

The Gospel Preceptor

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

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Kerry Sword—Truly a Man of God

Gilbert Gough

On Feb. 10, 2022 a great man of God departed this life. We are confident that this studious preacher, wonderful family man, and beloved friend, is in a far better place than this old world. On the Lord's Day, Aug. 10, 1986 he obeyed the gospel of Christ in baptism and until the day he died he was true to his Lord and Savior. **Kerry Lee Sword** was truly a valiant soldier of the Lord, yet the Lord's humble servant as well.

Once Kerry and his beloved wife became New Testament Christians, he and Karla dedicated their lives to serving the Lord and His kingdom, the church. He attended a preacher's school to prepare himself to enter the ministry. One of his instructors in preacher's school was Kent Bailey. Brother Bailey in his tribute to Kerry wrote these words:

Because of his loyalty to truth, Kerry had a burning desire to make preparation to preach, teach, and defend the truth of God as well as to win souls for Christ. This was very evident in his making preparation in attending preacher training school. I had the opportunity to see his and Karla's devotion first hand. They were both dedicated and devoted as students of the word of God during the two year period of training to which they committed themselves. Kerry was never satisfied with anything less than his best efforts in learning the scriptures. He had an exceptionally analytical mind. He was a rare critical thinker, and could have been a success as an attorney making arguments in the court-room.



When Kerry finished his Biblical studies, he was named the valedictorian of his class.

Kerry began his work in the kingdom of Christ in the state of Alaska, the state where he initially obeyed God's plan of salvation. He worked with the South Anchorage church for two years from 1990 to 1992 and part of his work was teaching the Bible in prisons. In 1992 Kerry made a tremendously big decision for him, his wife and baby daughter. They were moving across the great waters to a land where they had never been. Kerry desired to establish and build the church in the Ukraine. Also, he would teach in the Kiev Bible School training men to preach. This he did for the next 25 years of his life! He helped to establish many congregations in this now war-torn land.

In 2017 Kerry and his family with heavy hearts returned to the states due to Kerry's health issues. He was born with muscular dystrophy and his health had deteriorated so that he wanted to be in the states in case any medical issues arose. The Ukraine was not equipped for people with disabilities. Now, his mind had not dwindled, but his body was weakening and his legs just could not carry him very far. (They walked every-

where in the Ukraine.) Upon arriving in the states, they settled in Henderson, Tennessee. One of the reasons Kerry decided upon moving to Henderson was so his children could get a good education and develop friendships with Christians their own age that were like minded and Christ centered. However, Kerry admittedly was naïve as to what he would discover when moving into the “diocese” of Freed-Hardeman University.

After buying a house and enrolling two of his six children in FHU, Kerry discovered that many brethren no longer stood for the truth. Jerry Brewer sent brother Kerry an email message and said that he must have been dismayed and amazed at what mainstream churches had done during his 25 years out of this country. In Kerry's email reply, dated Aug. 31, 2020, he wrote:

“Dismayed and amazed at the changes in the church” may be a gross understatement. We are still in shock over the apathy, ignorance, and sin that we see our brethren in. This especially applies to the “elite” in the churches of Christ that so many hold in reverence and awe.

He learned firsthand that FHU was teaching and practicing things not in harmony with God's word. Being the good soldier of the cross, he began to communicate with brethren connected to FHU. Also, Kerry being an excellent writer started correspondence with those representing the school. He began to expose FHU for the errors they taught like social drinking is permissible; fellowshipping those who teach error; and for nudity in the art department. Kerry exposed FHU's errors in his website, <https://kteam1981.wixsite.com/fhu-uncovered>. Kerry's naivete was quickly overcome when the errors of the FHU became public.

Kerry stood unswerving for truth and he began a search for a sound faithful congregation of God's people where he and his family could worship and work. After a year or so of attending different congregations in the Henderson area, he found all of them were in cahoots with the “sacred cow” Freed-Hardeman University. In one congregation the Sword family was actually invited to leave their fellowship because Kerry was looked upon as a troublemaker.

At this point is where the Mt. Zion church of Christ in Savannah, Tennessee enters into the picture. The church at Mt. Zion, its elders and preacher, were aware of the digression of FHU and that the school had abandoned the truth in many ways. The elders of the Mt. Zion church, Brodie Johnson and the late Sammy Briley, and myself, Gilbert Gough, the preacher, knew that most of the churches in West Tennessee bowed down to the “sacred cow” FHU. When brother Johnson and myself learned of the difficulties of Kerry and his family, brother Johnson called and invited the Sword family to come a visit with us. Contact was made in the year of 2018. They came and visited, they placed membership with us and from that time forward the Sword family would drive an hour and fifteen minutes one way every Lord's Day and Wednesday evening for Bible study and worship. Kerry almost immediately began his work with Mt. Zion. The elders asked him to preach a Gospel Meeting for us, and **wow**, did he preach a powerful meeting! He began to teach in our Bible school and what great depth of knowledge he possessed and taught from the Bible. What a blessing he was, and his family still is, to the congregation at Mt. Zion.

A personal note: Kerry and I became the closest of brothers in Christ. It did not take us long to discover that we were of the same mind and the same judgment. As preachers we would sit down together, study God's word, and pray together especially for the church. When he would be answering his critics, he would ask me to review what he wrote. He was so desirous to be right and accurate in every detail. Rarely did I give him advice, or correct anything he wrote because he always did his homework. He was as a great supporter as I could have had in my preaching and teaching. There was absolutely no envy between us. We were brothers and loved each other for truth's sake. As I always told people, Kerry was my Barnabas!

It has been said that “The measure of a life is not in its duration but in its donation.” Kerry, in our human judgment, left us too soon. When thinking of Kerry, we think about what he donated, what he contributed, what he invested in this life that ended right before his sixtieth birthday. Consider the investments of his love and devotion to

his beloved wife of forty-years of matrimony. Consider the investments of godliness and nurturing that he made in the lives of his six children who remain faithful Christians. What a great legacy! Consider the investments Kerry made in the lives of so many through his preaching and teaching the Word of God especially in the Ukraine. He poured out his life to teach the gospel to one and all. He could not tolerate error, and stood firmly upon God's truth. The measure of his life is in what he donated to the Lord!

On Feb. 10, 2022, Kerry's soul left his worn out body for he died of Covid Pneumonia. His soul was then committed into the hands of the loving, merciful God he served. He had met his appointment with death. On Feb. 15, 2022 Kerry's body was interred in the grave to await the great resurrection day. Even though he has left us in body and soul, it is not the end of his story. The memory of his life and the influence of his demeanor and teaching remain with us. "He being dead yet speaketh." In honor of my friend and brother, I say...

Ring out the welcome,
Swing wide the gates.
Choirs of angels stand and sing, "Amazing Grace,"
There's one more soldier of the King,
Whose trials are past.
Ring out the welcome loud and clear—
He's home at last!

The Prosperity Gospel

Charles Pogue

Were it not so sad for both themselves, and those who follow them, the message of the typical televangelist would be almost comical. Televangelists have a few common errors which seem to always form the content of what they say. Eschatological (end time) speculation, and the pray-this-prayer for salvation error, are common with virtually every program.

Many of today's popular charlatan TV preachers "preach" what has been labeled, "The Prosperity Gospel." False teachers such as Benny (divorced) Hinn, Rod Parsley, Kenneth Copeland, and husband and wife team Marcus and Joni Lamb of the Daystar Network, are some of the more notorious proponents of this prevalent falsehood.

Sometimes called health and wealth, name it and claim it, or as someone else has more appropriately labeled it, "blab it and grab it," the basic idea is that "If you send money to us, God will send more back to you than you can even count." These people have a track record of taking every single verse they use out of its context, not to mention putting God in a position of encouraging people to seek that which His Word says to desire is fraught with spiritual danger.

Isaiah 53:5 is misinterpreted to mean that physical healing is a blessing of the cross, when the prophet is actually referring to spiritual (e.g. 1 Pet. 2:24), not physical, healing. If this were true, why would Christians ever be sick or die? The position actually impugns the power of the blood of Christ!

One of the favorite verses of the prosperity gospel advocates is reads,

Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, That there may be meat in mine house, And prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, If I will not open you the windows of heaven, And pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it (Mal. 3:10).

To begin with, this passage is written specifically to Judah, who has been stingy with God, and offered polluted offerings to the Lord. This passage is not a universal principle to all people. In the second place, tithes are part of the old law, not the new one. If the prosperity preachers are going to claim the blessing of Malachi 3:10, they need to be offering animal sacrifices of the best of their flocks. But that would put them in the

position of rejecting the sacrifice of Christ. What tangled webs men weave!

Preachers of the prosperity gospel seldom find a usage of the word *seed* in the Bible that they do not like. Their message is, “send me a donation, and you have planted a seed that will produce at some later date an abundant crop of cash for you.” These men are encouraging people to do what Paul warns against. “But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition” (1 Tim. 6:9). The prosperity gospel is both error and a scam, taught by those who’s greed for gain makes them identical to the description given by the apostle Peter stated in 2 Peter 2:3: “And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.” On July 7, 2008, the *New York Times*, reported that no less than six televangelists were under scrutiny by the U.S. Senate for financial wrong doing. Leading the way was Kenneth Copeland, who was accused of humanitarian aid fraud while his ministry supplied him a mansion which the *Times* described as “large as a hotel,” a \$20-million-dollar Cessna Citation jet, and a private airport to land it on.

The feet of these men, and women too, by the way, must be kept to the fire for two reasons: they are frauds with no qualms about cheating primarily the poor out of their money while they wallow in wealth. Additionally, when these shysters do preach anything other than their materialistic and Utopian message of “make your own heaven on earth,” their messages about salvation are as erroneous as $2+2=7$. Like the mainstream denominations, they teach salvation by the doctrine of faith alone. They deny the efficacy of baptism or that it is the crowning act required of one to be cleansed from sin by the blood of Jesus Christ (Mat. 26:28; Acts 22:16; Heb. 9:12; 10:22).

We live in a materialistic society crowded with faux-religious people who like other secular humanists, seek their ultimate happiness in the here and now. The prosperity gospel dispensers are there to scratch their itching ears. They reinforce the love of money with their brand of error. The majority of their followers will be disappointed in this life, because the promise of wealth is a mere confidence scheme. They will be further disappointed when they stand before God in judgment, because they have been fed a lie about how one is saved. The reality is, whether in this world, or the world to come, the prosperity gospel is not really so prosperous after all!

“Hearing They Hear Not”

Lee Moses

Jesus said of His fellow Jews, “they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not” (Mat. 13:13). One could translate this, “While they see, they do not see; and while they hear, they do not hear.” How can this be? One either sees or does not see; one either hears or does not hear. But so many people with good perceptive abilities fail to use those abilities as God has given them. Thus, it can truly be said of such people that “hearing they hear not.”

Many Hear There is a God, but They do Not Hear

There are those who hear the Word of God, or at least hear enough portions of the Word to have testimony to God’s existence. They have heard: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Gen. 1:1), which remains the best and only viable explanation. They have seen with their eyes evidence of God’s existence:

The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handy-work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. *There is* no speech nor language, *where* their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world (Psa. 19:1-4).

People have the ability to hear and see these things, they surely do see and hear these things—yet it as if they never do. They pay no attention, as a deaf man will pay no attention to the sounding horn of an automobile rapidly approaching him They do not live as though they are aware—that there is a God who is aware of their every move and

every thought.

Many Hear There Will Be a Judgment Day, but They Do Not Hear

There are those who claim to believe in God, but continue to stroll leisurely down the pernicious paths of immorality, selfishness, and man-made religion. They see that all accounts are not settled on earth. Job asked, “Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power?” (Job 21:7). The wicked often remain unpunished throughout their lives, and are certainly not punished to the degree they deserve (compare with Rom. 6:23). But will a just God allow all such wrongs to go unpunished? He most certainly will not. “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (Gen. 18:25). He most certainly will. And the Lord has revealed that He will and how He will: “But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds” (Rom. 2:5-6).

Revelation’s depiction of the Judgment Day should serve as a sobering reminder to forsake the paths of wickedness:

And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book of life*: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire (20:11-15).

Who can hear such things and not turn from their wicked ways?

Many Hear There is Salvation, but They do Not Hear

Some wallow in self-loathing, believing they could never be saved. Others assault what they believe to be a tyrannical God. But do they not hear what God says? God has offered salvation to all: “And he [Jesus Christ] is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for *the sins of the whole world*” (1 John 2:2). To receive a Presidential pardon, one must usually be a personal friend of the President. However, God offers salvation to His worst human enemies:

But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life (Rom. 5:8-10).

Tyrannical? Not remotely. “Then Peter opened *his* mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him” (Acts 10:34-35). Anyone can be saved from his sins and become an heir of eternal life, if one will hear what God calls him to do. The Lord has blessed mankind with the capability to see and hear (compare with Psa. 94:9). He has blessed mankind with faculties capable of discerning and acting upon the greatest spiritual truths. Yet, too often, “hearing they hear not.” When God has revealed to us crucial spiritual truths, yet we fail to discern and act upon them, the failure lies with the hearers themselves:

For this people’s heart is waxed gross, and *their* ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with *their* eyes, and hear with *their* ears, and should understand with *their* heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them (Mat. 13:15).

Let us not close our ears to the most important things we will ever hear.

It seems that a man these days cannot hurl a bit of Gospel truth in any direction without raising a howl. Well, a howl registers a hit! —**R.L. Whiteside**—

Man's Greatest Concern

Lester Kamp

The story is told of a preacher who preached a very graphic and descriptive sermon on sin. After the sermon one "well-meaning" and prominent church member approached the preacher with the following advice. The person said, "We don't want you to talk so plainly about sin, because if our children hear you talking so much about sin they will more easily become sinners. Call it a mistake if you will, but don't speak so plainly about sin." Shortly thereafter the "well-meaning" member was visiting in the preacher's home. The preacher presented a bottle of strychnine marked "Poison" to his visitor. Reminding the "well-meaning" member of the earlier advice given to the preacher, the preacher then said to his visitor: "I see now what you meant in your recent advice. You want me to change the label. But suppose I take off this label marked 'Poison' and put on some mild label, such as 'Oil of Anise,' can't you see what happens?"

"The milder you make the label, the more dangerous you make the poison." Our Lord did not place a "mild label" on sin. He made it clear that sin is man's greatest concern. It is the responsibility of the church (Gospel preachers in particular) to make sin as real and abhorrent to people as possible, if there is to be any hope of convicting anyone of sin and thereby truly converting them to Christ.

First, we must realize that God is the only one who can evaluate sin properly. Let us, therefore, strive to see sin as God sees it. Second, God defines sin to be "the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4). Sin separates men from God (Isa. 59:2; Col. 2:13). Hence, to die in sin is to be lost eternally in a devil's hell (Gal. 5:19-24; Rev. 21:8; Mat. 25:41-46). Third, one should notice how God moves people to come out of a life of sin. Jesus had more to say about hell than anyone else we read of in the Bible, and the reason why is that He does not want anyone to go to that terrible place (Mat. 25; 2 The. 1:7-9; 2 Pet. 3:9-13; Rev. 22:17).

Is it not obvious that one of the ways to understand just how God views sin is to understand the place that God has prepared for those who die in sin? Do we try to get people to see the eternal consequences of their sinful lives (Rom. 2:3)? God's great love for sinful man is the other factor that helps us see sin as God sees it (2:4). "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (5:8; John 3:16). To study in the Bible the loving, sinless life of Christ and to meditate on His agonizing and shameful death is a great motivating factor for man. In so doing, one realizes that Christ freely left Heaven and the form of God to take upon Himself the form of man whereby He allowed Himself to be tempted as all men are tempted, yet without sin (Phi. 2:5-8; Heb. 4:15). Surely, few people meditate on what God has done for them that they never could do for themselves!

If the consequences of a devil's hell for the sinner and the love of God to redeem sinful man will not move one to turn to God in penitence and obedience to the Gospel, nothing else is available to turn the sinner from his eternal appointment with the fires of hell!

People who take the Lord's name in vain, commit adultery, and other immoral acts, who lie, cheat, gossip, steal, teach false doctrine, etc., are going to burn in hell eternally. The unfaithful members of the Lord's church who have ceased to worship according to the Bible, who do not study the Bible, who are covetous, who murmur and complain, who are immoral, who repudiate Bible authority, who are hypocrites, and who hate their brethren who love and obey the truth will also suffer the torment of the raging fires of "the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" (Rev. 21:8; 2 Pet. 2:20-22). Assuredly, the elders and preachers who see a lost world and sinful members and do not try to confront boldly such sinful people with God's Truth, will occupy one of the hotter and lower pits of hell. If precious souls are to escape the horrors of hell, we must do our part as Christians to get men to see what sin is. Let us not mince words as we expose sin. Neither, let us forget to set forth the Christ who is "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6).

That “Sinner's Prayer”—Again

Jess Whitlock

A man asked. “Preacher, I have been told that in order to be saved I must say the ‘**Sinner’s Prayer.**’ Ever since that time I have been looking everywhere in my Bible for the ‘**Sinner’s Prayer**’ but I simply cannot find it.”

My friend will search for a long time. There is no mention of any sinner praying through and receiving salvation. Not one single solitary example can be found in the Word of God. Many religious tracts are available containing man’s ideas about praying for salvation. I have received numerous tracts with a prayer for one to pray. One of those prayers suggested: “Dear Father, I admit that I have sinned and need to be forgiven. Thank you for sending Jesus Christ to die for my sins. Come into my life and help me to be pleasing to You. Amen.” The majority of those prayers do not conclude by even being prayed in the name of Jesus Christ.

The Bible can help you to know what one must do to be saved. In Acts 2 we come to the day of Pentecost. Peter and other apostles preach the first Gospel sermon. The hearers were pricked in their hearts and asked, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). This would be the ideal time to say “Just pray the sinner’s prayer.” Yet, that does not happen. Peter said, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). Three thousand souls were added to the church that very day (Acts 2:41,47), as they obeyed the Gospel.

In Acts 8:5-13 the Samaritans believed and were baptized. In Acts 8 we have the account of the Ethiopian eunuch. An angel did not appear to the eunuch; but an angel did appear to Philip. The eunuch was in his chariot and reading from Isaiah 53:7-8. Philip ran up to the chariot and asked the eunuch “Understandest thou what thou reade?” He answered, “How can I, except some man should guide me.” Notice please, he is not told to pray the “sinner’s prayer.” Instead, Philip “...began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus” (Acts 8:35). After a little while they came to a certain water and the eunuch said, “See, here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized?” (Acts 8:36). The Ethiopian confessed that “Jesus Christ is the Son of God” (Acts 8:37). He does not pray the “sinner’s prayer.” Rather, “Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him” (Acts 8:38). Philip preached unto the Ethiopian “Jesus.” We learn that when “Jesus” is preached there will be the necessity of the one baptism (Eph. 4:5).

In Acts 9:1-6 we find Saul of Tarsus is traveling from Jerusalem to Damascus. The Lord appeared to Saul and he was afraid. He said, “Lord what wilt Thou have me to do?” The Lord did not have him to pray the “sinner’s prayer.” What did the Lord ask him to do? “Arise and go into the city, and it will be told thee what thou must do.” (Acts 9:6). Saul fasted and prayed for three days. Saul’s fasting did not save him. Saul praying did not save him. Ananias preached unto him saying: “And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). We are told in Acts 9:17-18 that Saul “arose and was baptized.” It was necessary for him to be baptized to have his sins washed away by the power of the blood of Christ.

There are eight cases of conversion recorded in the book of Acts. In Acts 10:34-48 Cornelius and his household believed and were baptized. It is in Acts 16: 13-15 we learn that Lydia and her household were baptized. The Philippian jailor and his family believed and were baptized in Acts 16:32-33. “Many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized” (Acts 18:8). Not one time is anyone told to pray the “sinner’s prayer” to receive salvation. Every time without fail, men and women are told to be baptized in order to be saved. You cannot find a single occurrence in God’s Word telling anyone to pray the “sinner’s prayer” in order to receive salvation. Not one time!

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Enemies Because of Truth

J.A. McNutt

The truth of God is man's most precious possession. Rob any man of the truth and you have removed the light which illuminates the pathway of life and have destroyed his hope of heaven. The wise man said, "Buy the truth and sell it not," and we can see the reason for his exhortation when we consider the power and value of divine truth. Here are some things which only the truth which is in Christ Jesus, can do for humanity:

The truth sanctifies (John 17:17).

The truth purifies (1 Pet. 1:22).

The truth frees (John 8:32).

No man can come to God without the truth (John 14:6).

Are You Anxious to Learn

It certainly seems that the whole world should be anxious to learn the truth. Only truth can break the shackles of sin and spiritual ignorance. Only truth can purify the souls of the obedient and free the slaves of sin from the bondage of corruption. Yet, in spite of the great value of saving truth, some people become offended at anyone who has the courage to tell them the truth in religion.

It was Paul who said to the Galatians, "Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" (Gal. 4:16). Paul lifted his voice against their violations of the law of Christ and these faithless brethren became his enemies. It is impossible to preach the truth and retain the friendship of some people. Christ preached the truth to the religious leaders of His day and they led Him away to Calvary. Someone has well said that the Gospel preacher cannot hope to hold the friendship of those who place coin above character and sinful pleasure higher than duty to God. If the bootleggers and crooks in the community sing a man's praise, there must be something wrong with his preaching. A Gospel preacher may retain the respect of sinners, but he is not likely to be the object of their affections.

Teaching the Truth

Paul believed that the preacher of the Gospel should, "reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:2) and this is not the path to popularity. Poor (?) Paul had not read Dale Carnegie's *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, so he violated one of the rules for making friends by condemning the conduct of wicked men.

Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that *your* brethren. Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:8-10).

Such preaching lost the friendship of some people, but it also saved many souls from death. A man is known by his enemies as well as by his friends. They regarded Paul as their enemy, but he was the greatest friend they ever had because he was not ashamed or afraid to tell them the truth.

Examples of Opposition Aroused

Human nature is about the same in all generations and the teacher who condemns unrighteousness and opposes the errors of his day is likely to be hated and persecuted. Noah tried to befriend his generation by proclaiming the coming flood and urging a reformation of life (Heb. 11:7; 2 Pet. 2:5), but he was despised and ignored.

The prophet Elijah was an enemy of idolatry and a friend to God and His people, but Ahab the King of Israel looked upon him and said, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" (1 Kin. 21:20).

John the baptizer preached the truth to Herod on the marriage and divorce question, but it cost him his head as soon as Herodias could contrive to have him slain (Mat. 14:1-12).

Jesus condemned sin and religious hypocrisy and taught the only system of perfect

truth the world had ever heard, but they crucified Him.

Stephen did not tell the Jews anything except the truth which exposed their sinfulness and cut them to the heart, but they stoned him to death (Acts 7).

Attitude of Many Today

Thousands of people have no knowledge of simple New Testament Christianity in the present day. Their intentions are good and they are sincere, but they are simply uninformed as to the Gospel plan of salvation and have not been taught how to worship God in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). There are others whom Paul accurately described in the long ago as those who perish “because they received not the **love of the truth**, that they might be saved” (2 The. 2:10).

My friend, and I hope that you will regard me as your friend, do you love the truth? Are you willing to accept the truth of God’s Word when it contradicts some cherished religious opinion or idea? Do “I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?” Will you carefully consider these statements and test them in the light of New Testament teaching:

1. The church of Christ, which was purchased by His blood (Acts 20:28) and is spoken of as the body of Christ over which He reigns as head (Col. 1:18), is “One Body” (Eph. 4:4). This “One Body” is not a denomination, nor is it composed of all the denominational churches of earth, because it existed in the days of the New Testament as a perfect working organization, hundreds of years before the oldest existing denomination was born. The Lord’s church is truly independent of any and all denominations and stands separate and apart from all sectarian alliances and invites you to be a Christian only (Acts 11:26; 1 Pet. 4:16).

2. You are invited to become a Christian through humble submission to the New Testament law of pardon: (1) Believe in Christ (Acts 16:30; Heb. 11:6), (2) Repent of past sins (Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30), (3) Confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus (Rom. 10:9-10; Acts 8:37), and (4) Be baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (Mat. 28:19), for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16). Obedience to these simple conditions will make you a member of the Lord’s church (Acts 2:47), free from any denominational entanglements or man-made creeds, and subject only to the will of Christ as it is declared in the New Testament Scriptures. Am I your friend or your enemy when I tell you these things? The real friend of humanity is the Gospel preacher who preaches the whole truth. Think on these things.

Editor's Travels and Preaching

We preached at Chillicothe, Texas on Sunday, Mar. 6, and at Mar. 13 at Yukon, Okla. My voice has gradually deteriorated since I had Covid in January, so my preaching will have to stop through April and the first of May. I started another round of speech therapy on Thursday Mar. 24. I am hopeful that these sessions will help my speech, and I will undergo surgery on my larynx on April 29. My larynx was injured by a tracheotomy which had to be performed when I had my stroke.

“What Saith The Scriptures?”

Harrell Davidson

“It’s an open secret that America was founded in rebellion to the British Crown. Thus, both implicitly and explicitly the founding fathers of America approved of rebellion towards tyrannical governments. In view of Romans 13:1-8, Titus 3:1-2 and 1 Peter 2:13-17: were the Founding Fathers of America right to rebel against the government? Can we rebel against tyrannical governments and still be right with God?”

So, the querist asked of us. This is not intended to be a history lesson but some information is needed to address the questions asked. I was fortunate in high school to study the history of America as well as Tennessee history the State wherein I was born.

History indicates that the United States of America was formed or founded on March 1, 1781 under The Articles of Confederation. John Hanson became the first President of

the United States under the Articles of Confederation. However, George Washington became the first President of the United States after the formation of the Constitution of America, in the year 1789.

Furthermore, the thirteen original colonies in America were under British rule who had statutory laws that were not compatible with the colonies. Laws that had been on the British books for years were all of a sudden going to be enforced in an effort for the colonies to stop trading with various other countries.

Several other countries were engaged with the colonies and independence was achieved from British rule. These are the facts that cannot be disputed by history. But we imagine that this is not what the question is about though the truth is important on any subject.

God ordained civil government early in the history of mankind that He had created when man wanted a one world government in Genesis 11. Thus, God never intended that there be one man-government-to rule over the world. God Himself is the power over all. There was also one language and God confounded that so that each country or tribe would have their own language or tongue. This was the civil arrangement that God made. He then left it to those people to have the kind of government they wanted.

God used providentially civil law—powers—to teach other tribes or nations various lessons in particular His love, power, and might. Notice Psalms 75: 11, “But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another.” God used means to accomplish His will. Daniel wrote, “But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another” (2:21). He also wrote,

This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men (4:17).

Daniel foresaw the fall of Jerusalem that was accomplished through the civil government of Rome that God used as a power to destroy the skeletal remains of the law and temple worship. He saw the Roman Empire come to rule over the entire world and during this rule a new kingdom would arise that would never be destroyed and would last forever (cf Dan. 7). So, with the four kingdoms he prophesied about, there would be a kingdom rising up in and while another one ruled and in the fourth kingdom-Roman rule-the Lord’s church, the kingdom, would come into existence in the first century as is revealed in Acts chapter two.

Look at Romans 13:1-8 listed in the question. There is no doubt in my mind that the emphasis in verse one would be the rule of Rome but this is a general rule for all. Notice the fact that God established civil law and this is the general rule but does not mean that God agrees with all civil rule. He left that in the hands of the citizens of said country tribe or state. Thus. It is the principle that Paul is appealing to and is applicable to all everywhere with the exception outlined by Luke in the Book of Acts chapter 5: 29, where the inspired Luke wrote these words of the apostle Peter and other apostles, “Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.” Therefore, if the higher “powers” of Romans 13 legislates that we ought to obey the laws of the land that would prohibit us from observing God’s law, we must put God’s law first in every situation.

The rest of the verses in the question of Romans 13 hinges on the proper understanding of the first verse. Keep in mind that Christ said to Pilate that he would have no power unless he had been given it by or from God (cf. John 18) but did that mean Pilate could, with God’s blessing, commit murder? Surely, we see the point in this.

“Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men” (Titus 3:1-2). Paul to Titus is drawing a conclusion of the conversation that started in chapter one and in particular verse 12 where he gave an inspired judgment regarding “The Cretians”. They too were under Roman rule and

were to submit to Roman laws with exception already stated. But nothing new is learned overall in these verses using also Romans 13 as background.

Now we go to 1 Peter 2:13-17:

Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.

To every secular power. Instrumentally these are ordained by men; but originally all their power is from God. Would then God observe one being faithful to Him that had disobeyed His law to serve a despot that was trying it force subjects to disobey God to follow themselves? You see all of human creation in this vein goes back to Genesis 11 and the ordination of every human nation or creation. Governors, governments enact laws for the protection of and for the punishment of evil doers Paul states.

Notice the word “king” (vs. 13) and then in verse 17 “Honour the king.” No doubt in the writer’s mind this is a reference to the Roman emperor that was styled as the king-ruler.

Therefore, the answer to all the questions is summed up in this. God gave civil law. He legislated that law be enacted by those under whatever law they lived under. He gave man the right to defend the law he was under or to legislate through the ballot box man’s desires for new laws or the passing of old laws. America serves under a democracy. Others under a dictator that’s oppressive. Kings or queens are known around the world today. It does not have to be a democracy like we are under in the United States of America. That said, there is a system under law where we can revolt against said system of laws if we have the votes or sanctions of a majority of the citizens of America. We have a constitution that can be amended certain ways that are laws we already have in existence.

Next question:

“Does Matthew 18:10 suggest that people have guardian angels?”

The passage reads, “Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.”

Many volumes have been written on the general subject of angels. A rule of thumb that the author has used over the years is to look “who” the angel was. Many times, we read “an angel of the Lord” or “the Lord’s angel.” Obviously, this is or was an angel of the Lord or of the Lord or of God that is also often used in the Scripture. To whom it the angel subscribed?

Jesus mentions “their angels” that is those of the “little ones” not literally them in their bodies but after their decease.

I have never believed in guardian angels. If we all had them why are there so many car crashes or planes falling out of the air or trains derailing or busses over turning? Did the guardian angel go to sleep?

Thanks for your questions.

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

\$1,000.00 Reward Offered

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?”

Philip, the Eunuch and John MacArthur

Nana Yaw Aidoo

I do not remember where I read that Dr. John MacArthur had preached through the entire Bible in 50 years to the Grace Community Church. I do remember being impressed by this news however. I respect this man even though I do not agree with him. Like most conservative Protestants, he says many good things. However, having been immersed in reformed tradition, he does not teach the truth on what a person must do in order to be saved. I am not aware of any Protestant who does.

Dr. John MacArthur has an article in which he gives reasons why baptism isn't essential for salvation. Thus, when I called to memory the fact that he had preached through the Bible, I began to wonder what he did when he got to the book of Acts. Therefore, I sought a lesson of his, specifically on the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch to learn how he could deny the necessity of baptism and yet preach through the Acts of the Apostles. I found the sermon entitled, "The Faith that does save." To be fair, MacArthur gives some good information in his sermon. However, in all candor, all I could think about when reading the manuscript was rat poison. Rat poison as most people know, is made up of 97% maize feed and 3% poison. Nonetheless, it is that 3% that kills the rat. MacArthur's aforementioned sermon is spiritual rat poison. Dangerous, deadly and destructive to the soul.

I do not think I have the ability to review everything he said. However, there are some things I want to point out from this sermon.

First is what he says about Simon Magus.

Now, some people might assume that Simon was just a wandering Christian. He is not a wandering Christian. He cannot be, for no Christian, no time needs to plead forgiveness. That's a set fact. That's a positional truth taken care of at the moment of salvation. The conditional forgiveness offered in verse 22 is proof positive that this man was never a believer.

Notice that MacArthur says a Christian, no time needs to plead forgiveness. What is interesting is that he gives no proof yet calls this statement, a *set fact* and a *positional truth*. What does the Bible say about Christians pleading forgiveness? Speaking to those in fellowship with Christ (1 John 1:6), the apostle wrote:

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us (1 John 1:8-10).

Does this not prove that it is possible for a Christian to stumble in sin and thus there comes a time when he needs to plead forgiveness from God? The case of Peter's encounter with Simon Magus teaches us that there are two laws of pardon in God's divine economy. There is the law of pardon for the alien sinner. And there is the law of pardon for the Christian who has sinned. In the former, men must believe the gospel, repent of their sins and be baptized unto the remission of their sins. And in the latter, men must "repent...and pray" for forgiveness of sins.

However, since MacArthur takes the position that a Christian does not need to plead forgiveness, he further says the *conditional forgiveness* offered to Simon *in verse 22 is proof positive that this man was never a believer*. If this is so, then it is interesting that the inspired historian did not know about it for he wrote:

But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Then Simon himself believed **also**: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done (Acts 8:12-13).

Please consider that little word *also*. It means "in that manner, similarly." Thus, by using this word, Luke is informing us that Simon believed in the same manner as those in the preceding verse. Therefore, if *verse 22 is proof positive that Simon was never a*

believer, then it is proof positive that the Samaritans of verse 12 were never believers. Who can believe this? John MacArthur on the one hand says Simon was never a believer. Inspiration on the other hand says the Samaritans believed and Simon believed **also**. Nothing but spiritual astigmatism can cause a man to say the exact opposite of what the Bible clearly says. Since it is a cardinal Calvinistic position that it is impossible for the believer to lose his salvation, it comes as no surprise to us that Dr. MacArthur takes the position that the believer needs not plead forgiveness. He couldn't prove it if his life depended on it.

Second is MacArthur's story of how he helped a man receive Christ.

Anyway, I said, "Excuse me. Could I talk to you a minute?" He says, "Yeah, yeah," you know. So I said, "Well, stand over here." we were in a little store front thing, and I said, "I just want to talk to you about Jesus Christ. I'll never forget it, he said, "You do?" And I said, "Yeah, I just want to explain how you can have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ." And I took about four or five minutes and I presented it to him, and I said—I got my courage up and I said—"Would you like to receive Christ?" And he looked at me and said—"You know, I think I would." My reaction was, "You would?" You know. I mean, is it this easy?

Right? And right there we knelt in the street and the guy opened his heart and received Jesus Christ. I mean, there are times, you know, when God puts you in a place and it's ready...So when something doesn't happen and you've presented Christ, check those two things. Maybe you had a good presentation but the Spirit of God hasn't done the preparation. Either one.

Folks, I do not think I'm willing to pin a lack of conversion on the Spirit of God not doing His part. Christ's diagnosis of some who could not be converted was not that the Spirit hadn't done the preparation but that the prospects had closed their hearts, ears and eyes to the truth (Matt. 13:14-15). True, there are many reasons why some would not come to Christ. However, one of these reasons is not a lack of preparation of the heart of the prospect by the Spirit of God.

The main thing in his story for me is the fact that in teaching his prospect what to do to receive Christ, they knelt in the street and the prospect opened his heart and received Jesus Christ. How different from Philip and the Ethiopian whom MacArthur was preaching about. Whereas MacArthur's prospect knelt down and opened his heart in order to receive Christ, Philip's prospect, the Ethiopian, believed the gospel of Christ, confessed his faith in Christ and was baptized. This is consistent with every single conversion account in the book of Acts. All who *received Christ* did so by believing in Christ and being baptized to put on Christ (Gal. 3:27). No kneeling down, no prayer. For prayer does a sinner no good as far as conversion to Christ is concerned (Isa. 59:1-2). Is it not interesting that MacArthur asked his prospect to do that which Philip did not ask his prospect to do? What do you say about a man who teaches and does contrary to the Spirit-filled preachers of the first century?

Third, MacArthur's teaching on the design of baptism.

MacArthur admitted that the Ethiopian's baptism must mean that baptism is important. But how important? Is it important for salvation?

True evangelism presents the whole doctrine of salvation. You know what else Philip even taught him? About Baptism. You say, "Is Baptism important?" It must be. Philip taught him about it. Is it important for salvation? No. But it's important for the confession of salvation publicly.

Once again, this man teaches something for which he has no proof. Where in all the Scriptures is it taught that baptism is important not for salvation but for the confession of salvation publicly? Whiles MacArthur says baptism isn't important for salvation, the apostle Peter says, "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 3:21). How many times would this man pit himself against the very Bible he claims to believe and preach?

Again, notice that he said true evangelism presents *the whole doctrine of salvation*. The whole doctrine of salvation you say? If Philip preached baptism as he preached the whole doctrine of salvation, is this not proof that baptism is necessary for salvation? MacArthur says no. Let's take it again folks. Is baptism important? According to MacArthur, *it must be* since Philip preached it when presenting the whole doctrine of salvation. Yet even though it is necessary to preach baptism when preaching *the whole doctrine of salvation*, according to MacArthur, baptism isn't necessary for salvation. So did Philip teach something as part of the whole doctrine of salvation, even though it isn't necessary for salvation? According to Dr. John MacArthur, that is a yes. This my friends is a clear case of a man who wants to eat his cake and have it.

If what this learned doctor is saying is true, how then do we explain the Ethiopian's joy after baptism? He had heard the gospel preached and believed it. Yet it was only after he was baptized that he rejoiced. Clearly, the Ethiopian's joy followed his knowledge that he was now a Christian. It is a strange thing that this man did not rejoice at the point he was supposedly saved until he had confessed his salvation publicly through baptism. Is that what evangelicals do? Do they postpone their "salvation joy" until they have been baptized? Do they not rejoice over their "salvation" even if not yet publicly confessed through baptism? I am aware of some evangelicals who were baptized two years after they were supposedly saved. I do not know if these folks lived in sadness two years after their "salvation," until they had publicly confessed it through baptism.

Evidently, Philip in preaching Christ to the Ethiopian taught him how to benefit from the work of Christ on the cross. It is useless to tell a man that Christ died for him without teaching him how to benefit from the death of Christ. Philip indeed presented the whole doctrine of salvation, which includes baptism. Thus, the Ethiopian's question in verse 36 was as if to say, "If what you're saying is true, then here is water; what stops me from receiving the benefits of the Christ you have just preached to me?" Friends, we benefit from Christ's death on the cross for our sins (1 Cor. 15:3) when we are saved from our sins. The question is how? How do we receive this benefit? How are we saved from our sins? Christ, the Savior's answer is this: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16). According to our Lord, what must a person do not to be damned but to be saved? The answer is that he must believe and be baptized. Little wonder the Ethiopian asked to be baptized and was baptized upon the confession of his faith. Dr. MacArthur's teaching however pits a Master against His slave, the Sender against the one sent and the Bible against the Bible.

So enslaved are men of the ilk of MacArthur by reformed theology that they just cannot see through a ladder. So scared are these men of being saved by their own works (Eph. 2:8-9) that they would rather deny Biblical teaching than relinquish the reformed position of justification by faith alone. Oh yes, we are justified by faith (Rom. 5:1) but folks, that is a far cry from saying we are justified by faith **alone**. The Bible explicitly says that no man is and ever will be justified by faith **alone** (Jam. 2:24). As far as justification or salvation is concerned, faith in its comprehensive and fullest sense includes baptism. Notice that while Paul and Silas told the Philippian to believe in Christ in order to be saved (Acts 16:31), it was only after he had been baptized that he was said to have believed in God with all his house (Acts 16:32-34). Again, when those Ephesians answered no to Paul's question, whether they received the Holy Spirit when they believed (Acts 19:2), the apostle inquired, "unto what then were ye baptized?" (Acts 19:3). Why did the apostle move to baptism, when he had just asked about faith? What has baptism to do with faith? Folks, this account clearly teaches that faith in its comprehensive and fullest sense includes baptism. **The one who is truly justified by faith is the one who upon belief, repentance and confession of faith, allows himself to be baptized unto the remission of sins.**

I sought this sermon to know how a man could hold the view that Dr. MacArthur holds on baptism and yet preach through the book of Acts. I have learnt that it cannot be done without wrongly handling the Bible (2 Cor. 4:2). Dr. John MacArthur in preaching about the faith that does save ended up preaching a faith that is dead and powerless in its ability to save. I must say I admire his faithfulness to the Calvin-Luther tradi-

tion even if I think it is rather unfortunate. Because of his conservative disposition, Dr. MacArthur says some good things concerning the book of Genesis, the virgin birth and others. He has no sympathy at all for the seeker sensitive church growth model and he seems a very good speaker and a man with convictions. This very disposition is what makes him a very dangerous preacher. Like all Protestant preachers, he preaches a perversion of the gospel of Christ (Gal. 1:6-9). With all due respect, he is as false a teacher as a Joel Osteen or a Joyce Meyer. Do not be deceived by his scholarly appearance. "...For even Satan fashioneth himself into an angel of light. It is no great thing therefore if his ministers also fashion themselves as ministers of righteousness, whose end shall be according to their works" (2 Cor. 11:14-15).

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New Testament Baptism

Dub McClish

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

The "What" of Baptism

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

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

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

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

For those who truly believe the Bible to be the inspired Word of God, the description and definition of baptism in the New Testament is sufficient, regardless of what mere men may say on the subject. However, it is worthwhile to notice a sampling of what religious leaders have said the subject. The reader is asked to please understand that we do not cite the following for the purpose of embarrassing anyone or to "prove" some to

be right and others wrong. The words of men prove nothing independent of the Word of God. Our only purpose is to exalt the truth of God's Word. Consider the following:

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

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

The "Why" of Baptism

There are two basic schools of thought on the purpose of the baptism commanded by Jesus Christ: One holds that baptism is an act of obedience of one who has **already been saved**, providing access to denominational membership after salvation has been granted through faith alone. In this view, baptism is part of one's obedience to Christ **because** he is already a Christian. The other view contends that baptism is the final act of obedience to which one submits in **order to be saved** or forgiven of his past sins. In this view a person is not saved until he is baptized, at which time the Lord adds him to His church **because he is saved**. What does the Bible say?

Jesus told the apostles that as they preached the Gospel, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). Note the order: (1) believe, (2) baptized, (3) saved. The order is not: (1) believe, (2) saved, (3) baptized. In this verse, Jesus definitively makes baptism a condition of salvation, as plainly as He makes faith.

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

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

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

When does this washing occur or how does one gain access to the precious cleansing blood of Christ? Besides the references already cited, consider also Romans 6:3: "Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?" It was in His death that Jesus' shed His cleansing blood for the sins of mankind (1 Tim. 2:6; Heb. 9:26– 4 28; et al.). By what means is the sinner able to participate in the death of Christ, where He poured out his atoning blood? The inspired apostle answers conclusively: We are "baptized into his death." This statement is in perfect harmony with every other Scripture on baptism.

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

Summary

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

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Shall We Join in a Conspiracy of Silence?

A.B. Keenan

“The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him” (Heb. 2:20).

Like many another, the above text may have its beauty and force dissipated through a wrong application. Certainly, it was never meant to apply to the field of religious investigation and fact-finding. None denies that there is a silence obtaining today among people who profess themselves to be inspired and directed by the teachings of Jesus. Searching of the Scriptures languishes, religious discussion is frowned upon. Error is whole-skinned and waxes strong amid his worshipers.

The Eclipse of Free Discussion

Unfettered speech constituted a defense of the truth in the first century. The Apostles argued, pleaded, exhorted, rebuked and commanded; as a result the Cause became firmly implanted in the world. The word of reconciliation entrusted to them was in turn committed to faithful men, who taught others also. When Paul spoke of those “whose mouths must be stopped,” we can be sure that his method of closing some blasphemous mouths was not the refusal to talk with their owners, but rather the defeat of them in open controversy, demonstrating that they were not able to withstand the spirit and wisdom by which he spoke. Such was the strength of all who adorned the doctrine of God our Saviour and in open, fearless discussion were the churches made fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free.

The eclipse of free discussion of the apostolic writings in time meant the emergency of the Papacy. To some Christians controversy was “unseemly,” devoid of the “spirit of Christ”, “disturbing” generally. People “refused to make a scene” any longer over growing corruptions in doctrine and practice. Those who continued to do so found themselves members of an ever decreasing minority whose unpopularity increased in inverse ratio. Ultimately all dissent was stifled by main force; “heretics” were ferreted out and their lives made forfeit.

With few exceptions, this state of affairs lasted until the advent of Martin Luther in 1517. Free discussion again became rife ; men stumbled and groped their way toward the Light which had once illumined their path, to the Truth as it is in Christ Jesus. Timidly, however, they were content to abide in denominational half-way houses, and to a later generation was left the complete return to the New Testament order of things, the restoration to the earth of the church which Christ had died to establish.

Restoration the Result of Controversy

This restoration of the church grew out of religious discussion, nothing else. Men and women of the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were dissatisfied with the harlot’s children who filled every landscape. They grew sick of mere reformation, saw that no amount of buttressing a building founded on sand could remove the unsightly cracks. The Campbells, Walter Scott, Barton W. Stone, many others at sundry times and in divers places, all saw that the solution to the problem of religious differences lay in a return to a “thus saith the Lord” in everything. The more they discussed the matter, the clearer the truth became. Thousands as individuals, many times whole congregations, became convinced that acceptance with God depends upon a strict adherence to that which is written, no less-and no more.

Determined sectarians were not long, however, in entering the lists against the Plea. They held opposition meetings so that their devotees could not conveniently hear plain gospel sermons, forbade their attendance upon any “Campbellite” teaching anytime, anywhere. In answer to the light of sound words they offered the heat of perverse emotions.

The Advocacy Of False Religious Ethics

When not jointly attacking disciples the sects were squaring off against each other, boxing many weary rounds to fruitless “draws,” none packing enough spiritual dynamite to lay the other low, the disciples meantime being edified, and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, multiplying.

Realizing this at length, the denominations dropped their “dukes” to stand shoulder-to-shoulder against the new threat to their existence. Observing that discussion was not helping their cause, and that the opposite was true of those who declared themselves to be Christians only, they one by one joined in a conspiracy of silence. After Campbell’s rout of Bishop Purcell, the Roman Catholic hierarchy forbade its members to engage in public debate on religious matters. The Protestants soon aped them when they began to form “councils of churches,” whose purpose was, and remains, the stifling of religious investigation by the fostering of union meetings and pulpit exchanges; by the extolling of a “common heritage”; by the willingness to let each seeker for salvation “join the church of his choice”; by the establishment of “inter-communion ethics,” chief tenet of which was and again still remains, the elimination of proselytizing.

ing among each other's members. Hardly a town in America is without its council of churches and ministerial alliance to reach this objective.

This is not strange. It is strange, however, for preachers who call themselves evangelists after the New Testament order to become associated with such organizations, and even to become officers. Surely they have misunderstood our history, or our plea, or the New Testament Scriptures, or all of them, to become so entangled. The unsullied restoration platform agrees as well with membership in a pastors' union as God with the devil. No gospel preacher can possibly be worthy of the name who, knowing what needs to be said, permits himself to be gagged by such dodges.

The New School of Innovators and Compromisers

In some quarters, this tendency takes another direction. It is the joining in a conspiracy of silence against the open rebuke which needs to be given a new school of innovators: the pious propounders of a theory whose burden is the reestablishment of fleshly Israel in a Palestinian kingdom, wherein Christ shall personally reign a thousand years. Or if not this, then the putting of the cat of a complaisant tolerance of instrumental music into the cage with the canary of doctrinal purity. No amount of hush-hushing will eradicate the deep-seated evils of which these two manifestations among us are but the outcroppings. The church must in its righteous wrath destroy these errors, or they will destroy the church.

The rank and file of the membership in some places, too, have ceased talking over the religious needs of their neighbors with them. It may not be in Emily Post to discuss politics or religion, but silence on the latter subject when we know our plain duty is damning. It is distressing that some members of the Body even squirm and appear uncomfortable when spiritual topics are introduced in ordinary conversation among professed disciples. They would be more at home discussing the latest happenings in the realm of sport. They assume that their mansion in the sky is eternally reserved for them simply because they took certain "first principle" steps years ago.

"In lazy apathy let Stoics boast

Their virtue fixed: 'tis fixed as in a frost."

Finally, brethren—preachers, elders deacons, members all—let us not slander one moment of our precious time by engaging in any kind of a conspiracy of silence. Let us speak when plain words need to be spoken. Silence is not always golden: it may be criminal. In season and out of season, let us contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.

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The Church Established

Douglas Post

"Church" and Semantic Range

Our topic assumes the church exists and is referred to in God's Word—the Bible. In fact, from the pages of the New Testament we can identify that which is known as the *church*, as well as how and when it came into being in the first century (Mat. 16:18; Acts 2:47; 5:11; 8:1-3; 1 Tim. 3:15; etc.). Nonetheless, there is much misunderstanding when it comes to the concept of *church* as the nursery rhyme, "Here's the church, and here's the steeple, Open the door and see all the people," well demonstrates. Throughout the years *church* has been referred to as an "organism," an "organization," an "assembly," and an "institution." The fact is, all these terms can refer to the concept of *church*.

After all, an *organism* is the whole made up of related parts; an *organization* is a group of people organized for a purpose; an *assembly* is the coming together of individuals to form a whole, having a purpose; an *institution* is an organization or group gathered together for public, social, or religious purposes. We can readily see that one

word, such as *church*, may allude to several different concepts (rarely at the same time). Concepts are ideas represented by words, and words are vehicles of thought. Words often change meaning over time, while spiritual concepts remain static. God revealed certain ideas through the use of words, but these concepts are eternal, being in the mind of the eternal God (Eph. 3:10-11). Words are subject to change, but these concepts, which they describe, are static and/or eternal.

It is clear, then, that defining the word *church* is a bit more complex than merely relying on its lexical, etymological, and contextual perspectives because words comprise the social nature of human language. While these aspects are important to know, so is the word's "semantic range," which means knowing how people have used a particular word elsewhere. For instance, in the 1980s, knowing the lexical, etymological, and contextual components of *bad* could not assist my understanding, being unaware of how it was being used. *Bad* evolved, being used to mean "good," "hip," "cool," or "awesome." The lexical, etymological, and contextual aspects, were of no real value to me because this was unclear to me. A football player might be referred to as *bad* because he was actually a great player, or a song was said to be *bad*, but it was actually popular and well liked. Therefore, the semantic range of *bad* was greater than the lexical, etymological, and contextual meaning, because *bad* was used differently than how I understood it.

Gay well illustrates a word having more than one concept due to word usage. Moreover, some tell us that while knowing a word's lexical definition and etymology is important, **context** is what really matters in defining a particular word. While context is *king* in determining a word's meaning, it is not everything. A word is not a blank canvas for one to apply his or her preconceived colors and shades of meaning. Regarding semantic range and context, E.D. Hirsch states:

It is sometimes said that "meaning is determined by context," but this is a very loose way of speaking. It is true that the surrounding text or the situation in which a problematical word sequence is found tends to narrow the meaning probabilities for that particular word sequence; otherwise, interpretation would be hopeless. And it is a measure of stylistic excellence in an author that he should have managed to formulate a decisive context for any particular word sequence within his text. But this is certainly not to say that context determines verbal meaning. At best a context determines the guess of an interpreter (though his construction of the context may be wrong, and his guess correspondingly so). To speak of context as a determinant is to confuse an exigency of interpretation with an author's determining acts. An author's verbal meaning is limited by linguistic possibilities but is determined by his actualizing and specifying some of those possibilities (47-48).

In other words, there are times when the **context may not be able to assist our understanding of a text**, especially if a particular word is not being used in the socially approved or conventional manner. Therefore, while context is generally *king* in determining word meaning, what really drives the meaning is the way the author uses the word within a particular framework of thought. Consider the *context* as King Louis XVI and the semantic range (word usage) as the people storming the Bastille. "King Context," followed by his lexical and etymological entourage, have the rule and authority over a word, until the people speak, capturing it and using it for their own purposes. How people use a word at a given time can have the final say in the matter. Scholar Daniel Wallace says it this way:

Often linguists say that the word being examined should have the meaning of "X" with "X" being only what one can determine from the context. But this is an unreasonable demand on any word. If **every word** in a given utterance had the meaning "X" then we simply could not figure out what any utterance ever meant.

Without getting deep into its history, *church* reaches back to the Greek word *kuriakos*, meaning "of the Lord" or "pertaining to the Lord" (Perschbacher 251). This concept was applied to *ekklesia* by various peoples over time. However, the *ekklesia* means

“called out,” and in the Greco-Roman world, according to Josephus, typically referred to a gathering of individuals or an *assembly* (Arndt, Danker 303). Once again, this demonstrates how one word may have multiple concepts or ideas, not just one. Some contend *ekklesia* means *assembly* only, but that is simply a fallacy based on *etymologizing*. As noted previously, etymology may be helpful, but only if the writer or speaker is aware of it. Otherwise, we must rely upon the writer’s use of the word. When we consider the multiple concepts associated with *ekklesia* and *church*, we can simply, correctly, and assuredly say that they mean any group of people, having something in common—a community of Christians, submitting to Christ and His Word, regularly coming together in one place on Sundays to worship God (1 Cor.11:20; 14:23).

Church—Kingdom Concept

The church is **eternal**. This is the concept taught in Scripture. This concept was in the mind of our eternal God. He devised a plan to save mankind, of which the **church** is part:

To the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord (Eph. 3:10-11).

As noted previously, the **church** refers to Christians. In describing these people, Peter writes: “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Pet. 2:9).

Here we see the overlap of **church** and *ekklesia*. These people belong to the Lord (Rom. 14:8; 1 Cor. 3:23), having been called by God through His Gospel (2 The. 2:14). The **called out** (*ekklesia*) are of **Christ** (*kuriakos*) since He purchased them with His blood (Acts 20:28), having died for them (Eph. 5:23-25, 32).

The **church** of the New Testament is often described by various metaphors or figures of speech. For instance, in Ephesians, alone, an epistle exalting the church, Paul refers to it as a body (1:22-23); one new man (2:15); fellow citizens, household or family (2:19); building and temple (2:21); habitation of God (2:22); saints (4:12); kingdom (5:5) and as a bride (5:25-27, 32). The New Testament is replete with such metaphors describing the church. However, one metaphor has tremendous significance, relating directly to the rule of God, and that is **kingdom**. In his debate with Ben Bogard in 1938, dealing with the establishment of the church, N. B. Hardeman stated:

The kingdom, friends, has always existed, and let’s get some things about it that will help us to understand it. It existed in **Purpose**, in the mind of God; it existed next in **Promise**, as delivered unto the patriarchs, and it existed in **Prophecy**; and then it existed in **Preparation**; and last of all, when the New Testament went into effect, it existed in **Perfection** (178).

A **kingdom** is associated with authority and dominion, ruled by its sovereign king. There is no such thing as a kingdom without a king and vice versa. Ferguson makes the following observation:

In Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, the primary meaning of “kingdom” is “kingship,” that is, royal power of kingly rule. The words more often refer to the “reign” than to the “realm” in which the rule is exercised, to the dominion rather than the domain (19).

We read in Daniel how God took Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom away from him, but what He actually took was his kingship—his authority and rule (Dan. 4:30-31). While the concept of **kingdom** necessarily involves physical, geographical aspects, it is the concept of kingship and exercise of authority that is under consideration. Jesus affirms this concept, saying, “the kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:20-21).

As Daniel, Jesus addresses the abstract characteristic of the **kingdom**, its spiritual nature. The **kingdom of God** is within a person, where God rules the heart by means of His Word. This same idea is described by the Hebrews writer: “I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be

My people” (Heb. 8:10; 10:16; cf. Jer. 31:33).

This figure of speech contemplates God’s rule over the heart or mind (the intellect)—the inward man—quite simply, God’s influence through His Word. God is said to put His law in minds, writing it on hearts, the very same way He **draws** people to Christ:

No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, “And they shall all be taught by God.” Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me (John 6:44-45).

This drawing, putting, and writing does **not** occur supernaturally and directly, but through the process of teaching, hearing, and learning. Through this process the kingdom is said to be within an individual, influencing and ruling the inward man. The Parable of the Sower is fundamental in understanding that only two are involved in this process: (1) God’s Word (seed) and (2) Good Soil or “good heart” (Luke 8:11-15). God provides the **seed**, designed to appeal and influence the mind but the individual, having a good heart, must provide the proper response. Of this kind of individual, Jesus says: “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled” (Mat. 5:6). The apostle Paul explains the entire process this way:

How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!” But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed our report?” So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God (Rom. 10:14-17).

God does not work directly and supernaturally *writing* His law on the heart as Calvinism teaches. God’s power to save has always been by the Gospel, which one must hear, believe, and obey (Rom. 10:14-17; 1:16-17; cf. Acts 2:41; Jam. 1:21). Moreover, concerning the Jews, Paul writes: “being ignorant of God’s righteousness,” they sought to “establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God” (Rom. 10:3). Christ replaced Moses; i.e., the Gospel replaced the Law of Moses (7:1-6), but the Jews continued teaching circumcision was necessary for justification binding it upon the Gentiles. This teaching, of course, was not part of the Gospel, not even being mentioned (Acts 15:24). In fact, Christ was the “completion of the law for righteousness to everyone [Jew and Gentile] who believes” (Rom. 10:4; 1:16; cf. Gal. 3:19-28).

The Law terminated at the death of Christ (Rom. 10:5; Eph. 2:15; Col. 2:14). The Law, serving as a *guide* in bringing the Jews to Christ, was until Christ (Gal. 3:19-24). When the faith (Gospel) came, they were no longer under that guide—the Law (3:25). The faith (New Testament) came after the death of Christ, the testator (Heb. 9:15-17), removing the Law and the necessity of circumcision. Concerning Deuteronomy 30:11-14, Paul continues showing how the inspired instruction of Moses was not difficult to understand and obey. His message was explained at its revealing, and the Jews did not need to go elsewhere for further explanation or wait for Divine illumination (Rom. 10:6-7). Paul writes: “‘The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart’ (that is, the word of **[the] faith** which we preach)” (10:8). Paul provides a New Testament application here, demonstrating that we also have the ability to understand **the faith** without some imagined need for a direct operation of the Holy Spirit on our minds (Divine Illumination). Unaided and without Divine manipulation of our minds, we are able to understand that which is written (Eph. 3:4), and our understanding allows the message to influence our hearts in obedience (2:5-16; cf. Psa. 119:11). As has always been the case, therefore, the King rules His kingdom (citizens) through His Word, the seed of His kingdom, which is His body—the church (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4).

Church—Kingdom Establishment

While **church** and **kingdom** do not carry the same lexical meaning, when it comes to semantic range (word usage) within the New Testament, they are synonymous—different expressions for the same institution. For instance, Jesus told His apostles He would build His church, then one verse later said, “And I will give you the keys of the

kingdom of heaven” (Mat. 16:18-19). Here we see the synonymous relationship between church and kingdom.

The **kingdom** is the prominent theme of the Gospel accounts. John the Baptizer came, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (3:2). Jesus began His ministry saying “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (4:17), and did so for the remainder of His ministry, even when instituting the Lord’s Supper on the night before His crucifixion: “Assuredly, I say to you, I will no longer drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God” (Mark 14:25).

One of the criminals, hanging on a cross next to Jesus, pointed to a time yet future of Christ’s kingdom saying, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom” (Luke 23:42). Coincidentally, the kingdom or church was **never** established during the earthly life of Christ, but we also note that at His Final Coming He will deliver the kingdom back to the Father (1 Cor. 15:24). Therefore, the establishment of the kingdom or church, must be at a time after Christ’s Resurrection and before His final return. However, we know the bread and “fruit of the vine” (Lord’s Supper) were shared among the first century Christians (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:23-27); so we are getting closer to identifying when the kingdom or church was established.

Now we focus our attention on some Old Testament passages to see what they teach concerning the kingdom. The first passage we note is the predictive promise God gave to David: “I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.... Your throne shall be established forever” (2 Sam. 7:12-16).

One from David’s lineage would be a King, ruling over His own kingdom forever, but He would not rule over David’s kingdom, physical Israel. Of course, we know Jesus is of the lineage of David (Rom. 1:3), and it was known before His birth He would be given the throne of David (Psa. 16:8-11; Acts 2:30; cf. Luke 1:32).

Related to the spiritual nature of the kingdom (Luke 17:20-21; John 18:36), is the concept of a “spiritual Israel,” which, of course, is the “Israel of God” (Gal. 6:16). This Israel was comprised of those who were not to regard “circumcision” as anything (6:15-16). They were the “Jerusalem from above” (4:26), also called the “children of promise” who were “born of the Spirit” (4:28). They were the “sons of God through [the] faith of Christ Jesus” upon being “baptized into Christ” (3:26-27). They were a people no longer under the authority of the Law of Moses, but they are under the authority of Christ and the faith or Gospel (3:25). They are referred to as “the churches of Galatia” (1:2). This was the spiritual Israel, which was during the first century.

The prophet Daniel interpreted king Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, which envisioned four world empires: the head of gold represented **Babylon**, the breast and arms of silver represented **Medo-Persia**, the belly and thighs of bronze represented **Greece**, and legs and feet of iron and clay represented **Rome**. Daniel provides an unmistakable starting point since he identifies Babylon, represented by the head of gold, as the first of the four world empires revealed. Daniel then speaks of an indestructible kingdom that would stand forever:

And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever (Dan. 2:44).

It is here indicated as to when this **kingdom** would be set up: “in the days of these kings,” which was the fourth empire, Rome. Moreover, in Daniel 7, we are informed of the specific time when the “Son of man” would receive “dominion and glory and a kingdom”: when “Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days” (7:13-14). When read carefully, we see the “Son of Man” **ascending** “with the clouds of heaven” to the Father (the “Ancient of Days”). David declared that the “King of glory” who is the “Lord of hosts” would enter through the “everlasting doors” as King of His kingdom (Psa. 24:7-10).

Regarding the Christ, the prophet Zechariah tells us He would rule from His throne and would do so as a priest (Zec. 6:12-13). While He was a priest (Heb. 3:1), He could

not serve as priest on earth (8:4). After His resurrection when He was given Rule, He would become a priest—“High priest over the house of God” (10:19-21). Jesus could not serve as King and priest until after His resurrection (See Jer. 22:28-30 and Mat. 1:11-13). Regarding the house of God, we know it is the church (1 Tim. 3:15) and according to Isaiah this house would be established in Jerusalem, where the law, the Word of God, would be proclaimed (Isa. 2:2-4). Related to this, Jesus said some would not die till they witnessed the kingdom come with power (Mark 9:1). Moreover, Jesus told His apostles to wait in Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on High (Luke 24:49). The apostles were in Jerusalem where they were baptized in the Holy Spirit, receiving miraculous power from the Spirit, which made them His apostles (Acts 1:4-5, 8; 2:1-4). It was at this time, the apostles preached the first New Testament message of Christ, offering salvation through the name or authority of Jesus (2:38). It was on Pentecost that Peter proclaimed Christ’s kingship and rule (2:22-36).

There is no mistaking the fact that the kingdom came with power on Pentecost, and from Jerusalem the law of the Lord went forth. It was also on Pentecost the church was established (2:47; 5:11). At the time of his letter to the Colossians, Paul tells us that church was in existence (Col. 1:18) but that the brethren had been “delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love” (1:13). Finally, John writes, saying that he was in the kingdom with those to whom he was writing (Rev. 1:9). When we put all of this information together (Psa. 119:160), we easily see the church and the kingdom are synonymous, having both begun on Pentecost.

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“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!!

The Periods of Church History

Foy E. Wallace, Jr.

In discussing the periods of church history there are five words which designate these periods. The first is the word **perfection**; then the word **departure**; then the word **apostasy**; then the word **reformation**; then the word **restoration**. All of this belongs to the course of religious history from New Testament times down to our times...The true church, of course, is identified in the New Testament. Christianity or Christology, in the Old Testament was in type, in prophecy. The Old and the New Testaments represent together the continuity of divine revelation. We are not under the Old Testament—but that does not mean that we do not believe it. When we try to show people that we are not under the Old Testament, they think that we do not believe the Old Testament. Let us ask who it is that does not believe the Old Testament—do you

believe that it has been taken away? If you say no—then you do not believe the Old Testament, because the Old Testament is the book that said, “A new covenant he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth, and waxeth old is ready to vanish away” (Heb. 8:13). Here Paul showed that what the Old Testament said in advance about itself had been done. That was a quotation from the Old Testament. So, if you do not believe that the Old Testament has vanished away, then you are the one who does not believe the Old Testament. I believe the Old Testament, but we are not under it. That does not mean that it is not true, it means that it was fulfilled and has been abrogated. It was not called the Old Testament as long as it was in force. There is not a law on the statute books of the State of Tennessee that you would call an old law while it is in operation. When a law is repealed, when it is abrogated, when it is relegated, it becomes an old law. Then why is the Old Testament old? Not because it was written first, not because it is older than the New Testament—Paul said, in Hebrews 8:13, that God made it old. “In that he saith, a new covenant, he hath made the first old.” He made it old by abrogating it, taking it out of the way. The Old Testament is true as the revelation of God and the history of man, and of God’s people Israel, and as an inspired record of the development of the divine plan of redemption. All of that is in the Old Testament. The Bible is thus the longest thread of thought ever woven in the loom of time. There is no repudiation of the Old Testament, but we recognize the difference in the dispensations under which men have lived and have served God. So we discuss these phases of revelation only to illustrate the principles that have to do with the history of the church.

The Period of Perfection

Now God has done everything in perfection when he created man. He made him exactly like he wanted him to be. Adam was God’s model, he was the perfect man. There was not a cloud over his path; there was not a jar in his whole nature; there was no experience of pain, no dread of evil, no fear of death. He could look into the face of his God, his Creator and his Maker, with love unpoisoned and confidence undimmed, with which a child may look into the face of its mother. But in the process of time, man being a free moral agent, he broke through the restrictions of divine law and was separated from God. Sometimes people ask why God did not create man incapable of sinning. He would not have been a man. God would have created a machine, instead of a man. He endowed him with the powers of will and of intellect. And God does not circumvent the faculties of his creatures in any of the relationships that we sustain to God. The New Testament refers to the law of the mind, and that is only a designation for the law of God, which law is addressed to the intellect—pertains to the mind, therefore God’s law is called the law of mind. You would not preach the gospel to a goat, because the gospel is the law of the mind, addressed to the mind, addressed to the intellect, therefore the law of God is the law of the mind.

The Spirit of God operates upon man only through this law of the mind, which is the gospel. Paul said that we receive the Spirit through the hearing of faith (Gal. 3:2). And the Holy Spirit remains in us the same way that it enters into us—through the hearing of faith, and dwells in us, through that medium—the Word of God. There is not any mystical, mystified, direct intangible, unintelligible, better-felt-than-told way that God influences man.

So in the beginning God created man with mind and soul. Adam was the perfect man; exactly as God wanted him to be; but Adam transgressed, and there have been centuries of degeneration from the first man until now. But we can span the centuries of degeneration, and see the first man as God created him—man as he was, not as he is; man as God made him, not man as sin corrupted him.

In Ephesians 2:14, the apostle tells us God created a new man, and the new man that God created is called the church—the one new man, the new creation. We have the old creation and we have the new creation. The church is the new creation and, as with the first, at the beginning God made it perfect. The New Testament church was perfect. Its members were not perfect but God created a perfect institution—he formed the church as in the first creation, exactly as he wanted it. But as the degeneration of Adam, departure came, even in the New Testament time, when men so early began to corrupt

God's New Testament institution. In 1 Timothy 4:1 the apostle said: "The Spirit saith expressly, that in the latter times (the last days) men shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils." The last days means the gospel dispensation. That passage does not refer to the approaching end of time. Isaiah the prophet, in chapter 2:2-4, foretold that "in the last days" the house of the Lord would be established when the New Covenant would be inaugurated in Jerusalem. Jesus referred to this prophetic forecast in Luke 24, and pointed to Pentecost as the fulfillment of it. The last days began on Pentecost. In Hebrews 1:1 Paul said that God at sundry times and in divers manners had spoken unto the fathers by the prophets, but in the last days he speaks unto us by Jesus Christ. This is the gospel age—the gospel dispensation, the last days. When Paul told Timothy that in the last days men shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits he meant that even though the Holy Spirit had given to them divine revelation, that all along during the Holy Spirit's dispensation—the last days—men would give heed to seducing spirits instead of the Holy Spirit. That is exactly where the line exists between truth and error—the Holy Spirit and seducing spirits. The departure comes when men give heed to the seducing spirits instead of the Word that the Holy Spirit has revealed to us.

The Period of Departure

These incipient departures began in the apostolic day and time, and continued, and developed into what is called "the apostasy," a stronger word for a more advanced state than departure. The departures were gradual, they did not come about overnight. They appeared first in organization—in the corruption of the divine arrangement of the New Testament church. The divine arrangement is simply that of the congregation with elders, deacons, and members. There was a plurality of elders in each church, but as time went on, one elder presided over several churches--instead of a plurality of elders in one church, there was plurality of churches under one elder, which developed the bishop, and the bishop over bishops--the archbishop, a diocesan bishop over a diocese of bishops. It was then an easy step up to the papal system and the pope on his Vatican throne because, after all, the pope was just an overgrown metropolitan bishop. That was an organizational departure.

The next stage of departure was doctrinal. For instance, concerning baptism, the first case of sprinkling in all history was that of Novation, who was sick, and being very ill they substituted sprinkling for immersion, but sprinkled water over his bed, not just on a spot on his head. When Novation recovered, they insisted that he be immersed, but he said if sprinkling is baptism when one is sick, then it is baptism when one is well, because the condition of one's health has nothing to do with what the action baptism is; and he claimed that it would be a mockery of the ordinance if he should be immersed. Later, he became a candidate for the office of bishop of Rome, but only an immersed person could qualify for the office and Novation forfeited that position rather than do what he called making a mockery of baptism. It was in the tenth century that sprinkling was made a sacrament—so there is the example of departure in the doctrinal area, which occurred 252 A.D.

Next, as in the case of Novation, came corruption in the realm of worship—innovations in the realm of worship—when in 670 A.D. the first instrument of music ever known to be used in the worship of any body of people claiming to be Christians was introduced by Pope Vitalian I. When it threatened the unity of the Roman church, it was removed. In 800 A.D.—130 years later—it was reintroduced, and that time it stayed. But the voice of every reformer coming out of Romanism was raised against the corruption of worship by the use of mechanical instrumentation in worship. We hear the voices of Luther and Zwingle and Wesley and Calvin protesting the use of organs in worship.

The Period of Apostasy

The departures were gradual in organization and in doctrine and in worship, and as history relates the developments, between the sixth century and the sixteenth century there were one thousand years of apostasy; and from the eleventh to the sixteenth centuries, that particular period of history that is called the dark ages. That period in which the Bible was taken away from the people; when they were taught they could not understand it; that it had to be interpreted for them; and thus a barrier was erected be-

tween the people and the Bible. One young man who entered a German institution to prepare himself for the duties of a priest discovered an old rusty Latin Bible, and read it as he could; and in reading of that old Bible he found that the institution to which he had attached himself had departed completely from its teaching. He severed his connection with the monastery and went out preaching reforms. He did not intend to leave what was then called the church, he only wanted to reform it. But every reformation has failed—there has never been a successful reformation in all religious history. When men have undertaken reformation, the result of their efforts has always been the emergence of some other denominational organization or Protestant body or sect. The efforts of Luther and Wesley and Calvin and Zwingle, whose names are familiar to all students of history, only resulted in the formation of Protestant denominationalism. We do not go into the mention of these organizations by their names here, but this is the manner in which all Protestant denominations originated—out of a state of the dismal darkness and apostasy of the dark ages.

There were some men, though themselves steeped in error, who in their hearts were devoted to God and desired to be right. We admire Luther as he stood before the Diet of Worms, and said: “Here I stand, I can do no other, so help me God.” His aims were right; he was headed in the right direction; so were other men of that struggling time—but they had to crawl before they could walk. Coming out of centuries of darkness they could not be expected to arrive at the whole truth; but they made a start in the right direction; and we today derive fruit from the work of the men who are called the reformers.

But their worthy work degenerated into Protestant denominationalism; they failed to arrive at the goal which they had set before them; but from their beginning came the fruition of their own desires in the continuous efforts of later men.

Having defined the periods of perfection, of departure, of apostasy, and of reformation, we go to the fifth word—and the word is restoration.

The Period of Restoration

From the ranks of these very men who had carried on the work of reformation came the plea for restoration. This did not come from an outside group of people at all. It came from inside the Protestant denominations, when men advancing in their knowledge, developed a consciousness of the evils of party creeds and party names, and they finally made the plea that was right: Where the Scriptures speak let us speak, and where the Scriptures are silent, let us be silent. That was the statement of their plea, but it is stated in the New Testament words: “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God.” The whole restoration concept is wrapped up in the statement, “Where the Bible speaks, let us speak, and where the Bible is silent, let us be silent.” This is the appeal to get back beyond the reformers--beyond Wesley and Calvin and Luther and Zwingle and Wycliffe and Huss; back beyond the formation of papacy, back beyond the dark ages, back beyond that which produced the dark ages; back beyond the worship of the emperor, when it was said that to be a Christian, one must be a Roman; back beyond the Holy Roman Empire, and farther back, on and on, until we are right back to the New Testament.

But people will say out of all this talk of restoration how can we identify anything; how is it possible to identify a restored church? Let us now settle that point.

The Marks of Identification

Everyone knows how to identify an automobile that is lost—by its make, model and number. Well, we have the make, model and the number of the New Testament church on record—it is a registered institution, and it can be identified. But we must go to the New Testament to do it. We cannot identify it by human authority in documents, disciplines and creeds. There is only one book that identifies the true church, and that is the New Testament itself.

The first identifying mark would be origination, and that would be in the word seed. Plant seed anywhere and it produces after its kind. An unbroken chain of church succession, dating back to the New Testament, is not necessary in order to have the New Testament church, any more than an unbroken chain of wheat crops through all gener-

ations is necessary to have a wheat crop now. Then, *origination* means that every seed produces after its kind. The wheat crop is in the seed that produces it. Plant it anywhere and it will produce the same thing everywhere. Now, on the same principle, take the New Testament to any dark land of the earth today, where the church has never been known, teach it and preach it, and it will produce now exactly what it produced then—the same New Testament church. The church is in the seed that produces it.

The next mark of identification is organization, and here is the word *congregation*. The church is not a denominational organization nor in any sense an ecclesiastical body. It is a congregation of Christians assembled for the purpose of worship and service to God. The simplicity of its organization is that of elders, deacons, members--elders to oversee and provide the teaching of the truth; deacons to assist in the work of service; members to assemble together and thus to work out their salvation; and preachers to proclaim the gospel. The word *congregation* comprehends the organizational identity of the New Testament church.

Next is the word *doctrine*, and beside that word doctrine, we simply write gospel. It takes the same thing to make a Christian now as in New Testament time. There is no other means or method. Jesus said in Mark 16:15-16: “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” Peter said in Acts 2:38: “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” It is said in verse 41: “They that gladly received his word were baptized, and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls”—and verse 47 says that “the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.” This is the process. The only way to be added to the church in New Testament times was to be baptized and there is no other way now. There are no other kinds of additions. People may need restoration but the only additions to the church are by baptism. We are baptized into Christ, and into the One Body, the church, as stated in Galatians 3:27 and 1 Corinthians 12:13—and Acts 2:41,47 states that we are thus added to the church—baptized, saved, added—it is one process.

The next identity mark is worship and here we have the word *pattern*. “Keep the ordinances as I delivered them unto you” (1 Cor. 11:2). There can be no additions—when is a thing an addition and when is it not an addition? One says, “Show me the scripture for seats in the meetinghouse, or lights in the meetinghouse, or for songbooks, and I will show you one for organs in the church.” That is not parallel, but we would like to see him look for the organ, so we will give him the scripture for the seats. In James 2:3 it is said that when a man comes into the assembly he is told to “sit thou here.” That is a seat—one could not sit without a seat. It was not only a seat, but the man was ushered to it and was told to sit on it. That is chapter and verse for seats. As for the lights, when Paul preached on the first day of the week at Troas, we are told in Acts 20:8 that he continued his discourse until midnight and the record says “there were many lights.” So the quibbles can be answered, but they are not parallels. A thing becomes an addition only when another element is added. For instance in the Lord’s supper, the elements specified are the bread and the fruit of the vine. Now, the plates on which to distribute the bread are not an addition, because no element is added. But if we should spread butter and jelly on the bread, that would be an addition—there would be another element. The vessels in which to distribute the fruit of the vine are not additions, because no element is involved in the use of a container, but if we should put milk in them, or some element other than the fruit of the vine, there would be an addition. It is said that an instrument of music is as scriptural as a songbook, but a songbook does not introduce an additional element of music. When one uses a songbook, he sings; whether one sings with or without looking at the music staff, he is performing only the act of singing. There is no added element in the use of a songbook. But when instrumental music is introduced into the worship, there is another element of music, and that is the addition—that is the butter and jelly on the bread! A simple coordination of words in an illustration will settle such quibbles. There is a pattern for worship as there is a pattern for doctrine and we cannot transcend it.

The next mark by which to identify the church is terminology, or names—and here we

put the word *Christian*. “The disciples were called *Christians* first in Antioch” (Acts 11:26). If the disciples were called Christians then, why should they not be called Christians now? We are willing to call the people of God by any name or designation that the New Testament mentions, but by none that it does not mention. It is so with reference to the church; we are willing to call the church by any designation that the New Testament mentions, but none that it does not mention. That settles the question of terminology, nomenclature, or names—Bible things by Bible names.

The final mark of identification is creed. We simply put beside it the word *Bible*. A human creed is a formulated interpretation of what the Bible says; the divine Creed is what it says. It is the only divine creed, we can have no other. “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God.”

Now we have named six identifying marks—Origination, Organization, Doctrine, Worship, Name, and Creed. If we are right in origination; and right in organization; and right in doctrine; and right in worship; and right in name; and right in creed; we cannot be the wrong church. But if we are wrong in origination; and wrong in organization; and wrong in doctrine; and wrong in worship; and wrong in name; and wrong in creed; we cannot be the right church. That represents the make, the model and the number of the New Testament church. And it is just that simple—a matter of identification.

There is an incident that occurred many years ago in connection with the gold rush to California far back in 1849. A group became separated from the party, and thought that they would perish for water, when all at once they came upon a sparkling running stream of water. They rushed to it with delight thinking that their thirst would be satisfied; but when they drank of the water it was brackish and bitter. They sat beside the stream in disappointment. One of their number wandered up the stream, and came to the fountain from which the stream was flowing. When he drank of the water from the fountain, it was sweet and refreshing. He wondered how a fountain so sweet could send forth water so bitter. It led him to examine the surrounding terrain, and down below the fountain he saw side streams pouring into the main stream; and that solved the problem. The side streams were bringing into that main stream the bitter and the brackish elements. He went back to his party and took them up to the fountain where they drank and were satisfied. How aptly does that illustrate conditions in religion today. There are many men standing on the outside looking on, and they ask the question: What is Christianity? When they see the discords and the divisions that exist in the religious world, over human creeds and denominational theology, they say to us: If that is Christianity, its waters are brackish and bitter. Someone needs to go to all such men and to take them by the hand, and say to them: My friend, you are drinking too far below the fountain. Come, and let us go to the fountain. Now the fountain is this Word in my hand—it is the Bible, the Word of God. It is the fountain of all truth, and when we drink of it, the waters are sweet and life-giving. Below the fountain men have poured into the stream of religion their human philosophy, their speculative theology, their religious traditions, and their false doctrines—and that has corrupted the stream. To the outsider it is brackish and bitter.

Our whole aim of today should be to bring people back to the source—the Bible. It will lead us right, it will lead us into obedience to God; it will lead us into the church; it will lead us into complete devotion to his will; it will lead us along life’s pathway until we have come to the journey’s end; and it will lead us to heaven. Come, stand with us on the Bible and the Bible alone.

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

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Links to Bible Study Resources

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South Seminole church of Christ

Halfway to Jerusalem

Ray Stone

The story begins in Antioch of Syria, site of the first Gentile congregation. Established by unnamed Christians scattered from Jerusalem, Acts 11:19-21, it is often called the “cradle of Christianity,” apparently the first congregation open to Jews and Gentiles alike.

When the Jerusalem church heard of a thriving congregation there, they sent Barnabas as encouragement, (Acts 15:22), “and much people was added unto the Lord,” v. 24. He soon sent for Saul (Paul), recently returned to his home town of Tarsus, v. 25. The Antioch church was destined to become Paul’s “base of operations” for his three missionary journeys.

Sandwiched between Paul’s first and second journeys is the event in Acts 15 often called the “Jerusalem Conference”, occasioned by a doctrinal problem that needed resolution. Some Jewish Christians from Judea (the “sect of the Pharisees who believed,” (Acts 15:5) came to Antioch with the teaching that Christians must “be circumcised after the custom of Moses” or be lost, (Acts 15:1). Paul and Barnabas stood strong against this heresy, but the controversy was such that the church there “appointed that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them (perhaps representatives of the opposition), should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question” (Acts 15:2).

Is this to be held as a precedent for “church conferences” at some central location to settle doctrinal disputes today? Not at all; simply consider the question “Why Jerusalem?” The very context answers it: Because “the apostles and elders” were there! The record of the scattering from Jerusalem because of persecution, Acts 8:1, notes Christians “were all scattered abroad...except the apostles,” who stayed in Jerusalem. The apostles, because of the gift of inspiration (Acts 2:4), amounted to the Word of God on two legs! So when the Antioch church appealed to Jerusalem for answers, they were going back to God’s Word as it miraculously resided in the apostles, who resided in Jerusalem. The equivalent today is to gather around the Bible to settle disputes of doctrine. So we go “back to the Bible” (the modern Restoration plea) in like manner as they went “back to Jerusalem.”

You can read “the rest of the story” of the conference and the outcome in the remainder of Acts 15—that isn’t our concern here. The lesson to be learned is this: Common sense decreed that they must go all the way back! It was a long and arduous journey of about 300 miles, a solid two weeks of travel. Acts 15:3 records their route through both

Phoenicia and Samaria. It must have been tempting to road-weary travelers to stop along the way for rest and recreation. But they had a mission more important than their weariness, and pressed on, and came to Jerusalem, (v. 4). “Halfway to Jerusalem” would have accomplished exactly nothing.

Now: Keep that in mind concerning our modern parallel—is anything accomplished by going only “halfway back to the Bible”? We have the answer in the Reformation Movement of the 16th century, led by John Calvin and Martin Luther. They had doctrinal issues with the Roman Catholic Church, and proposed to go back to the Bible for their solutions—but they only went “halfway to Jerusalem”! They got off to a good start, but stopped too soon, simply forming more denominations “protesting” the Catholic excesses. This shortcoming was only finally resolved in the Restoration Movement of the 19th century, in which the Lord’s church was restored in all its glory—by going “all the way” back to the Bible.

Perhaps an even more immediate lesson would be our insuring, in any dispute, that we go “all the way back” to God’s truth, rather than selectively viewing only those passages that may be misused to promote error. Jesus said “Thy Word is truth”, but Psalm 119:160 clarifies His meaning: “The sum of Thy Word is truth,” so translated in the ASV, NASV, RSV, ESV, ERV, ISV, Young’s Literal, and others. “The entirety of Thy Word is truth,” so rendered in the NKJV, Christian Standard, Berean Study Bible, etc. The old KJV simply says “Thy Word is true from the beginning”, but even then includes “every one of Thy righteous judgments” in context. The point: It takes **all** of the Bible—going all the way back to Jerusalem!—to insure we arrive at the truth. Until you have everything the Bible says on any subject, you can’t be certain your conclusions are right.

When Christians find themselves in a doctrinal disagreement, by all means they should sit down with the Bible between them to resolve the issue. Just be sure you don’t stop “halfway to Jerusalem” without considering every relevant passage, even (maybe especially) if it doesn’t seem to support your argument. The Bible doesn’t contradict itself; truth is always harmonious. If your stand is right, you have nothing to fear from a thorough examination of **all** the Bible has to say on the matter. Remember, “halfway to Jerusalem” accomplishes exactly nothing!

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“I Will Build My Church”

Robert H. Farish

“I will build my church” is the emphatic declaration of intention found in Matt. 16:18. It is the declaration of Jesus the Christ, the Son of the living God and thus is not subject to limitations which would apply to such an expression coming from mere man. The fact that the divine authority by which Jesus spoke had been demonstrated by the signs He performed, and revealed to Peter by the Father in heaven, needs to be emphasized. Some men said that He was “John the Baptist, some Elijah and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets” but God revealed that He is “the Christ the Son of the living God.” It is the Son of God Who said, “I will build my church.”

The unqualified expression of intention would have been improper coming from mere man. Men are forbidden to express their purposes without qualifying them. “For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall both live, and do this or that” (Jas. 4:15). In order for man to **do**, he must **live**. But not so in the case of Jesus and the building of the church. He says that He “will build” in spite of death. “The gates of Hades (death) shall not prevail against it.” (Matt. 16:18.) Not even death itself could defeat the immutable purpose of the Son of God to build the church. Such a positive expression of

purpose would have been the part of a fool had Jesus not been the Son of God. The man who expressed his determination to “build greater (barns)” was prevented by God requiring his soul of him before he could build (Luke 12:18). But not so in the case of Jesus; Hades was unable to hold His soul. He was not “left unto Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption” (Acts 2:31). Death, the great obstacle in the affairs of men, could not prevent Jesus accomplishing His expressed intention to build the church. Death was made the instrument by which His objective was achieved. It was by shedding His blood in death that Jesus purchased the church. (Acts 20:28.) Even though Jesus passed through those awful portals, they were unable to hold Him—“He was not left unto Hades.”

“This Jesus Did God Raise Up”

In the first sermon under the great commission, the same Peter who about six months before had confessed that Jesus is “the Christ, the Son of the living God,” now announces this truth publicly when he announced that “this Jesus did God raise up” (Acts 2:32). This is the act—raising up Jesus—by which God declared that Jesus is his Son . “...who was declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead” (Rom. 1:4). The gates of Hades were defeated; they were unable to prevail, but had God not raised up Jesus, they would have prevailed. “If Christ hath not been raised,” the gates of Hades prevailed and the purpose of Christ to build the church went down in defeat. To deny that Christ built the church according to His irrevocable plan is to deny the fact of the resurrection of Christ. When Christ declared that not even the gates of Hades could prevent His building the church, He was simply stating that nothing could defeat Him in that purpose. If the most formidable opposition is unable to prevail, then certainly lesser things will be unable to prevent the carrying out of the purpose of the Son of God. The intention expressed is the intention of the Son of God; hence, to doubt it's fulfillment is to doubt the power and/or the integrity of God's Son.

Church And Kingdom

Church and *kingdom* are different terms applied to the same thing. The two terms are used interchangeably in Matt. 16:18-19. In other places the two words are applied to the same thing When some in Ephesus opposed Paul's preaching “the things concerning the kingdom of God” (Acts 19:8), the record states that they spake evil of the Way (Acts 19:9). From this we learn that the **kingdom** and the **way** are the same thing. In Acts 8:3 it is stated that Saul “laid waste the church,” and in Acts 9:2 his efforts of laying waste are described as directed against those of the “way.” Hence, as the **way** is the **kingdom** and the **church** is the **way**, therefore the church is the kingdom. If Christ did what He said He would do, He established the kingdom.

A denial of the fulfillment of the pledge to build the church involves a reflection on the power of God. For such a denial requires one to take the position that the gates of Hades or death did prevail, and Paul announces that the power of God was “wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead...and put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all” (Eph. 1:20-23). Christ said, “I will build my church” and by the power of God He performed in harmony with His expressed intentions.

This divine utterance finds its fulfillment on the day of Pentecost after Christ was raised by the power of God. At the time Christ said, “I will build my church” the church was a future thing, as is seen in his use of the future tense. He said, “I will build,” thus exploding the theories of the church existing at any time prior to the time of this expression. If the church was already built at the time Christ made the declaration, then the language employed by Christ would be out of order. It would be a case of deliberate deception. We have already seen that the divine demonstration of the truth of Peter's confession was the raising of Christ from the dead (Rom. 1:4). This foundation truth was not publicly announced until after it had been demonstrated by God. The resurrection of Christ was an accomplishment of divine power (Eph. 1:19-20) to demonstrate that Jesus was divine (Rom. 1.4).

On the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ the church had its beginning when the public announcement of the fact of the resurrection of Christ was made. Be-

fore this time, the church was spoken of as a future thing, but after Pentecost it is spoken of as existing. In giving the history of the body of people who had accepted the truth that Jesus is the Son of God, the Holy Spirit recorded in Acts 8:1 that “there arose on that day a great persecution against the church which was in Jerusalem” and in verse 3, “But Saul laid waste the church.” After Saul was conquered, we are informed that “the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace” (Acts 9:31). A report concerning the “great number that believed (and) turned unto the Lord” at Antioch came “to the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem” (Acts 11:22). Barnabas and Saul “were gathered together with the church” (Acts 11:26) for a whole year. Herod put forth his hand to afflict certain of the church” (Acts 12:1). “Prayer was made earnestly of the church unto God for him” (Peter) (Acts 12:5). “There were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers...” (Acts 13:1). Paul and Barnabas appointed “elders in every church” (Acts 14:23). Upon the return of Paul and Barnabas to Antioch from their first journey, they “gathered the church together” (Acts 14:27). Paul and Barnabas were “brought on their way by the church” (Acts 15:3) to Jerusalem about the question of circumcision and keeping of the law and “were received of the church” (Acts 15:4). “The whole church” at Jerusalem (Acts 15:22) entered into the plan to send Judas and Silas with Paul and Barnabas to Antioch with the decision respecting the question. Paul and Silas “went through Syria and Cilicia confirming the churches” (Acts 15:41). “The churches were strengthened...” (Acts 16:5). Upon Paul's return from the second journey, “he went up and saluted the church” (Acts 18:22). On the return from the third preaching tour Paul sent from Miletus “to Ephesus, and called to him the elders of the church” (Acts 20:17). Paul charged these elders to “feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28). These direct statements respecting the fortunes of the church, its trials and growth are overwhelming proof that the church—kingdom—was in existence from Pentecost.

The only conclusion possible for those who believe the Bible, is that Jesus did what He said He would do. He built the church.

Catholicism's Favorite Text

Ted W. McElroy

No man can be a part of the church and ignore Christ. No man can have Christ and ignore the church. This vital lesson of the relationship between Christ and the church is taught in Matthew 16:13-20.

To center the minds of the apostles upon this fact, Jesus asked them, “Who do men say that the Son of man is?” They gave a variety of answers in reply, “Some say John the Baptist; some Elijah; others Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.” Men were not agreed on this religious question; neither are they agreed on any other major question of religion. Indeed, they are not even agreed on the existence of God. When you ask today concerning what men say about a religious question, you will be certain to receive many answers contradictory, the one to the others.

When Jesus asked the disciples, “Who say ye that I am?” the impetuous Peter answered and said, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” To this noble acknowledgement, the others all agreed. Jesus then said, “Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven.” There is found here a good lesson on unity and division. When Jesus asked concerning the opinion of men, there was division in the answer. Men, following their own human reasoning, could not agree. But when He asked the same question of the disciples, they with one consent agreed (Peter acting as spokesman) that He was “the Christ.” Jesus said that their knowledge came from God, not man. Theirs was by revelation, not by the processes of human reasoning and judgment. Human reasoning led to false conclusions; divine revelation made known the truth.

Following the statement concerning the source of their knowledge (i.e., that it had come from God) Jesus promised to build His church, “And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall

not prevail against it.” Jesus promised to build His church. It is, therefore, Christ's church; which is exactly what Paul called it when he said, “The churches of Christ salute you” (Rom. 16:16). Any institution not built by Christ, not wearing Christ's name, is a false church. Calvin, Luther, Wesley and others were never authorized by the God of heaven to build any kind of church; and their institutions bear no relationship at all to the church that Christ built.

The Foundation

There has been great controversy over the question, “What is the foundation of the church?” Catholics have tried to establish the doctrine of the primacy of Peter, asserting that Christ in this passage promised to build the church upon Peter as the foundation. They say that the Greek word for Peter is a word meaning *rock*, and that Peter is the *rock* upon which the church was built. Their argument is erroneous. The word *Peter* and the word *rock* are **not** identical words, either in the Greek or the English. The Greek word for Peter (*petros*) is masculine gender, and means “a pebble or fragment of rock.” But the word Christ used in this passage is **not** *petros* but *petra*. Now *petra* is feminine gender and means “a solid ledge of rock.” The Greek words, therefore, are different in gender and in definition; they are no more synonymous than are the English words Peter and rock. Jesus Christ and the immutable truth of His divinity provides the foundation of the church. Any other foundation could not stand.

That Christ is the foundation, which cannot be shaken, was prophesied by Isaiah: “Therefore saith the Lord Jehovah, behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, and a precious cornerstone of sure foundation: he that believeth shall not be in haste” (Isa. 28:16). This prophecy can belong to no one but Christ, to whom it is often applied in the New Testament. Paul taught that there is no other foundation, “For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3:11). These scriptures **exclude** the idea that Peter or any other man has ever been the foundation of the church; the only foundation of the true church is Jesus Christ. If you are building on any other foundation, you are building on the sand.

Church Succession

Some religionists have based a false doctrine upon the clause, “The gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.” They cite this passage in efforts to prove church succession or perpetuity. They say that the promise means that the church must always exist, and that therefore the church can be traced through succession back to the days of the apostles. Their position is contrary to the facts of history and their idea of church succession is **not supported** by the word of God. The erroneous argument is based on the assumption that the pronoun *it* refers back to, and has for its antecedent, the word *church*. But this is obviously false from the fact that the church has never pressed the gates of Hades either trying to get into it or out of it. At no time has the kingdom on earth been trying to get out of it. This is proof that the pronoun *it* does not refer back to the church.

To what, then, does it refer? The word refers to the building of the church by Christ. The “gates of Hades” were not powerful enough to prevent Jesus from building His church. Hades is the place of departed spirits. Jesus was crucified, His spirit went into Hades, but the gates of Hades could not hold Him prisoner; He came forth after three days, conqueror over death, Hades, and the grave. On the following Pentecost He built His church according to the promise He had made to the disciples.

Binding And Loosing

After declaring that he would build the church in spite of “the gates of Hades,” Jesus described the work of the apostles in these words, “I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven.” Some people want to restrict this power to the apostle Peter alone. But as is clearly shown in Matthew 18:17, this “binding and loosing” power was given to **all** the apostles alike. There is nothing on this point to sustain the doctrine of the supremacy of Peter. All the apostles had exactly the same power that he had.

The keys given to the apostles symbolize their authority to declare the terms of entrance and the conditions of continued fellowship in the kingdom of God. The first an-

nouncement of the terms of entrance into the church was made by Peter on Pentecost (Acts 2). The conditions of continued fellowship with Christ are also given by Peter (2 Pet. 1:5-8) as well as by all the other writers in numerous places. These terms and conditions cannot be set aside; they are bound on earth, because they were **first** bound in heaven.

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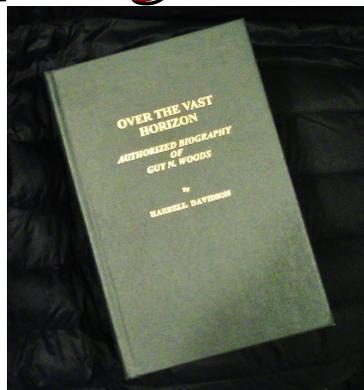
A church is losing its grip on the Gospel when it puts more stress on “a good mixer” than it does on a preacher. Beware of the serpent—he was a good mixer. If Absalom were living today, he would be in great demand, for he was the best mixer in the kingdom. —**R.L. Whiteside**—

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