that pleases us and still be acceptable in Jehovah's sight? Man may choose to serve God or not to serve God, but if we choose to serve Him, we **must** serve the way that He instructs us to do service. A few examples will help to illustrate.

Noah was commanded to build an ark (Gen. 6). He was told to make it out of gopher wood according to the directions given him. Noah had a choice to make. He could either build the ark or he could refuse to build. But if he chose to build the ark, he had no right to choose how it was to be built. It had to be erected according to the pattern given to him; according to God's instructions. The Israelites were commanded to build the tabernacle. The Lord gave the instructions as to how the tabernacle was to be constructed (Exod. 25, 26, 27). The Israelites had a choice to make—they could build the tabernacle or they could refuse to build it, but here their choice ended, for if they chose to build, they had no choice as to how it was to be built. It had to be built according to the pattern or plan of God (Heb. 8:5).

The church is built upon Christ as the foundation (1 Cor. 3:11). Some have chosen to build upon other foundations, but the church of our Lord has not been the result. If we

desire to have the church that Christ purchased with His own blood, it must be constructed according to God's instructions. In Matthew 26:26-28, Jesus instructs us concerning the supper of the Lord (1 Cor. 11:22-29). Man has the choice about the Lord's supper. He can either partake of it, or he can refuse to partake of it. But if he decides to partake of the supper, man has no right to choose which day the supper is to be observed. It must be on the first day of the week in obedience to divine authority (by divine approved example, Acts 20:7). If we choose to partake of the supper, we have no right to choose what is to be a part of the supper. We are not at liberty to use anything other than the bread and the fruit of the vine. To partake is man's only choice; not as to the day, nor as to what is thereon.

It is not enough to do something, unless we are willing to do it according to the divine plan set before us. There are far too many in the religious world today who have not learned this simple lesson. The result is that the religious world is divided into hundreds of different groups. These groups (denominations) are content to act without asking if the things being done are in harmony with what God wants done. They have not stopped to consider the fact that man's right to choose does not give man the right to do just anything that might suit his fancy or satisfy his carnal mind. The sad plight of this is that there are many in the church of our Lord today who have allowed themselves to fall into the same channel of thinking. Many today are content to act, without even so much as asking whether or not the action would be pleasing unto Jehovah. We who are members of the family of God need to realize that our only choice is whether or not we desire to serve God. If we choose to serve Jehovah, then we have no choice as to how that service is to be done, it **must** be done in accordance to God's prescribed ways.

We have heard this principle taught for years from the pulpit concerning the scheme of redemption; how that man must choose to believe in Christ as the Son of God, for "without faith it is impossible to please God" (Heb. 11:6). Man is not forced to believe, but if he desires to be saved in eternity, he must. This faith will then lead man to repent of his past sins and be baptized into Christ for the remission of his sins. (Acts 2:38; 22:16.) **Note:** Man may choose to be baptized or he may choose not to be baptized, but if he chooses to be baptized, he has no right to choose **how** he is to be baptized. He cannot choose to be sprinkled, or to have water poured over him, but in accordance to the Divine pattern he **must** be buried with his Lord (Rom. 6:3-4). Man's choice is to obey or not to obey, but if he desires to obey he has no choice as to how; he must be immersed, planted, buried for the remission of his sins. It does make a difference how things are done. It is not enough simply to do something, unless it is done in accordance to Divine Law.

There is rapidly growing within the church a feeling that just as long as we do something, it makes no difference how it is done. There are those among us who have never questioned the many present day plans within the church, devised by man to carry out God's desires. The church is to preach the gospel, and each congregation has the right to choose whether or not it will do its part in this proclamation. The Lord desires each congregation to do as much as possible, but He does not force the congregation to fulfill its duty. It is their choice. But if the congregation chooses to obey God and do what it is able to do in teaching the world, it does not have the right to choose just any way to accomplish this. We do not have the right to choose some man-made plan or way to do this work. We do not have the right to choose some way that does not have divine approval. If we choose to preach the gospel, we cannot choose to do it through a Missionary Society, or any other arrangement that is without divine authority, including the sponsoring church arrangement.

We realize there are expedients in carrying out the commands of God, but may we always remember that an expedient must be within the scope of that which is lawful. A method can never be expedient if there is no authority for it. God does not give us the right to choose just any plan and then call it an expedient to justify its existence. That which is done must have divine authority or else we have no right to choose it. This is as true in preaching the gospel as it is obeying the command to be baptized.

Yes, man is a creature of choice, but his choice is very much limited with reference to his obedience to God. Man's only choice is to obey or not to obey. If he chooses to obey, man must obey in accordance to divine instructions. Many seem willing to give up this fundamental precept of the gospel of Christ (1 Pet. 4:11). But if we desire to be pleasing unto the Father, we must choose to “speak where the Bible speaks, and remain silent where the Bible is silent.” Then and only then will we be able to realize the Father's blessings. “Our Father, give us the courage to choose Thy ways and Thy Desires.”

What Does the Bible Say About True Worship?

William S. Cline

What does the Bible say about true worship? The question is indeed an important one and deserves a biblical answer. The very question implies that there is such a thing as false worship. And since it is our responsibility to not go beyond the things written (1 Cor. 4:6), we shall examine the Bible and see what it says about true worship.

There are passages that imply false worship. For example in Matt. 4:10 Jesus said, “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and him only shalt thou serve.” Thus, the necessity to worship and the object to worship. Therefore, to fail to worship (the necessity) the God of heaven (the object) is false worship. Again, in John 4:24 Jesus said, “God is Spirit; and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth.” Here we have the object and the manner. Therefore, to fail to worship Jehovah (the object) in the right attitude and according to the proper avenues of worship (the manner) is false worship. In 1 Kings 12:25ff, we learn that Jereboam changed the place of worship, the object of worship, the time of worship, and the access to worship. He greatly sinned and led all Israel to sin by his changes. Surely we understand that to bow down to a pole or a stone and call such “God” or “Father” is **not** true worship. Likewise, to worship Jehovah in the wrong manner or with the wrong attitude is also sin.

The Bible identifies false worship. There is ignorant worship (Acts 17:30; Rom. 10:1-3); there is will worship (where people do what they want to do, Col. 2:18-23; Amos 4:4-5r), and, there is vain worship (Matt. 15:7-9).

The Bible identifies true worship. There are correct avenues of true worship. This is the “what” or what we are to do to worship in truth; and there are correct attitudes or “how” we are to worship in truth. Bible study is one of the avenues of true worship (Acts 2:42; 20:7; 2 Tim. 4:1-2; 1 Pet. 4:11). Prayer is another avenue, or item, of true worship (Acts 2: 42; Jas. 4:3; 1 Tim. 2:8), According to 1 Tim. 2:8, it is godly men who lead the prayers and never the woman when in the presence of a man. Giving as God has prospered us is another avenue of worship (1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 5:8-9). The fourth item of true worship is singing (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16) . Please notice that the only thing we have authority for is to sing. We do not have authority to play a mechanical instrument as many people do. Nor do we have authority to hum as some do. We are to sing. The final act of worship which we have authority to engage in today is eating the Lord's Supper. Jesus instituted the supper the night he was betrayed and New Testament Christians in the First Century ate the supper on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7, 11; 1 Cor. 11:23-30).

Bible study, prayer, giving, singing and eating the Lord's Supper are the . five avenues of worship authorized in the New Testament. And since we are not to go beyond the things written (1 Cor. 4:6), we cannot scripturally add to or take away from those things that are authorized. To change God's word is soul damning (Gal. 1:6- 9). Even if an angel from heaven changed one part of God's law, that angel would be anathema. Ours is not to question or change. Ours is to obey.

Someone may say, “You have gone through several books of the New Testament to find the five items of worship. I think you should not do that.” I know of no verse that contains all five avenues of worship though Acts 2:42 does contain four of the five. There is the apostles doctrine (Bible study), the breaking of bread (the Lord's Supper), the prayers and fellowship (contribution or giving). Permit me to carry this point a bit further. If one should object to several passages being used to point out what is true and

acceptable worship he should note the following. Under the Mosaic system a lamb had to be offered at the Passover feast. There were numerous rules or laws regarding the offering of that lamb but in no single place are all of the laws regarding such listed. In Deut. 16:1-8 we find instructions concerning the Passover. We are told that the feast is to be in the month of Abib, but the passage does not say which day. And to have been on the wrong day would have been as much in error as to have been in the wrong month. We have to go elsewhere to find out the day of the month. Again, the passage cited says that the victim should be of the flock or the herd, but it does not say that it must be a lamb (thus a goat could have been from the flock or herd), and the passage does not say that the lamb must be without spot and blemish nor does it state that it must be of the first year. We must go to other passages to learn these tremendously important points. To have offered anything other than a lamb of the first year without blemish would have been sin. But again, the passage does not say that the animal should be roasted whole, that bitter herbs were to be eaten with it as well as unleavened bread, nor does it prescribe that no bone of its body should be broken. The passage says nothing at all about the burnt-offerings which were to be offered every day of the Passover week. Not nearly half of the legal requirements for the feast are mentioned in Deuteronomy. To learn all of what must be done to please Jehovah one must search out other passages which deal with the feast of the Passover. Therefore, one should not pause for even a moment when he learns that God, likewise, did not list every item of worship for the New Testament church in a single passage.

Just as important as the avenues are the attitudes. Much of worship is mental and it must be participated in in a correct manner. To simply listen to a preacher, to bow the head during prayer, to give some money, to eat the Lord's Supper with your thoughts elsewhere, to sing without thinking and understanding what you are singing (1 Cor. 14:15) is to fail to worship in the proper spirit and even though the mechanics are right, the worship is still wrong. Worship is an attitude of reverence, adoration, submission, honor and praise. To go through the motions without proper consideration and concern is to fail to worship in truth.

I am thankful that the Bible identifies both false and true worship. I am thankful that we are told what we must do and how we must do it. May we have the courage and the conviction to avoid the false and seek after and follow the truth.

Is it Unjust to Oppose the Homosexual Lifestyle?

Nana Yaw Aidoo

The lgbtqia+ agenda is a worldwide agenda by the powers that be to normalize the homosexual lifestyle as a “valid” alternative to the universally tried and tested, traditional marriage. So powerful are the people behind this agenda that the Finnish MP, Paivi Rasanen, was recently tried in Helsinki for quoting what the Bible says about homosexual acts. God help us if they could do this to an MP. Notwithstanding, the lgbtqia+ agenda is a sinful and soul-damning agenda. It is so sinful that it leaves room for sins yet “unborn.” Consider that little plus sign beside the alphabet A. Like the Athenians who had an altar dedicated to “the unknown God,” the plus sign is as if to say, “We do not know all sexual perversions yet. Therefore we are leaving room for any one that might rear its head in the future.”

On the Biblical front, the pro-lgbtqia+ group has lost its case. The Bible says,

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators,...nor effeminate (homosexuals NKJV), nor abusers of themselves with mankind (sodomites NKJV),...shall inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor.6:9-10).

Therefore, it attempts to gain acceptance for the homosexual lifestyle by arguing from justice. “It is unjust for two consenting individuals, who have chosen the homosexual lifestyle” it says “to be prevented from joining themselves in civil unions.” Since justice

is virtually a byword for fairness, the argument is that homosexuals are not being treated fairly.

Friends, this argument is flawed for one simple reason. It places the same social value on homosexual and heterosexual unions alike when they simply **do not have the same value**. This as Spiegel noted, “is in itself a *de facto* denial of the special value of the latter” (85). While heterosexual unions or traditional marriages perpetuate nations and strengthen societies by producing new human beings (is this not why the State has an interest in marriage and attempts to protect it?), homosexual unions have as their primary purpose, “...the personal gratification of two individuals whose union is sterile by nature” (*10 Reasons*). Both unions simply do not have the same social value and therefore not only is it wrong for both unions to be put on the same pedestal by the State, it is also wrong for the less valuable union to cry “injustice.”

To illustrate, it is like crying “injustice” because a colleague who works harder and is more valuable to the company than you would ever be, is paid more wages than you or is given due recognition. Crying “injustice” in this case is obviously wrong. Rather, what would be real injustice is receiving the same wages or recognition as your hard working colleague. It would be an injustice against your colleague to receive the same wages and recognition as you when his output and value to the company far surpass yours.

In like manner, heterosexual unions or traditional marriages are superior to and more valuable than homosexual unions because they benefit society in a way homosexual unions do not in that “...what they contribute to society is uniquely valuable, viz. the production of new human beings” (Spiegel 85). Thus, to place both unions on the same pedestal by allowing homosexual unions is an injustice against heterosexual unions or traditional marriages.

Spiegel summed up the argument this way:

1. Heterosexual union is the indispensable means by which humans come into existence and therefore has special social value (indeed, the greatest possible social value because it is the first precondition for the existence of society as well as its continuation).
2. What has special value to human society deserves special social recognition and sanction.
3. Civil ordinances which recognize same-sex marriage as comparable to heterosexual marriage constitute a rejection of the special value of heterosexual unions.
4. To deny the special social value of what has special social value is unjust.
5. Therefore, same-sex marriage is unjust (83).

Some might respond to the foregoing argument by saying that since homosexuals are not trying to stop heterosexual unions from taking place, we can give heterosexual unions their prominent place in society, while at the same time permitting homosexual unions. While this idea is tempting, it:

...raises practical issues...But the most direct way of meeting this objection might be to simply note that if same-sex marriages are permitted, then any extra endorsement of heterosexual marriage would be merely symbolic and therefore trivial. Only truly significant benefits accorded to heterosexual married couples are sufficient to justly honor the special social value of such unions. If the current social benefits of marriage are extended to homosexual couples, then it's hard to imagine what substantive advantages or privileges could be reserved for heterosexual unions. For this reason it appears that any such 'extra endorsement' from a public policy standpoint, would amount to little more than damning with faint praise (Spiegel 88-9).

Friends, it is not unjust to oppose the homosexual lifestyle. Rather, its permission is an injustice against heterosexual unions or traditional marriages because to the extent that the homosexual lifestyle is permitted, “it constitutes an elimination of the special

sanction of traditional marriage, as warranted by the unique and significant social goods that heterosexual unions provide” (Spiegel 89).

Now, to the one who has been overcome by the homosexual lifestyle. Christians are not your enemies. Love for our Lord and your soul would not allow us to encourage you in sin. Rather than persist in that which is wrong and sinful from all standpoints, why not allow yourself to be washed, sanctified and justified in the name of our Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God (1 Cor. 6:11)? Jesus Christ will set you free indeed (John 8:36) if only you would believe in Him (John 8:24), repent of this and all sins (Luke 13:3), publicly confess your faith in Christ (Matt. 10:32) and be baptized unto the remission of your sins (Acts 2:38). God loves you.

Works Cited

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“Career Women”

Lavonne James McClish

A full-page ad appeared in the “Career Women” section of the Denton, Texas Record-Chronicle on March 29, 2000. The page was headlined, “Once upon a time...Women were housewives & mothers, but now we do it all!” I did not appreciate the implication that women who stay at home and take care of husband, house, and children do not work or are of less value than are “career women.”

The headline is misleading. I am firmly convinced that, unless a “career woman” has an exceptionally flexible job and schedule, a very accommodating employer, and someone to care for her children who will bring them up exactly as she herself would (in which unlikely case she still is not actually bringing them up herself), she cannot “do it all.” Either her job will suffer, or else her home and children will suffer.

The future of our country depends on our teaching and training of these children right now—this task is crucial. What more important “career” can one think of than that of nurturing, teaching, and training one’s children in a secure, stable atmosphere, where discipline is administered with consistency and love? Do I want my child to absorb someone else’s values (anyone else’s—even a “nice” person’s) other than my own Scripturally founded values? Remember, there would have been no Timothy without Lois and Eunice (2 Tim. 1:4–5). We who are mothers should remember that our children actually belong to God (in just as real a sense as Samuel did, 1 Sam. 1:1–26). God gave us the stewardship of their care, teaching, and training for a few years. What kind of “return” do we want to give back to God on His investment, when the days of our stewardship are completed and the child is mature? Should not we be “redeeming the time” against the day when our children are tested (Eph. 5:15–16)? We must be willing to pay whatever price it takes to “buy up” all the opportunities we can for preparing them for lives dedicated to the service of God, unto Whom we will give an account.

The idea that one can spend “quality time” with one’s children (and thus somehow compensate for the missing “quantity time”) is pure hogwash. The need children have for the attention of parents cannot be put off until a convenient time. I have worked outside my home (after my children were older), and I know how exhausted I was when I reached home after a stressful day. Had there been children to care for in the evening, I would have seriously shortchanged them. During some of those years of working outside my home, I also cared for a 2 young grandchild—taking her to work with me (in fact, taking her everywhere I went), then caring for her in the evening at home. I am sure she did not get the patience and attention she deserved, but I did the best I could. Patience is hard to come by under those circumstances (1 Cor. 13:4–5).

Jesus once asked: “If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone?” (Luke 11:11–12). These words apply with equal force to a mother’s con-

cerns for her children. When we give our children the “leftovers” after we have given our best to others all day, are we not, in effect, giving them a stone, a serpent, or a scorpion? Unless a “working mother” (is there any other kind?) can afford to hire help, her attention is pulled in many different directions; all those mundane chores at home have to be done or at least supervised. There will often be school activities in the evening requiring parents’ attendance, and/or homework needing assistance.

Cannot we see the connection between the epidemic of violence among children in recent years and the fact that so many children are being brought up, not by conscientious parents, but by day care employees? Those day care centers with which I have had acquaintance are overcrowded and shorthanded, and many of the employees are there (at minimum wage) because they cannot find any other work. To many of them, it is just a job with the purpose of getting a paycheck—they put in their eight hours and get away as soon as possible. While some of them might like to give the children time and love, they are spread too thinly to do so.

Even worse, many children are at home alone with unsupervised television after school, on holidays, and in summer, from which they get an education in such negative traits as disrespect for adults, disregard for the property of others, filthy language, sexually immoral behavior, dishonesty and deceit, self-centeredness, materialism, “might makes right”—in short, survival of the loudest and most aggressive. I have also seen this principle demonstrated in more than one day care center: The loudest, strongest, and most aggressive children are the dominant ones. The atmosphere is often rowdy, uncontrolled, and even physically dangerous.

What can we be thinking of, to turn the care and training of our precious children over to the bullying and bad influence of undisciplined peers, to complete strangers (some of whom have been discovered to be pedophiles) or worse, to the entertainment industry? Some of the “educational” programs are almost as bad as those on the commercial stations because of what they teach both explicitly and implicitly (e. g., evolution). If a parent watches such educational programs with his or her children, one can point out errors and take advantage of opportunities to teach. A parent may then exercise proper judgment as to what programs should be “off limits.”

I am not condemning all mothers of young children who work outside their homes. I well know that many have no choice. But when a mother can choose, and she chooses to devote herself to caring for her family, why would anyone want to make her feel as if she is not worth very much, is lazy, or is shirking her responsibilities? Some have even called such women “freeloaders,” have accused them of not carrying their own weight or have said that caring for children is demeaning and a waste of intelligence and education. Nothing could be further from the truth. Any woman, who has stayed at home and devoted herself to caring for the physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual needs of one child or of several children, is doing a duty—a very taxing and exhausting duty at that—of inestimable value and far-reaching consequences. She uses both her education and her intelligence constantly. Hers is truly a labor of love. She should be encouraged and uplifted, not denigrated.

She knows her children and their needs in ways that no hired caregiver could possibly know them. She is there when they need her, not “by appointment only.” She is obedient to the command that she be a keeper at home and that she is to love her children (Tit. 2:4–5). Love involves so much more than just words or emotions (1 Cor. 13:1–8). The stay-at-home mother fulfills her responsibility to teach her children at all hours of the day (Deu. 6:6–9). One cannot teach her children merely by saying something such as “All right, now we are going to sit down for fifteen minutes, and I am going to teach you.” While there is certainly a place for “scheduled” teaching, I believe a mother’s (or a father’s, for that matter) most valuable teaching is that which she does moment by moment, while going about her daily routine of activities. She teaches her children by her attitude, by the tone of her voice, by her patience (or lack of it), by the comments she makes, by the songs she sings, by what she listens to on the radio or watches on TV, by her concern for others and the good deeds she does for them, and by her honesty (or the lack thereof—“answer the door and tell whoever it is that Mother is not home”). Children can see through us; they know very well what is most important to

us.

The stay-at-home mother and her family must be willing to forego many of the material things they might otherwise have with her extra income, but the trade-off is well worth it (sadly, sometimes even Christian husbands will try to push their wives into taking a job and leaving their children). Solomon said that it is better to have a dinner of vegetables served with love and peace than to have a stalled ox served with hatred (Pro. 15:17). Paul wrote to the Philippians, “I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content” (4:11). He wrote to Timothy, “Godliness with contentment is great gain,” and warned that the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil; we should not trust in riches (1 Tim. 6:6, 10–11, 17–19).

Sometimes I think it is easier to be content with less than it is with more. The sad truth is, the more we have, the more we want. (In fact, we would all be better off if we did not have some of our possessions which take our attention away from spiritual things—or worse, plant evil thoughts and desires in our heads.) Could there be a relation between the material things—luxuries (now become “necessities”) purchased with Mother’s extra money and the fact that so many church members have their vision almost entirely focused on earthly, material, physical things—from sensual “worship” practices to questionable, worldly methods of reaching the “unchurched”? We so easily forget that this world is not our home, and that we can take none of our possessions with us (Job 1:21; 1 Tim. 2:4; 6:7; Heb. 11:8–10). Only those treasures which are stored in Heaven will survive (Mat. 6:19–21). My most prized physical treasures are my children and grandchildren, and I want them to go to Heaven more than I want anything else for them. Surely this is true of any sober-minded mother.

Elders—Their Crucial Role

Dub McClish

When the Lord Jesus returned to the Father, He first entrusted the church to the apostles (Mat. 16:18–19; John 14:16–18), who had the responsibility of receiving the revealed Word (John 16:13) and delivering it faithfully. This Word was not only the Gospel to be given to the lost world for its salvation. It was the constitution—the law of Christ—for His church. While the apostles lived, the church was under these inspired ambassadors of Prince Immanuel (2 Cor. 5:20). However, just as the Lord in His flesh would not be with His disciples indefinitely, neither would the apostles.

They left behind that perfected Word which is fully capable (without any direct Divine intervention or assistance) of perfecting the saints who will yield themselves to it (2 Tim. 3:16–17). However, the Head of the church also entrusted her to other human hands upon the departure of the apostles. This grave responsibility would not be to one man or to a small council in some geographical global headquarters, but rather to a small group of men on the local level of His church—men in every congregation of His people. These men He denominated “elders,” “bishops,” “pastors.”

Elders must meet stringent inspired qualifications before being given charge of the congregation (1 Tim. 3:1–7; Tit. 1:5–9). It is their sacred duty first to engage in self-examination, then in congregational-examination (Acts 20:28). Their responsibility is two-fold: (1) They are to feed–tend–nourish the church so that she might develop spiritually to the extent of her potential and remain pure (Acts 20:28b; Tit. 1:9b; 1 Pet. 5:2). (2) Equally important, they are to protect her from evil men and their damnable doctrines (Acts. 20:29–31; Tit. 1:9b–11).

The losses to liberalism the church has experienced over the past forty years could not or would not have occurred had not numerous elders (and some entire elderships) been guilty of serious dereliction of duty. It is not our intent to place upon these men a burden greater than they can or should bear or to discourage any from becoming elders. However, it still remains a crystal-clear conclusion that, had elders led, bishops overseen, and pastors shepherded as they should have, the church would not be in such throes of apostasy as we see on every hand.

Elderships are God’s wall of defense for His church—accountable for congregational

welfare and safety—and are directly responsible to God for that which is taught in the classrooms, the pulpit, the church bulletin, and all other teaching media they supply. They need not do all of the teaching personally (impossible even in an average-size congregation), but **they must know what is being taught**. This knowledge includes the material that is used and that which is taught in the Bible classes. Also, elders need to know that the teachers are both morally and doctrinally sound. They must do this by personal interview, written questionnaire, or some other means, or be guilty of grave neglect. They dare not merely assume that all is well in these matters. It is their business as overseers and pastors to find out—to know.

Hundreds of congregations have been lost to error in the last four decades, likely never to be reclaimed for the Truth. Misguided preachers and professors have led the departure, but who has enabled them to do so? One group above all others must be blamed—elderships in the local congregations who went to sleep on their watches. We stress again—the role of these men has been (and continues to be) absolutely pivotal to the health and welfare of the church of Christ! Bishops, more than any others, had (and have) both the opportunity and obligation to build up the churches, to prevent false doctrine and practice, and to oppose and expose them if they appear. Weak, ignorant, overly-benevolent, or sometimes outright liberal elders have allowed compromising preachers (and occasionally under-taught and over-zealous “youth directors”) to continue to spew out their errors and promote their innovations, when these men should have been sent packing long before.

Elders are supposed to be “mouth-stoppers” of such men (Tit. 1:9–11), but sadly, many of them are “mouth-supporters” of them! They have kept corrupt preachers in their pulpits till they converted much of the church (and sometimes the elders). (Ironically, it is the man who is determined to preach only and all of the Bible without fear or favor who is most often run out of town by misguided elders nowadays.) Many elderships have become so numbers-happy that they are willing to allow almost anything to be taught or practiced if it will draw the crowds or keep certain ones (and their money) from leaving. Now most of those elderships would not think of inviting in and supporting any besides such religious wolves, further devouring the flock. Consequently, in many places (and especially in the larger metropolitan areas) the church is drowning in a sea of error.

Elders must practice a zero-tolerance policy toward any and all religious error. Many churches have been undermined by and lost to various erroneous “isms” advocated by brethren through the years because elders were either inattentive, apathetic, ignorant, or cowardly. The current monster of liberalism in the church could have been killed aborning had elders been informed, alert, and strong enough to allow it no place at all in their respective congregations. ³ Instead, in hundreds of cases it was tolerated in its earliest manifestations as merely a harmless “different approach.” Many elders (and preachers) boast that they do not know what is “going on” in the church and that they do not want to know. Their congregations are paying the price for such folly.

One who claims to be a Gospel preacher has no excuse for perverting the Gospel and will be damned eternally for so doing (Gal. 1:6–9). However, we reiterate, the ultimate blame for the rampant apostasy in the church must be laid at the feet of elders. They could (and should) have denied rotten preachers the pulpits and support they gave and are giving them. **It was their business to do this—“the buck” stops with them!**

Many elders who are sound in the faith still seem to be in a state of denial relative to their pivotal role—they just do not seem to “get it.” Some otherwise conservative elderships seem to see no inconsistency in inviting a false teacher for a Gospel meeting or workshop of some sort (“We won’t let him teach error while he’s here”) or in publishing in the church bulletin an article written by such a man. Likewise, they will allow programs to be announced from the pulpit, on bulletin boards, and through the church bulletin on which false teachers are featured, which simply gives the unworthy teacher undeserved credibility and implied endorsement.

We should contemplate with shame and sorrow how few elderships ever lead their congregations in withdrawing from erring, impenitent members. It is evident that

elders have all too often been willing to wink at immorality and sinful divisive behavior, as well as false doctrine, rather than deal Scripturally with it. This neglect has resulted in severely weakened churches in some cases and in apostasy of the entire congregation in many others. Elders fail miserably if they are unwilling to lead the church boldly in its Divine mandate to withdraw from those who will not repent of their impurity of life or teaching.

There is no greater or more demanding work in the entire world than that of serving as an elder, bishop, pastor in the Lord's church. However, the greater the potential for good if one serves well, the greater the potential for harm if one fails. We unhesitatingly commend the many faithful elders of past and present—they deserve much honor. There is likely not a more thankless task than is theirs. It has been this writer's great delight and encouragement to work with several such righteous shepherds over the years. Let us encourage such worthy men, and let us pray that in His providence the God of Heaven will raise up more great men for this great work.

Preachers, elders, deacons, and all other members are precious to the Lord and important for the church to be what He desires. However, the elders in any congregation occupy a crucial position more than any others. The Lord appointed them to nurture and to keep His church pure. The congregation is a reflection of its eldership more than of any other element or factor. If elders fail at the point of tending the flock, particularly at the point of providing it with sound teaching and protecting it from error, they fail utterly, and so will the congregation they oversee.

The Kingdom in Metaphor

Jerry C. Brewer

The church Jesus built and His kingdom are two terms applying to the same institution. We now embark on a study of metaphors applied to the church, and the various aspects of it embodied in them.

The Body of Christ

This term is descriptive of the fellowship feature of the church. The term “fellowship” is from the Greek *koinonia*, which means “joint participation.” As the human body functions as one unit through the joint participation of its many members, so does the body—or church—of Christ. Paul delineates that principle in the following language:

For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we bond or free; and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many...Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular (1 Cor. 12:12-14; 27).

As the human body functions at the will of the head, the body of Christ functions at the will of Christ who is the head of it. (Eph. 1:22-23). Notice also Paul's statement that, “the body is one, and hath many members.” The church is one. Jesus promised to build only one (Matt. 16:18), gave Himself for only one (Eph. 5:25-27), purchased only one with His own blood (Acts 20:28), and will save only one (Eph. 5:27).

The extant notion among denominational industrialists is that each separate denomination constitutes the one body of Christ. If that were so, then the body of Christ is a monstrosity that bears no resemblance to a single body. Christ is the only head of His church, but the Pope is the head of the Roman Catholic Church, the Mormon Church has a President as its head, the Monarch of England is head of the Anglican Church, Southern Baptists have a Convention President, and the list goes on and on among denominations. If each of them constitutes a part of the church of Christ, then Jesus created a multi-headed Hydra and He is not **the** head, but one of many.

The claim is often made that Jesus' statement in John 15:5-6 refers to Himself as the head of His church with the branches being the various denominations of men.

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; and men gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

But Jesus has no “branch churches.” He has only one. The branches to which He refers in the above passages are individual members of the church, as Paul pointed out in First Corinthians 12. Note Jesus’ statement in John 14:16: “If a **man** abide not in me...” He is speaking of an individual member of His church—a “man.” **Men** are the branches, not denominations. The body of Christ, which is His church, is **one**.

The House of God

In his first epistle to Timothy, the apostle Paul wrote, “These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God” (1 Tim. 3:14-15). The term “house of God” illustrates the familial nature of the church. Its members bear the relationship of children to God and He is their Father. One’s “house” is his family. Of Cornelius, it was said that he was, “one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always” (Acts 10:2). Cornelius’ “house” in this passage was not his the domicile in which he lived, but his family. That’s the same use of the term Paul made in First Timothy, where he explained that the “house of God” was the “church of the living God.” Describing the Ephesian Gentiles’ relationship to Christ when they obeyed the gospel (Acts 19), Paul wrote, “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God (Eph. 2:19), and the Hebrews writer describes members of the church as God’s house (Heb. 3:9).

There are only two spiritual households—or families—in the world and every person on earth is in one or the other. They are the family of God and the family of the devil. “In this the children of God are manifest and the children of the devil. “Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother” (1 John 3:10). God is the Father of the righteous and Satan is the father of the wicked.

Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, we be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God. Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God...Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do: he was a murderer from the beginning, and bode not in the truth because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar and the father of it. (John 8:41-44).

We thus conclude that, 1) all of God’s children are in His family. 2) God’s family is the church. 3) Therefore all of God’s children are in the church. In view of that conclusion, consider the implication when one asserts that God has children in all churches. Not all churches are God’s. He has **only one**. Therefore, to say God has children in other churches is to say God has children outside of His own family. That conclusion is blasphemous, making God an adulterer! Those who are not in Christ are not God’s children. One becomes a child of God in Christ by faith. “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:26-27).

The Temple of God

The kingdom of God—the church—is also metaphorically called, “the temple of God,” expressing its feature as the place of acceptable worship. The church is to the people of God in the New Testament age what the tabernacle, and later the temple, were to Israel in the Old Testament. It is the spiritual sphere where God meets His people and accepts their worship.

In every age of the world, God has always specified the acceptable place and method of acceptable worship offered to Him. That is illustrated in the Patriarchal Age when God told Abraham to offer his son Isaac as a burnt offering:

And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am. And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of

Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of. And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him. Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you (Gen. 22:1-5).

God **specified** Abraham's **method** of worship—"Take now thy son...Isaac...and offer him for a burnt offering" and He **specified** the **place**—"...the land of Moriah upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." It was not left to Abraham to choose the "worship of his choice." Nor was it left to his judgment concerning where his **worship** was to be offered.

The same was true under the Mosaic Law. At the inauguration of that law at Mount Sinai, God instructed Moses to construct the **place** where He would accept Israel's worship.

And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it (Ex. 25:8-9).

And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron, and unto his sons, and unto all the children of Israel, and say unto them, This is the thing which the Lord hath commanded, saying, What man so ever there be of the house of Israel, that killeth an ox, or a lamb, or goat, in the camp, or that killeth it out of the camp, and bringeth it not unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, to offer an offering unto the Lord before the tabernacle of the Lord: blood shall be imputed unto that man; he hath shed blood; and that man shall be cut off from among his people: to the end that the children of Israel may bring their sacrifices which, which they offer in the open field, even that they may bring them unto the Lord, unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, unto the priest, and offer them for peace offerings unto the Lord" (Lev. 17:1-6).

But unto the place which the Lord your God shall choose out of all of your tribes, to put his name there, even unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither shalt thou come (Deut. 12:5).

The above references are explicit concerning the place where God would accept Israel's worship. They were not given a choice as to where their worship was to be offered, but were required to offer it at the tabernacle, and later in the temple Solomon built. Neither are men given a "temple of their choice" today. Paul said, "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning" (Rom 15:4) and the above passages relate to the place of acceptable worship in our day. That place is the temple of God in this present age and that temple is the church.

Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in who all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye are also builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit (Eph. 2:19-22).

Paul uses two metaphors of the church in the above passage—"the household of God," and "a holy temple." It is the latter metaphor that we are concerned with here. The church is the temple of God in which He figuratively dwells today, as He figuratively dwelt in the tabernacle in the wilderness and later in Solomon's temple. We know God's indwelling in His temple is figurative because of Solomon's words at the dedication of the temple he built. "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?" (1 Kings 8:27).

As God designated the temple of Solomon as the place where He was to be worshipped, so He has designated his spiritual temple, the church, as that place today. The church—His temple—is what Paul calls “a habitation of God, through the Spirit.” That language does not mean God **dwells** in His temple through the Spirit, but that His dwelling place was **built** through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in the apostles and prophets of the New Testament. Nor does the statement that they were, “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets,” mean the apostles and prophets are the foundation. Jesus Christ is the foundation of the church which was laid by inspired men in the first century. Paul said, “Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3:11). From the laying of the church’s foundation as the temple of God, through the erection of its superstructure, all was accomplished through the Holy Spirit’s inspiration at the direction of God.

The stones of the temple’s superstructure are Christians who not only constitute the spiritual stones of the temple of God today, but are also priests within that temple who offer acceptable worship to God. “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house,, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 2:5). Having specified that acceptable worship is offered within the confines of His temple, the church, God accepts none from those who are outside of it. Outside of God’s temple no acceptable worship to Him can be offered. The church of Christ is the spiritual temple of God where He has placed His name, where He dwells, and only where He accepts men’s worship.

The Vineyard Of The Lord

The church is also metaphorically a “vineyard.” That word is synonymous with a field of labor, indicating that the church is that sort of field in the spiritual realm. As an agricultural figure, a vineyard indicates a place where seed is sown and cultivated to grow grapes. The parallel as it relates to the church is that the seed of the kingdom (Luke 8:11) is sown by workers (Christians) who are in the Lord’s vineyard. Jesus illustrated that in the parable of the sower in Luke 8. Life is in the seed—placed in all seed by the Holy Spirit at creation. The Law of Biogenesis says that everything reproduces from seed after its own kind. That was God’s law from the beginning.

And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the her yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, and the 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. 1:11-12).

The same law of reproduction exists in the spiritual realm where the word of God is designated as spiritual seed. “It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life” (John 6:63). Against this background of spiritual life contained within God’s word, as a parallel to physical seed, Jesus spoke the parable of the sower in Matthew 13:3-9. In that parable, He explained that the word of God is the seed of the kingdom (Luke 8:11), indicating that the work given to the church as the vineyard of the Lord is to sow that seed in the hearts of men. That was the final order Jesus gave to His apostles just before His ascension (Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16) and that is the sole mission of the church. In Matthew 20:1, Jesus said, “The kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard.” There are at least three things to notice in His words. First, He said the householder, “went out early in the morning,” indicating the urgency of the work. Second, He went out early to “hire laborers.” Labor for the Lord in His vineyard will be rewarded. Jesus said, “And behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be” (Rev. 22:12). Third, labor for the Lord must be done in His vineyard. The householder of the parable represents the Lord and it was into his own vineyard that he went out to hire laborers, not into another’s. No acceptable work can be done for the Lord if one is not in **His** vineyard.

None of those metaphorical references of the church—the **body of Christ**, the **house of God**, the **temple of God**, and the **Lord's vineyard**—allow for any which are plural. He **has only one church**.

Editor's Travels and Preaching

We preached at Chillicothe, Texas on Sunday, Feb. 6. On Monday, Feb. 7, Steve Bradshaw of Chillicothe, phoned with the sad news that his father, Farrell Bradshaw, had passed away. We returned to Chillicothe, Feb. 10 to speak at his funeral. Farrell and his wife Dolly, have been our friends for more than 50 years. When we returned home from the funeral, we were greeted with a sad email message, that brother Kerry Sword had lost his battle with Covid and pneumonia. As we age, sorrow is our constant companion. Our travel ended at Feb. 13 and 27 to preach at Yukon, Oklahoma.

“What Saith The Scriptures?”

Harrell Davidson

We are always thankful to have questions that you have in mind that you are studying or have an interest in. Please be patient with us since we are a few questions behind but we will get to all of them as quickly as possible.

This month we are entertaining two questions, though sent separately they are on the same general subject as you will also note.

First Question: “Did David use instruments in the Old Testament worship?”

Second Question: “In Psalms 150 and other Psalms David asked to sing and play instruments? Did he ask so all Israelites or Levites only?”

There is no doubt in the minds of most that David did indeed use such in worship to God (cf. 1 Chron. 23; 2 Chron. 7; 29 et al). The thing that needs pondering is where did God authorize David to use them? When I see this question, I sometimes look back in the Old Testament and read what other things went with the playing of them. David danced and played before the ark of the covenant when it was being moved. Does this mean that we should dance when we come together to worship?

They offered animal sacrifices back there and were at least commanded even to the type of beast or bird by God. David and those people of that time observed the sabbath also as commanded by God. David had many wives but not as many as Solomon, his son. Did God authorize that also? David had a man killed because he had made love to the man’s wife after he had lusted after her. Is that authorized today? We know the answer to that don’t we.

Many religious institutions (churches) have lofts for bands and have various instruments that are played and most all go back to David and call his name over such. However, David figuratively walks by with his many wives and they would shame him today. However, he walks by with his harp and they say come on in brother David and play for us. Why is it that we pick that one thing to try to justify its use?

On the other hand, Jesus, God’s only begotten Son said, “And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth” (Matt 28:18). The New Testament directs us to “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him” (Col. 3:17). No one spake as did Jesus (John 7:46). Peter by Inspiration said, “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins....” (Acts 2:38). The apostle Paul recalled his conversion from the law of Moses to the new covenant of Christ and said that he was told to “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). What do these statements mean?

Christ promised that He would build His church (Matt. 16:18). He purchased it with His own blood (Acts 20:7). Whatever we do as a congregation of the Lord’s people we must have His authority or else we are worshiping in vain (cf. Matt. 15:9). Remember “word or deed” that is what we do and what we say (cf. Col. 3:17). We are baptized into Christ. We put Him on in baptism (cf. Gal. 3:27) we do so calling on His Name—by His authority. We mean this by **His authority** and **His only**. Even God said on the Mount of Transfiguration that we are not to listen to Moses or Elijah but the Lord

(Matt 17:1-5). When Christ died on the old rugged cross the law was fulfilled, nailed to the cross and a new law was given for a new creation (cf. Rom. 6:4).

The law served its purpose. Paul said that it—the law—was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ and a better way of life and complete forgiveness of sins that they did not have in David's or Moses' time nor anyone anywhere in the Old Testament (Cf. Gal. 3:24).

Thus, we note that Christ through His Word commands and doing so He authorizes singing and making melody in the heart. "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19). Not only are we to sing but the Lord told us what instrument to use—the heart. That is where the melody is made not on some mechanical instrument, but the heart only.

The Hebrews writer emphasizes in the first seven chapters how that Christ and the new covenant are better than all the old even greater than angels. And, that Christ is the express image of the person of God (Heb. 1:3).

You see, David may have done many things, but we are to follow Christ and have been since the first century A.D. There is also no doubt that David did many great things, but we are to follow Christ and He did not authorize any mechanical instrument of music in worship. Some may then say, "you just do not like music." That's not true. We had six years on piano lessons and enjoy several genres of music to this day.

Second Question: "In Psalms 150 and other Psalms David asked to sing and play instruments? Did he ask so all Israelites or Levites only?"

The 150th Psalm does not clearly indicate one or the other. However, Psalms 47:1 includes all people which would include even the Gentiles. But notice please that Levi was the son of Jacob who was the father of the twelve tribes of Israel and other than their work and support, they served God the same as the other. I see no difference here in this chapter.

Thanks for your questions. Enjoy your study of God's Word for by it alone will you be enlightened.

Brother Davidson answers readers' questions in this column each month. If you have Bible questions, you may email them to him at: wd4lar@gmail.com

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We will pay \$1,000.00 to anyone who can produce a New Testament passage telling one to "Pray The Sinner's Prayer" in answer to the question, "What must I do to be saved?"

A Tragic Vow of Jephthah

Jess Whitlock

Jephthah is the 9th judge of Israel and serves as such for 6 years. Jephthah is a Gileadite. Gilead was located on the east side of the Jordan. His mother was a harlot, which caused his brothers to hate him and drive him away (Judges 11:1-3).

Israel appeals to Jephthah for deliverance (Judges 11:4-11). Israel had rebelled against God once more. Thus, they are given into the hands of the Ammonites. This oppression lasted for 40 years. Israel needed a leader and looked to Jephthah. When Israel came out of Egypt, they had been told not to attack Moab or Ammon (Deut. 2:9-19); because they were descendants of Lot (Gen. 19).

Jephthah informs the Ammonites, (1) the land had belonged to the Amorites and not the Ammonites; verses 15-20, (2) just stay in the land that your god Chemosh has given you; verses 21-25, (3) it has been 300 years, so why now? In Judges 11:28-30 we learn that the king of Ammon is ready to fight. Pay close attention to this fact: "Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah..." (Judges 11: 29). This brings us to the rash vow that Jephthah made to the **LORD**.

“If Thou wilt indeed deliver the children of Ammon into my hand, then it shall be that whatsoever cometh forth from the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, it shall be Jehovah’s, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering” (Judges 11:30-31). He is given an awesome victory over Ammon; but the vow was totally unnecessary! Why? Because “the Spirit of the LORD” was already upon him (Judges 11: 29). Did Jephthah fulfill his vow? **Yes!**

How did Jephthah fulfill his vow? As a “**boy preacher**” a long time ago, I taught that Jephthah offered his daughter as a literal sacrifice to Jehovah. In further study I have come to the conclusion that Jephthah actually offered her in service to the Lord God.

- Jephthah’s daughter is the first one to come out of his house. His heart is broken. “And it came to pass, when he saw her, that he rent his clothes, and said, Alas, my daughter! Thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me; for I have opened my mouth unto Jehovah, and I cannot go back” (Judges 11:35). Much controversy surrounds his vow!
- Human sacrifice was forbidden under the Law of Moses (Lev. 18:21; 20:2-5; Deut. 12:31; 18:10; Jer. 7:31-32; 32:35). Surely no priest of God would have taken part in such an offering due to the Law. The offering of children as sacrifice was one of the main reasons that God wanted the Canaanites driven out of the land of promise. A human sacrifice to God would have been an insult to Jehovah, since man is made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-28).
- None would deny that Jehovah gave the victory to Jephthah over the Ammonites (Judges 11: 32-33). Would God have done so knowing that the daughter of Jephthah was to be offered as a burnt offering? *Keil and Delitzsch* have commented: “...nowhere is it stated that the Spirit of God came upon a worshiper of Moloch and endowed him with His own power, that he might be the helper and savior of Israel...” (pg. 391-392).
- Let us not forget that things vowed, which involved persons, could be redeemed according to the Law (Lev. 27:1-9). Jephthah could have taken advantage of the Law regarding the making of rash oaths (Lev. 5:4-ff). We know that Jephthah was knowledgeable of the Law.
- The text clearly states that Jephthah “did with her according to his vow which he vowed: and she knew no man” (Judges 11:39). His daughter requested of her father that she might “go up and down upon the mountains, and bewail my virginity, I and my companions...and he sent her away for two months: and she departed” (Judges 11:37-38). *Adam Clarke’s Commentary* states: “for a woman to have no offspring was considered to be a state of the utmost degradation among the Hebrews.” (p. 153). A woman denied male children was considered as cause for pity in Israel. To die being not a mother in Israel was justifiable reason for mourning. Why the delay for two months, if Jephthah was going to offer her as sacrifice? How much time did Abraham delay when he made ready to literally offer his son, Isaac as sacrifice to God?
- In God’s “Hall of Faith” we read, “what shall I more say? For the time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, **Jephthah**” (Heb. 11:32).

God did not need or request a vow from Jephthah, He needed faith! Whether you agree or disagree, we know this for a fact; **Jephthah kept his vow!** “When you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it; for He has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you have vowed—better not to vow than to vow and not pay” (Eccl. 5:4-5).

The Bottom Line

Lee Moses

At a typical annual shareholders’ meeting, the chairman of the board gives a lengthy welcome to the attendees, followed by a flattering introduction of himself and the board. After covering numerous points of order, he then launches into a protracted

speech about the corporation's vision for the future. Through all of this, the stockholders in attendance anxiously await more useful information: whether the customer base is being expanded, how much money the corporation spent and will spend, and how much money the corporation made and will make. They are interested in the bottom line.

It is readily acknowledged that businesses exist to make money, and need customers to do so. But trouble is always closely behind whenever principles of the world dictate how one conducts himself in religion (consider Acts 8:18-20).

Yet, so many churches are intentionally market-driven rather than spiritually led. Church leaders are interested first and foremost in the same things in which corporate stockholders are interested: whether the customer base is being expanded (whether attendance is increasing), how much money has been spent and will be spent, and how much money has been brought in and will be brought in. Rather than seeking to emulate the New Testament pattern that led to the Divine commendation of churches such as Thessalonica and Philadelphia (1 Thess. 1; Rev. 3:8-10), church leaders seek to emulate the paradigms of the financially successful, but repugnant to the Lord, Willow Creek and Saddleback Community Churches.

Christians certainly should be interested in preaching the Gospel to as many people as possible (Mark 16:15), stewardship of the Lord's resources (Mat. 25:14-30; Rom. 11:36; 1 Cor. 4:2), and giving generously to the Lord (2 Cor. 9:13). But when popularity and financial success are viewed as the church's ultimate goal, we are not measuring success by the Lord's standard.

Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). The church, the kingdom Christ would and did establish (Dan. 7:13-14; Mat. 16:18; Col. 1:13; Rev. 1:9), is not of worldly origin or nature. Nor is it intended to serve worldly interests; as the inspired apostle Paul wrote: "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 14:17). Christ is certainly interested in a bottom line, but His bottom line is not the same as that of the worldly-minded. While standing at the Judgment Throne we might try to be like the chairman of the board at a shareholders' meeting. We might desire to bring up various things: Our appreciation to God for all He gave us on earth, a rundown of all our many accomplishments on the earth, and a protracted speech about what we would do on earth if given more time. Jesus foretold: "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works" (Mat. 7:22). But the Judge on that day will not be interested in peripheral matters or unsubstantiated claims; He will wholly reject them and those who make them: "And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (7:23). He will be interested only in the bottom line: "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** which is in heaven" (7:21). The bottom line in religion, whether individually or collectively, and the bottom line in life is: **Did you do what God said?**

The Gospel Preceptor

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Lot's Wife

Fred E. Dennis

Jesus said to those who were contemporaneous with him: "Remember Lot's wife" (Luke 17:32). There must be reasons why we should remember that woman. Why single out Lot's wife and tell us to remember her? In this sinful age in which we are living we do well when we remember Lot and his wife.

The Bible is full of danger signals. Lot's wife is one of these. Abraham and Lot were agreeing nicely. Both were rich. Both had great flocks and herds. Finally the herdsmen fell out among themselves. Abraham learned about this, and sent for his nephew. The old patriarch said to Lot: "Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdsmen and thy herdsmen; for we be brethren" (Gen. 13:8). Abraham was a man of peace. He seemed to think that the very fact that men were brethren ought to be enough to keep down strife between them. And so it ought.

He made a magnanimous offer to Lot, saying: "Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left" (v. 9). That was a big offer. It takes a big man to make a big offer. Abraham was older and wiser than Lot. How much better it would have been for Lot to have allowed Abraham to make the decision! But he had his eyes too much on the things of this world. In his anxiety to secure fine pastures for his flocks and herds, he all but forgot his girls. Girls and boys have souls to save. Flocks and herds do not. "And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord" (v. 10). This appealed to Lot. He chose this plain of Jordan. But the book very significantly says: "And pitched his tent toward Sodom." What a sad "pitch" that was! And how many others have done the same thing! How many have forgotten God in their mad rush after wealth, social prestige, political ambitions, educational attainments, etc.! Had Lot's wife been as wise as a mother ought to be, she would have advised Lot to move as far from Sodom and Gomorrah as possible. It was a good place for cattle, but a poor place for girls.

Could poor Lot have seen a little way into the distance and could have seen how hard it would be to extricate himself from this wicked environment, never would he have made the choice he did. So it has been with millions of others. Our shortsightedness is pitiful.

"But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly" (v. 13). And they got no better, but rather grew worse. Finally the Almighty decreed that these cities should be destroyed from the face of the earth. This sent faithful Abraham to his knees, pleading in behalf of these cities for the sake of Lot and his loved ones. What a spirit to manifest! In his petitions to God, Abraham said: "Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein?" (Gen. 18:23-24). God assured him that if there were fifty righteous within the city he would spare the city for their sake. Abraham knew the wickedness of the place. He kept pleading for the city until he had the promise of the Lord that if there were ten righteous within the city he would spare the city.

Ten righteous people would have been the physical salvation of Sodom and Gomorrah. But they were not to be found. Lot was warned by angels to flee from the city. But his wicked sons-in-law mocked him. Lot's mistake had been made in coming into this wicked place, in the first place, with those girls of his. They had married the wicked Sodomites. What a mistake it is for a pure Christian girl or boy to marry a wicked and sinful person! Finally the angels laid hands on Lot, his wife, and their two daughters and brought them out of the city, commanding them: "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed" (Gen. 19:17).

"But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt." (v. 26). And this is the last time that she ever disobeyed God! You know there will come a last

time.

And Jesus told somebody to remember this woman. There are so many things that we ought to learn and remember from her. We ought to be able to see that the things this world has to offer do not compensate for the loss of a soul. We ought to put first things first. The salvation of our soul and the salvation of the souls of others ought to be our first consideration. Do not allow business, pleasure, or anything else to come before our duty to God. We should be able to see the danger of putting our children in wicked environments and under the influence of the ungodly. One of the most dangerous things is to marry outside of the family of God. Thanks be to God, it has worked out many times to the salvation of the one who was not a Christian. And while this is true, numberless are the times when it works the other way. And to think of the eternal consequences involved! Unborn generations will be influenced by these dangerous alliances.

And then we should learn from Lot's wife that when we have been delivered from the pollutions of this world we must not look back. Lot, his wife, and the girls were on their way to safety, but she looked back. Christians have escaped the pollutions of this world and are on their way to heaven, but heaven will not be reached if we look back to the sinful things of this world. Jesus said: "No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62). Many are looking back, and some have gone back; and such are not fit for the kingdom of God.

"Remember Lot's wife."

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www.thegospelpreceptor.com

Holy Ghost Baptism

J.D. Tant

Was	Holy Ghost Baptism	Is Not
A promise (Joel 2:28; Matt. 3:11)		A command
to certain individuals (Acts 1:5; Acts 11:3)		for all men
in a few days (Acts 1:5)		for all time
to make witnesses (Acts 1:8)		to regenerate
miraculous (Acts 2:1-8)		for good feelings
seen and heard (Acts 2:33)		better felt than told
to confirm the word (Heb. 2:1-4)		to save from sin

Perhaps no other subject in the Bible is preached upon and talked about so much as Holy Ghost baptism. Yet no other subject is less understood. Many times preachers, in meetings, will earnestly pray for Holy Ghost baptism, when they don't know what Holy Ghost baptism is, nor what it is for. Neither do they expect God to answer their prayers. Should it be possible for God to answer their prayer, and should Holy Ghost baptism put them to speaking with different tongues, or languages, as it did in the days of the apostles, or should it enable them to perform miracles as it once did, few would be left at their big meeting after their prayer to perform the miraculous demonstrations that followed those who had it in the long ago.

If you will notice the diagram you will see that Holy Ghost baptism was a promise, and not a command. Since water baptism is a command that must be obeyed, and Holy Ghost baptism a promise given, we see the difference between the two. We also notice that Holy Ghost baptism was to certain individuals, and water baptism is to all the world. "Teach all nations, baptizing them:" so taught the Son of God (Matt. 28:19).

Holy Ghost baptism was limited to a few days. Water baptism is for all time. Holy Ghost baptism was to make witnesses, was not to regenerate. But water baptism is

called the washing of regeneration (Titus 3:3-5). Holy Ghost baptism is miraculous, and is not for good feelings. Water baptism is administered by the preacher and is not miraculous. Holy Ghost baptism was both seen and heard, and is not better felt than told. Holy Ghost baptism was to confirm the truth, and never to save people from their sins; for the apostles, on Pentecost got Holy Ghost baptism long after their salvation. ...We conclude, the Bible being our guide, that Holy Ghost baptism was never given at any time, nor to any people to teach them what they must do to be saved.

During the period in which Holy Ghost baptism was given we had no New Testament written. All that was known of the plan of salvation was in the living apostles. But the Spirit was to guide them into all truth, and bring all things to their remembrance that Christ had taught them. The Spirit was not only to work through the truth in convincing the world of sin and judgment (John 16:7-12), but the Spirit was also to confirm the truth when it was spoken and written, by signs following (See Mark 16:16-20; Heb. 2:1-4). Since the truth was fully preached, and as much preached as God deemed proper, and was confirmed by miraculous power which was the result of Holy Ghost baptism, there has been no Holy Ghost baptism from that day to the present time.

I am writing a deed. I can continue to reveal and write on that deed until it is complete. After deed is completed it is confirmed by the seal of the state, and no one can add to or take from said deed. I can write another deed and put the seal of the state on it, but cannot put the seal of the state the second time on the same deed. So it is of the word of God. It was written and the seal of heaven was placed on it by miraculous power resulting from Holy Ghost baptism. Those who claim to get Holy Ghost baptism in our time must get it to confirm another deed, or gospel, as God's Gospel is already confirmed. But if they preach another gospel Paul says let them be accursed (Gal. 1:7). So we are forced to conclude that all the so called Holy Ghost baptism, and the performing of miracles, and speaking with tongues in our time, are deceptive and come from the devil, as we have no promise of such coming from God.

All of God's laws in the past have been established and confirmed by miraculous power, but as soon as said miraculous power had filled its mission it was then set aside and God's law of perpetuation continued. When God created Adam and Eve it required miraculous power, but after creation God gave them the natural law of reproduction, and said, "Multiply and fill the earth." So all children are brought into this world by God's law of reproduction, not by miraculous power. When God created the first grain of corn it required miraculous power; but he placed in that grain the germ of vegetable life, and now all corn comes according to God's law of vegetation, not according to miraculous power. So it is with the church. On the day of Pentecost the church was brought into spiritual existence by Holy Ghost baptism, and the truth was confirmed by miraculous power. But after the truth was established and continues, the confirmation remains, and every time we preach the same gospel which has been confirmed by miraculous power it is not necessary to confirm it again by Holy Ghost baptism.

In the early age of the church when the truth was being revealed and taught, the Holy Spirit had power and gave gifts to men. In the twelfth chapter of First Corinthians Paul mentions nine different gifts that were given to men by the Holy Ghost. In the thirty-first verse of same chapter he taught them to covet earnestly the best gifts, yet he promised to show them a more excellent way. In 1 Cor. 13:8 he shows that prophecies, tongues, and knowledge, meaning supernatural knowledge, shall all cease. These were direct gifts of the Holy Ghost, as taught in the twelfth chapter. But when were they to cease? Paul taught that they were only given in part till that which was perfect was come. But did that which was perfect ever come? When all the apostles had completed all the revelation God intended the world should have in the new dispensation it was then come. It was then called "The Faith" which was once for all (Revelation 5) delivered to the saints (Jude 3). It was called the "Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:2). "The perfect law of liberty" James calls it. It was then that the perfect scheme of redemption was completed. A spiritual law was put in operation through which all people could be saved.

This law is the Gospel which is God's power to salvation (Rom. 1:16). When people will hear the Gospel as taught in Rom. 10:17, and believe that Jesus is the Son of God as

taught in Acts 16:31, and forsake, or repent of their sins as taught in Acts 2:38, and confess the Son of God as taught in Rom. 10:8-10, and be baptized and wash away their sins as taught in Acts 22:16, the spiritual law is in operation, and the church is reproducing herself as the descendants of Adam and Eve are in their natural law of reproduction. It is as absurd to talk about Holy Ghost baptism in its miraculous power today as it is to claim that God is still making men and women as he did Adam and Eve in the beginning.

“The Thing That Hath Been...”: The Cycle of Apostasy

Copies of this book have gone around the world—Canada; Philippines; Kenya; Great Britain; St. Vincent, West Indies; Ghana; Majuro M.H.; Zimbabwe; Ireland; Ukraine. FREE!!

Did Jesus Contradict Himself?

David Ray

“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16).

There are few passages of Scripture easier to understand than this. Unfortunately, there are few passages of Scripture more twisted by men than this.

How many times have we tried to lovingly show to our denominational friends the necessity of baptism in this verse (and many others), only to hear in reply, “but the verse doesn’t say ‘he that believeth not **and is baptized not** shall be damned’”? Therefore, baptism is not necessary?

My next question for those who respond in this manner is always, do you believe that the Bible contradicts itself? Inevitably they reply in the negative. This is important to understand and agree upon in **any** Bible study. The Bible does **not** contradict itself! Yet, according to their misunderstanding of this text, not only does the Bible contradict itself, but it was done by the Son of God Himself, and He did it within one sentence!

The first part of His statement, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved,” states unequivocally that **baptism is necessary** for salvation. It would take a preacher to help us misunderstand this! So, if one concludes that the second part states that **baptism is unnecessary** for salvation, then he believes the two parts contradict each other. He cannot explain the alleged discrepancy between the two. But we can.

Does the second part really mean that baptism is unnecessary? First of all, if we believe that God does not contradict Himself, then we’ve just proven that it cannot mean this. However, we can delve a little deeper into the question. Logically, how can we conclude that this part of the verse teaches that baptism isn’t necessary for salvation when it never even mentions baptism or salvation? Rather, it discusses disbelief and condemnation.

Did Jesus need to say “he that believeth not and is baptized not shall be damned”? Of course not! How many people are there who will refuse to believe in Jesus but will decide to submit to His command to be baptized? The next one to do this will be the first one to do this!

The main point is this: in the first part Jesus told us what we must do **to be saved**. In the second part He told us what we must do **to be damned**. Do you want to be saved? Then believe and be baptized. Do you want to be condemned? Then don’t believe! If you don’t believe then it is completely irrelevant whether or not you are baptized. So, why would Jesus waste His words by saying “he that believeth not and is baptized not...”?

It is our earnest desire that everyone who reads this will choose to be saved and, therefore, will obey the first part rather than the second. If you haven’t made this

decision, then “why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16).

The Gospel Preceptor May Go, Where a Man May Not Go

These are a few countries whose residents visited the www.thegospelpreceptor.com in **January, 2022**: Thailand, Singapore, Russian Federation, China, Vietnam, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Egypt, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Jordan, Sudan, Qatar, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Morocco, Uzbekistan. You will note that most are Moslem countries. In many Moslem countries, a man entering to preach Christ would be killed. **We are preaching the Gospel around the world on the Internet where a man may not go.**

Links to Bible Study Resources

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Spiritual Perspectives - Gary Summers

False Doctrines of Man

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South Seminole church of Christ

The Church—Then and Now

Nathan Brewer

When something exists for a long time, we start thinking that it's always been that way, even when it hasn't. And we just assume it's right, even when it isn't.

Look around at all the churches that exist today, all claiming allegiance to Jesus Christ. Now look at the church in the New Testament. There's a vast difference.

The church of Christ described in the book of Acts and in the epistles—Romans through Revelation—was not denominationalized. It wasn't cut up into different groups, wearing different names, teaching different things, and practicing different worship.

When Paul wrote to the church at Rome that “The churches of Christ salute you” (Rom. 16:16), he wasn't talking about different “community” churches or denominations. He was talking about different congregations of the same church.

When John wrote the words of Christ in the book of Revelation, they were addressed to the seven churches of Asia (Rev. 1:4). Those were congregations of the same church.

Which church? The one Jesus built. The one He promised (Matt. 16:18), the one He bled for (Acts 20:28), the one that came into being the same time that the Good News of salvation—the Gospel—began to be proclaimed (Acts 2).

So why are things different today? Because men—not God—decided to change them.

Part of the confusion comes from misunderstanding of the role that Christ's church plays in salvation. No, the church does not save. The church **is** the saved. In Acts 2, as people obeyed the Gospel, the Lord simultaneously added them to His church (Acts 2:37-47).

That's why Paul says that the church is the body of Christ, and that Jesus is Savior of the body (Eph. 5:23). He saves the body, the church.

Christ has **only one** body, **one church**. The churches mentioned in the New Testament differ only in location. Sure, some were more faithful than others in keeping the Word of Christ, but they were all expected to follow the Word of Christ.

Today, churches may be as different from each other as night and day, yet claim to be part of the body of Christ. That is both illogical and unscriptural.

But does it matter? Answer this: Does it matter whether you're a part of the church Jesus died for and which He saves, or part of a church established by some man?

Trifling with God's plan of salvation is serious business. Jesus died to redeem those willing to submit to Him and become part of His body. Treating His church lightly is to treat His death lightly, because He bled and died to make salvation possible for that church.

Since the first century, men have left the Word of God and begun their own churches. Don't settle for churches of men. Obey the Gospel, let Christ add you to His church, and be saved from your sins (Acts 2:37-47).

**“The Thing That Hath Been...”: The Cycle of Apostasy, Volume 2
The Book and Postage are Both Free. Order From:**

**Jerry C. Brewer
308 South Okla. Ave.
Elk City, Oklahoma, 73644**

Is it Possible for a Christian to Worship Acceptably in or with a Denomination?

Andrew M. Connally

Brethren and friends, denominationalism is of the devil and all who remain in such till death will be lost! Notice what our Lord has said:

Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread. But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand: Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man. Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying? But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch. Then answered Peter and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable (Mat. 15:15).

There are several significant points in this passage. **One**, our Lord warned that there are religious people who “transgress the commandment of God because of their tradition.” **Two**, there are those “who have made void the word of God because of their tradition.” **Three**, there are people who claim they are “honoring God” while they practice “vain worship,” “teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men.” **Four**, many hearing these truths become “offended.” **Five**, there are those disciples who are more concerned over those “offended” than they are over God! **Six**, our Lord stated that all plants(churches) not planted by the Father shall be rooted up! And finally all such blind guides who lead blind followers are going to be lost unequivocally, irretrievably lost! We doubt seriously that any stronger indictment of human denominations has ever been written.

A parallel passage to the above is found in Matthew 7:21-23. 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 which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Here the scene is the Judgment and the people are expecting Salvation based on these reasons. **First**, they are “calling on the name of the Lord.” **Second**, they had taught “by thy name” and “by thy name cast out demons, and by thy name do many mighty works.” But they are rejected, notice why: “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.” It is evident the “will of the Father” is one thing, while their actions did not, and we repeat, did not fit the will of the Father! This is a true picture of denominationalism in our day. They are busy worshipping the Lord, they have their “good works going” and they did accomplish things, but neighbor it was all according to “**their** will,” and **not** the Father’s!

It is very evident from only these two passages something is radically wrong with denominationalism. Surely it is not the sincerity, for they called on God, they worshipped God, they did it all by the name of the Lord, so if sincerity is not the question, what is?! It is plain to see they did everything without God’s will (authority), and their will (authority) was the mitigating circumstance. Let us notice why worship in a denomination is not acceptable to God.

Denominations Are of Human Origin and Exist Without Authority of God
There is only one body (Eph. 4:4), “There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling,” and that one body is the church of Christ (cf. Eph. 1:23), “which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.” Jesus built only one church (Mat. 16:18), “upon this rock I will build my church” God planned it in eternity (Eph. 3:10-11), “According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord,” and Christ built it in time (Acts 2:47), “And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”

Human denominations wear unscriptural names, teach unscriptural doctrines and worship in unscriptural ways. Anyone who compares them to the one true church can substantiate each of these points.

God forbids doing anything in religion that is not authorized by the doctrine of Christ:

Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds (2 John 9-11).

Since God does not authorize denominations then God forbids denominationalism! If men follow the Bible and the Bible only then no denominations could exist. Think about this!

Denominations Wear Unscriptural Names

The church is found in our New Testament and it has various designations to describe its nature. Notice: It is the family of God, the house of God (1 Tim. 3:15), “But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.” It is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16). It is the church of Christ (Rom. 16:16), “Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you.” It is the Church of God (1 Cor. 1:1-2):

Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.

It is the church (Acts 8:1), “And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.”

It has various designations to describe the nature of the individuals who make up the church. They are disciples (Acts 11:26), “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.” These disciples were called Christians (Acts 11:26). They are saints (1 Cor. 1:2), “Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.” They are sons and daughters of God (2 Cor. 6:18), “And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters.” They are an elect race, a royal priesthood and a holy nation (1 Pet. 2:9). All such designations of individuals or congregations are divinely named and such names can be worn in honor and with great dignity. Now where does that leave the names of the denominationalist? **Completely without divine authority.** In fact, to wear any other name than those given by God is to dishonor God! Think about this! Now, how in the world could a child of God be acceptable to God, living, working, supporting and worshipping in a denomination? It is impossible.

No Christian should ever be found worshipping in a denomination. For **it is sin!** Don't you think we should quit trying to merge the church with denominations and quit fraternizing with them before we are lost with them? “If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch” (Mat. 15:1-15).

Vital Points in Worship

Cled E. Wallace

For practical purposes worship may be considered the all-out adoration of the human heart. When a lawyer, questioned Jesus about “the great commandment in the law” he received a quick and a pointed answer. “And he said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the great and first commandment.” The measure of a man's love for his neighbor or those who are closer to him is less than this. “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” “He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.” So the Lord declares.

This all-out adoration is not even to be directed toward heavenly beings such as the angels. “For it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.” A sense of awe has always taken possession of men when they were confronted by angels. An angel showed the apostle John some of the visions that are found in the last book of the Bible. “And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel that showed me these things.” This was a very natural reaction and John evidently considered it proper and right or he would not have acted in such a manner. He was a very intelligent and experienced Christian. He made a mistake and

was instantly corrected by the angel at whose feet he lay prostrate. "And he saith unto me, See thou do it not: I am a fellow-servant with thee and with thy brethren the prophets, and with them that keep the words of his book: worship God." There we have it. "Worship God." Angels are a higher order of created beings than man, but created beings nevertheless and servants of God, fellow servants with faithful men, and are even employed in the task of "doing service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation." If it be improper to worship angels, how much more so it is to adore the saints, so-called images of the saints, or the mother of the Lord. To worship any man is not to be thought of even for an instant. "And when it came to pass that Peter entered, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him. But Peter raised him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man." The practice of bowing before the modern ecclesiastic who claims to be the successor to Simon Peter and vicar of Christ on earth is deserving of sterner rebuke than either John or Cornelius received. No true worshipper of God will be guilty of it. It is a presumptuous thing on the part of any man to either expect from or offer to any human being a token of adoration that even the angels reject. Worship must be reserved for God.

Abundant and revealed reasons exist for this. In his address on Mars Hill in Athens, Paul made clear the true relation existing between God and Man. God is "Lord of heaven and earth," the giver of "life, breath and all things." He created man and appointed the bounds of human habitation. We live and move and have our being in him and we are his offspring. It is man's duty to seek and find God and "he is not far from each one of us." The affection that a dutiful child exercises towards his father and mother is only a small measure of the honor that humanity owes Jehovah. Myriads of angels "fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power and might, be unto your God forever and ever. Amen."

Righteous men on earth echo the praises of angels in heaven when they worship God. His name should never be lightly used or bandied about in irreverent conversation. Thoughtless people who would not speak disrespectfully of their parents often take the name of God in vain. More teaching is needed to enlighten men on what the Bible has to say about God. This is the sure way to generate faith in him "and without faith it is impossible to be well pleasing unto him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him." Man is weak and dependent and must have super human guidance. Human efforts to guide human destiny independently of God lead to ultimate ruin. This has always been and must always be true. "The world through its wisdom knew not God." Apostate and ruined Israel wrung a cry of anguish from Jeremiah the prophet. "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. O Lord; correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing." The most humbling influence that can take possession of a human heart is a true knowledge of God. It is a real pity that so many who seem inclined to worship him, like the men of Athens, do so in ignorance. Human arrogance appears in its ugliest form in the rejection of God from human knowledge. Nebuchadnezzar is both classical and typical as an object lesson. He was supreme monarch of the world. He walked upon the broad walls of Babylon and was swollen with pride. He took credit for it all "by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty." Jehovah intervened to teach him a lesson and leave it as a monument for the generations to come. The proud usurper of divine right was driven from men and given the heart of a beast. He ate grass as oxen, his body was wet with the dew of heaven, his hair grew like eagles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws. This horrible experience was followed by a return of his understanding and with it a sane and righteous recognition of the supreme place occupied by Almighty God.

And at the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth:

and one can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? (Dan. 4:34-35).

Nebuchadnezzar in his pride and ignorance had set up a golden image and commanded all men to worship it. In fury he commanded that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be cast into a burning, fiery furnace because they refused to bow before the image. In his humbled and chastened condition he expressed the profound truth that the Hebrew children chose a bath of fire rather than surrender. "Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase." It is this doctrine of God that gives the Bible its supreme place in the literature of the world. Such a book must be divine for human power was no more capable of producing it than it is of creating a sun or a star. Chance is the mother of neither the natural world nor the Bible. God is the only explanation of both and that explanation is the only rational one.

The question of how men can worship God acceptably is somewhat akin to the question of how a degenerate race can be saved from sin. Human wisdom can answer neither question. "For seeing that in the wisdom of God."

"The world through its wisdom knew not God, it was God's good pleasure through the foolishness of the preaching to save them that believe." God sent a Saviour into the world and revealed a Plan by which man must be saved. There is, no substitute for it and it must be accepted by faith. Likewise man cannot be guided by intuition or reason to a true code of divine worship. No man can know what is acceptable to God in the way of worship except as God reveals it.

Even so the things of God none knoweth, save the Spirit of God. But we received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is from God; that we might know the things that were freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth; combining spiritual things with spiritual words (1 Cor. 2:11-13).

So spoke Paul and the inescapable conclusion is that the Bible is the source of all information about what a man must do to be saved and **how** he is to render **acceptable worship to God**. The man who consults **his own feeling** or convenience and brings an offering to God is more apt to receive the curse of Cain than the blessing of faithful Abel.

The Old Testament system of worship with its "carnal ordinances imposed until a time of reformation" was a divine kindergarten to teach the Jews the vital lesson that they must depend on divine leadership. Moses was given a detailed blueprint of the tabernacle and warned to build it according to the pattern which was shown him in the mount. The law carried this fateful warning. "What thingsoever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it." The corpses of Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron and princes in the assembly are grim monuments of the wrath of God toward men who are presumptuous enough to tamper with divine arrangements in worship. In burning incense, they offered strange fire which God had not commanded. They "were not even given time to mouth the hackneyed excuse" that God had not told them not to do as they had done. They had divine orders and it was their duty to stick to them without taking any detours in the way of experiments. They paid for their folly with their lives.

The time came for the old law and the old priesthood to be changed. They were "disannulled," permanently abolished. We have a new order of worship under the new and better covenant. Even though this new order is a "law of liberty" the **liberty** does not consist in allowing men to offer up to God in worship that which is right in their own eyes. Divine leadership is as essential as ever and it is fully as important for the servants of the Lord to maintain purity in worship as it is for them to be sound in doctrine. Men have no more right to introduce unauthorized practices in the worship of God than they have to change the conditions of pardon. When the church assembles to worship God it must do what God says. Let it be assumed that the church is right in "spirit," that the members are reverent, zealous and abounding in ambition honor him who "giveth to all life, and breath, and all things." They assemble on the Lord's day.

Why? It is “the day that the Lord hath made,” a monument to his resurrection from the dead, a divine appointment. What is the nature of this meeting and what procedure shall be followed? Is human wisdom to decide? Shall it be a time of feasting and merry-making? God has revealed his will in the teaching of the New Testament, in the precepts and examples recorded therein.

The early church met to break bread, teach, admonish, pray, sing praises and contribute money for doing good. They did so because they were instructed to do so and the instruction they received was inspired. It would be folly to conclude that they did other things they were not told to do, that they happened to want to do, on the pretext that they were not instructed not to do them. They **did not allow** the rebellious rule that what is not forbidden is allowable. They respected the apostolic admonition to “hold the pattern of sound words which thou hast heard from me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.” The claim that worship is in the heart and cannot be embodied in specific acts is about as much lacking in both sense and faith as the like claim that a sinner can love the Lord as much in his heart out of the water as in the water, and therefore baptism is unnecessary.

What God commands must be done and what he has not commanded must not be practiced in the realm of worship. It is all right to drink water and milk but it must be done somewhere else besides the Lord's table. It is very well on occasion to express personal exuberance in the singing of popular and secular songs and the playing on instruments of music, but not in the worship of God. He has not appointed such things in the worship which is directed to him. The whole situation is summed up in this. **“Worship God” and do so as it is written.** To try to do so otherwise exhibits a lack of faith which makes all worship vain.

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The Worship of the Church

Landry Brewer

Though most people think it doesn't matter how you worship God, the Bible shows that it matters to God. That's why Jesus says in John 4:24 that “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”

Rejected Worship

In Genesis 4, God accepts Abel's worship and rejects Cain's. We're not told why in Genesis. We have to turn to the New Testament. “By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts” (Heb. 11:4). Abel was righteous because he worshiped God “by faith.” According to Romans 10:17, faith comes by hearing God's word. Abel offered what God told him to offer. Cain must have ignored what God said and offered what he wanted instead. So God rejected Cain's worship. All worship must be in spirit and in truth, or God rejects it. To worship in spirit means to worship from the heart and offer to God the thanks and praise He's due, especially for sending His Son to die for us.

Just as important is worshiping in truth. Jesus refers to God's word as truth in John 17:17. Paul does the same in Second Timothy 2:15. Worship “in truth” is according to the requirements in God's word. Since Jesus established a New Testament, we find in it God's worship requirements for us today. Worship “by faith” is the same as worship “in truth.”

If your worship isn't according to God's word in the New Testament, it's rejected just like Cain's. The same is true if it isn't from the heart.

Acceptable Worship

God rejects worship that's not from the heart and isn't according to His word. Cain's worship in Genesis chapter 4 was rejected, and two sons of Aaron—Nadab and Abihu—were killed in Leviticus 10 for using fire God hadn't specified for offering sacrifices.

To find out how to worship God acceptably today, we've got to look in the New Testament. The Law of Moses in the Old Testament doesn't apply today because we're answerable to the Law of Christ. It's in Christ's law where we find God's requirements for worship in our day.

Paul writes in Colossians 3:17 that whatever we do in word or deed must be in the name of the Lord. All religious activity, including worship, must have the Lord's authority. Worship in the name of the Lord is what the Lord has authorized. Inspired men gave the commandments of the Lord to Christians in the first century, teaching them how to worship acceptably. Jesus commands the apostles to teach those who obey the gospel to "observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" in Matthew 28:20. This includes worship. And we can learn how to worship acceptably by reading Acts and the epistles.

Jesus said our worship must be what God wants in the way He wants it (John 4:24). Paul says the same thing in Colossians 3:17. Otherwise it will be rejected just like the worship of Cain, Nadab and Abihu. Friends, can you find your worship in the New Testament? Does God accept your worship? Those who say it doesn't matter how you worship God don't understand what Jesus and Paul taught. God only accepts worship offered on His terms.

Prayer and Lord's Supper

According to the New Testament, five acts of worship are required today—singing, praying, studying God's word, eating the Lord's supper and contributing money. God wants these five things done without addition or subtraction on the first day of every week.

Prayer is so important that Jesus taught His disciples how to pray. Paul addresses acceptable

worship, and he singles out prayer in First Corinthians 14:15-16. Prayer is a wonderful opportunity to approach God.

God also wants us to remember the Lord's death every week by eating the Lord's supper. Paul writes about the proper observance of the supper in First Corinthians 11:23-33. The food is unleavened bread, and the drink is fruit of the vine. These represent the body and blood of Jesus. Inverse 27, Paul emphasizes respectful observance of the supper. God wants it eaten reverently.

Can we eat the Lord's supper on Thursday, Tuesday or to celebrate holidays like Easter or Christmas? The church in the New Testament ate it when they came together (1 Cor. 11:20) on the first day of the week (1 Cor. 16:2). To eat the supper any other day is to do so without the Lord's authority. That's a violation of Jesus' command to worship in truth (John 4:24) and Paul's command to have the Lord's authority for religious activity (Col. 3:17).

Does the church you're a member of include prayer and the Lord's supper every Sunday? If not, why? The apostles taught the church to include these in worship on the first day of each week.

Singing

Multiple passages in the New Testament deal with Christians singing in worship to God. For example, Paul writes that we are to engage in "singing with grace in your hearts unto God" (Col. 3:16 ASV). He tells the Corinthians that they must "sing with the spirit...and...with the understanding also" (1 Cor. 14:15).

Singing also teaches and encourages. Paul mentions that "teaching and admonishing one another" (Col. 3:16) results from singing. We learn of God and are encouraged to be faithful to Him as we sing biblical songs. But is singing restricted in any way?

Yes. God **specified singing**. That eliminates accompaniment with musical instruments. Using a piano, organ or any other musical instrument lacks New Testament authority and is not worship in truth (John 4:24) and is not in the name of the Lord (Col. 3:17). "But the New Testament doesn't say not to," some say. But silence doesn't authorize, a point made in arguing that Jesus couldn't be a priest under the Law of Moses (Heb. 7:12-14). For the same reason, we have no authority for instrumental music in

worship today.

Another argument is that people in the Old Testament used instruments, so we can. But we live under the New Covenant Jesus established with worship requirements peculiar to that covenant.

A third defense of instrumental music is that “it sounds better.” Whether it does or not is irrelevant. There’s no authority given by Jesus or any New Testament writer for musical instruments in worship. Their use violates John 4:24 and Colossians 3:17.

Preaching and Giving

Paul commands us to give money on the first day of the week (1 Cor. 16:1-2). The amount is determined by how much we’ve been prospered by God. There’s no set amount. Most people think that we’re supposed to tithe, or give 10 percent. But tithing was part of God’s Old Covenant with the Jews. Under the New Testament, we’re simply told to give as we’ve been prospered. But we’re to give cheerfully and from the heart (2 Cor. 9:7).

The Hebrews author writes of the New Testament’s greater blessings and obligations. While ten percent is a good place to start, it’s important to remember our debt to God for offering His Son to die for us when considering how much to contribute. And it’s only on the first day that we’re to offer. Some religious groups collect money other days, but Paul commands to contribute each first day of the week. Specifying the first day excludes every other day, and taking up a collection any other day is forbidden.

Each first day of the week we’re also expected to study God’s word, and this is done by hearing preaching (Acts 20:7). It’s vital to study God’s word so that we’ll know how to please Him and so our faith will grow. That’s why it’s so important to hear only “sound doctrine” (Titus 2:1). It’s only through hearing the proper preaching that we’ll be saved (1 Tim. 4:16).

Many people consider worship optional, but God doesn’t. God expects to be worshiped the way He wants, not the way I want. If we don’t give God the worship He wants, He’ll reject us like He did Cain, Nadab and Abihu in the Old Testament. Do you want to be rejected by God?

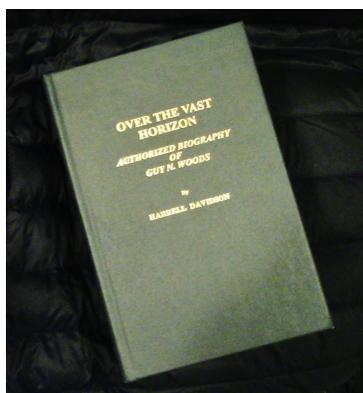
Israel fell because of its own internal corruption, and so has many another nation fallen. That is the greatest danger facing our nation today. When God is ruled out of the educational, social, and business life of an nation all of sorts of corruption follows, and corruption means decay and death. —R.L. Whiteside—

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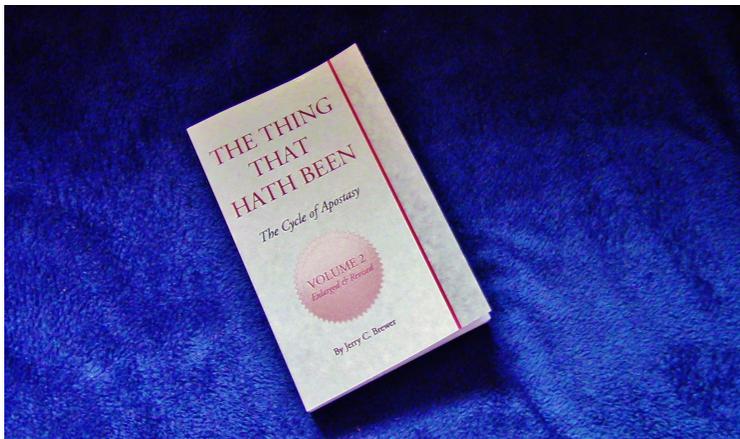
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“The Thing That Hath Been...”



The thing that hath been, it *is that* which shall be; and that which is done *is that* which shall be done: and *there is* no new *thing* under the sun. Is there *any* thing whereof it may be said, See, this *is* new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us (Eccl. 1:9-10).

Apostasy is the bane of God's people as Israel in the shadow of Sinai.

And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together

unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for *as for* this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which *are* in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring *them* unto me...And he received *them* at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These *be* thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt...To morrow *is* a feast to the LORD. And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play (Exo. 32:1-6).

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Introducing Our New Staff Writer

Jerry C. Brewer, Editor

We are happy to introduce *The Gospel Preceptor's* newest staff writer, Lester Kemp, a native of Indiana. He and his wife, Lillian (White) have one daughter, and one son and two grandchildren. Lester is an experienced writer and a former editor. He did his undergraduate work at David Lipscomb College where he earned a B.A. and later did graduate work at Andrews University.



He has labored as the local preacher in Indiana, Missouri, Louisiana, Ohio, Kentucky, Texas, Colorado, and North Carolina.

He has preached in Gospel meetings, and lectureships in 10 states and has written chapters for many of those lectureship books.

He has articles published in numerous Gospel journals. He was past editor for *In Word and Doctrine*, and was the founding editor of *Matters of THE Faith*. He currently preaches for the Piedmont church of Christ in Denver, Colorado. We have know him for several years and we are confident that he is sound in the faith and we are pleased to add brother Kamp to our staff.

In the World, but Not of the World

Lester Kamp

According to an old fable, three peas lived in a summer garden safely within the protection of a green pod. Their world was, as far as they knew, cozy and comfortable. Suddenly during a late summer day the pod split open, and the peas found themselves, not in their previously comfortable world of green, but now in a frightening brown world. Their responses were immediate. One pea crawled back into the pod hoping to regain the safety and comfort of the past. The second pea turned brown so it would be exactly like the new world in which it now found itself. The third pea, however, decided that what the brown world needed was a green pea, so it resolved to be the best green pea possible in that brown world.

This fable illustrates well the possible reactions of Christians to the world of sin in which we live. Bear in mind that Christians have always lived in a world darkened by sin. Recall Paul's instructions to the Christians at Philippi: "That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; Holding forth the word of life" (Phi. 2:15-16).

Peter on Pentecost encouraged that multitude of Jews to become Christians with these words: "Save yourselves from this untoward generation" (Acts 2:40). Christians live in a world which is hostile to Christ, His teachings, and those that follow Him. Using the terminology of the fable, we live in a "brown world." Our reaction to that world can be one of three actions—the same three reactions that we saw in the fable of the three peas. Let us take some time to examine these responses and to examine ourselves.

Isolation from the World

One reaction to the world found among those who claim to be Christians is isolation. Over the centuries, some efforts to do this have resulted in literal, physical isolation from the world. People have actually withdrawn themselves from the world to some isolated place that they might not have to confront the sinfulness of the world. This kind of thinking gave rise to monasticism. Others who have not gone to that extreme have attempted to isolate themselves by ignoring the real world. They may cancel their newspaper subscriptions and refuse to listen to the news for fear of being aware of the problems of the real world. They live in their own dream world without coming to grips with the way sin has affected others.

Though this kind of thinking has its appeal, we should realize that Christians cannot respond to the world in this way. Jesus' prayer shows the error of His followers when they try to withdraw from the world. He prayed: "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:15-17).

Jesus did not desire that His disciples be "taken out of the world." Sanctification (i.e., separation from sin and devotion to the service of God) is necessary, but sanctification is not isolation. Christians must remain **in** the world, but not be **of** the world. Christians must have contact with those in the world (Mat. 28:19) and help them deal with their burdens of sin (Gal. 6:2, 10), but Christians must abstain from the sins of the world (1 The. 5:21-22). If Christians are to be "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world" (Mat. 5:13-16), they must be in the world and make contact with that world.

Become Like the World

A second mistake that Christians make is to become **like** the world. This course is the easiest one to take—just give up and give in. There are members of the church who do not want to be distinctive, to be different. Their lives after baptism are no different from the way they lived before. They have the same companions, their language is the same, they go the same places, and they enjoy the same forms of entertainment that they did before they became "Christians." These "unconverted Christians" live just as those do who are in the world. For them it is too difficult to change; it is too much to ask of them.

Their concept of being Christians is certainly not what is taught in the Scriptures. Change in the behavior of those who became Christians was noted in the New Testament by their former companions: “Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with *them* to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of *you*” (1 Pet. 4:4). Paul described the sinfulness of the Corinthians before they became Christians in 1 Corinthians 6:8-11. However, it is highly significant that he said that these sins were in their **past**, not their **present**. His words were, “And such **were** some of you” (6:11).

Repentance requires a change of mind, which brings about a change in behavior. Conversion requires a turning around of the believer’s life. A person who is no different in behavior after baptism has neither repented nor been converted. He may have his name on some church roll, but he is not a Christian. The true Christian does not love the world, “neither the things *that are* in the world” (1 John 2:15). Christians realize that the love of the world causes one to be an enemy of God (Jam. 4:4). Paul wrote, “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed” (Rom. 12:2). Pure religion involves keeping oneself “unspotted from the world” (Jam. 1:27). Paul’s admonition is appropriate here: “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you” (2 Cor. 6:17).

What the world desperately needs (and can be influenced by) is more who are willing to live the Christian life and display the love of Christ to the world. The world cannot be improved through the cowardice of those who try to isolate themselves from it in some sort of cloistered environment. Nor can the world be improved by the hypocrisy of those who claim to be Christians but whose lives deny their claims. The world can and must be influenced by those who are dedicated to the Lord and His Word enough to live the Christian life.

The words of a Christian are important (Mat. 12:37), but without a life to back them up our words are worthless. Jesus spoke of the experience of some on the Day of Judgment: “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 which is in heaven” (7:21).

Paul described the life of the Christian, “That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God” (Col. 1:10). The Christian life must also show a genuine concern for others. Loving our neighbors, those who have needs that we can supply, is one of the greatest commandments (Mark 12:30-31). This is Christ-like!

There are those who have physical needs that Christians can supply. John wrote:

But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels *of compassion* from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth (1 John 3:17-18).

However, the greatest need of all mankind is the salvation which is only in Christ—in being a Christian. “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). Surely, going to Bible classes and worship assemblies of the church is not enough; the church must also go in service to others. The world can be greatly influenced for good by Christians who do not hide the light of Christ within them, but who live their lives as Christians. “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Mat. 5:16).

The Christian’s life must also be committed to the Gospel of Christ. The Gospel saves, but the Gospel must be taught (John 6:45; 1 Cor. 1:21). Christians have a responsibility to teach the Gospel (that which they have come to know and have obeyed) to others by word and deed so others might also be saved. Someone has well said: “The Gospel is the currency owed to the lost by those who are saved.” Because Christians have been saved by God’s grace through the Gospel, we have a debt to pay. Paul said, “I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise” (Rom. 1:14). Paul realized the existence of that debt, and so must every Christian!

Truly, what this world of sin needs is more who are genuine Christians. May we rise to this task!

“Saved by Faith”...But

Thomas Allen Robertson

The Bible tells us what faith is. The record states, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1). The American Standard version says, “the assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen.” Faith is the assurance or substance of that for which we hope; it is the conviction or evidence of that which we did not see. Faith is not just a vague feeling which comes in some mysterious, miraculous way at some opportune hour; faith is concrete; it is based on substance or evidence. Faith is preceded by evidence; it is followed by action.

How Faith Comes

Paul says, “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” (Rom. 10:17) The things for which we hope are a resurrection from the dead and eternal life. The things which we did not see are Christ, His teaching upon the earth, His death, burial, resurrection and ascension. It is concerning these things the New Testament gives testimony or evidence. One must hear or know of these things before he can believe them. That is why we are told it is impossible for him who has not heard to believe. (Rom. 10:14)

What Faith Does

According to the New Testament there are three things attributed to faith in connection with the salvation of man:

1. Justification by faith. Man is freed from the penalty of sin through faith. Paul says, “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1). Again he says, “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law, for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified” (Gal. 2:16).

2. Purification by faith. Man is freed from the stain of sin through faith. Concerning the conversion of Cornelius and the Gentiles Peter said, “And he put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith” (Acts 15:9). We believe exactly what this passage says; we do not believe what some have tried to make it say.

3. Sanctification by faith. Men are sanctified, set apart, separated from the world through faith. As the Apostle Paul made his defense before Agrippa, he told that king that God had sent him to the Gentiles that they might “receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith” (Acts 26:18). We believe every word in this passage; but we do not believe what it does not say.

Not by “Faith Alone”

The Bible plainly teaches that men are justified, purified, and sanctified by faith. It does not teach that this is done by faith alone, as the creeds both old and new affirm. The fact is, the Bible teaches quite the contrary of that creedal dogma. James bluntly gives the lie to this denominational doctrine when he asks, “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him?” He answers his question once and for all in the ringing words of eternal truth, “Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only” (Jas. 2:24). Between Paul and James there is absolute agreement. By the deeds of Moses' law, according to Paul, no flesh shall be justified. By faith apart from works, according to James, salvation is equally impossible.

How Men are Saved

The Bible is God's word. There are no contradictions in it. The apostles, all of them being under the direction of the same Holy Spirit, never contradicted each other in their teaching and doctrine. What one apostle taught, they all taught. If Paul taught salvation by faith, so did James. If James taught “no salvation by faith alone,” so did Paul.

The fact is, the Bible teaches that even faith itself is a work. When Christ was asked, “What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?” He replied, “This is the work of God that ye believe on him whom he hath sent” (John 6:28, 29).

Even though faith is a work, it is not a meritorious work; that is, it does not, within itself, make a man worth saving. There is simply no merit in the act of believing. It is what one does because of that belief that brings him into the sphere of God's pardoning grace. There is no virtue in the mere act of eating; it is **what** one eats that sustains life—not the mere act of eating it. So the benefits wrought through faith come not by the mere act of believing; they come because faith causes us to move in obedience to the commands of God.

Throughout the New Testament, salvation is repeatedly attributed to faith (John 3:16; 3:18; Acts 10:43; 15:7; Gal. 3:11; Eph. 2:8-9, and many others). There are also many passages that attribute salvation to works (Matt. 7:21; Luke 6:46; Acts 2:38; Heb. 5:8, 9; 2 Thess. 1:8). Here we have two groups of passages, one teaching salvation by faith; the other teaching salvation by works. How are we going to reconcile them? Shall we take one, and exclude the other? Or shall we say it is impossible to reconcile them, that the Bible contradicts itself?

The answer is quite simple. Paul gives it in these words, “For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love” (Gal. 5:6). Thus if we have faith in Christ, we will love Him enough to do the things He commands. If we do not do the things He commands, we do not have enough faith in Him to save us.

After His resurrection from the dead, Christ sent His disciples to “preach the Gospel to the whole creation.” He commanded them to teach faith, repentance, and baptism for the remission of sins. That they understood Him to teach this is very obvious from the way in which they preached in the years following His ascension.

If any man today has a faith that, through love, moves him to obey the commands of Christ as laid down in the New Testament, that man will be saved in exactly the same way that men were saved when they obeyed that same gospel under apostolic preaching.

God has always tested man's willingness to do His will. To be a real test, the thing commanded must be such that the person can see no connection between the thing commanded and the result to be obtained. Examples: The brazen serpent (Num. 21:4-9); Naaman's dipping in the Jordan (2 Kings 5:1-19). Baptism is such a test. —**R.L. Whiteside**—

What it Means to Say Baptism is Non-Essential

Gayle Oler

- 1.** It means that Peter commanded a non-essential! “And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord” (Acts 10:48). It therefore reduces the commandments of God to absurdities if any one of them isn't essential to salvation.
- 2.** It means the remission of sins is not essential to salvation. “Peter said unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38 ASV).
- 3.** It means that not one single command of God can consistently be construed as obligatory upon man. By the same rule of reasoning by which baptism is deemed unnecessary to salvation, every other commandment can be so deemed. Faith is commanded. So is baptism. Faith is exemplified. So is baptism. Jesus said, “Except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins” (John 8:24 ASV). He also said, “Except a man be born of water and of the spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5).
- 4.** It means that Ananias deceived Paul when he told him, “Arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). If Paul's sins had been washed away prior to his baptism, Ananias did not correctly represent the case to Paul. Paul's sins had not been forgiven prior to baptism. Neither are men's sins today.

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