

The Gospel Preceptor

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

Volume 6, No. 6

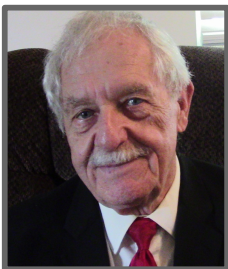
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The Alpha and Omega

Jerry C. Brewer

Jesus said, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending" (Rev. 1:8). These are the first and the last letters of the Greek alphabet and they correspond to the *Yea* and *Amen* of the Hebrew equivalent, *Alef* and *Tau*.



And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. (Rev. 21:6) With the proclamation "it is done" the vision proper concerning the church in tribulation had ended, and the Revelation had ended...God and Christ are the Alpha and Omega because they are the beginning and the end in creation and in salvation (Foy E. Wallace, Jr., *The Book of Revelation*, p. 431).

God's eternal nature is succinctly expressed in five short words: "I AM THAT I AM" (Ex. 3:14). "The repetition of the same word suggests the idea of uninterrupted continuance and boundless duration" (*Keil & Delitzsch*, e-Sword)

The phrase, *Alpha and Omega* is found only four times in the New Testament, all in the book of Revelation (Rev. 1:8, 11; 21:6; 22:13) and when Jesus said, "I am the Alpha and the Omega" He expressed the same nature of uninterrupted, continuing, and limitless duration that God expressed to Moses at the bush in Midian. And as Moses expressed in Psalms 90:1-2: "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou *art* God." Notice that the phrase, "Thou *art* God" has the word *art* in italics. The phrase is literally, "Thou God." Italics were added by the translators to help the meaning of the passages, but in many cases they hinder rather than help.

The claim that Jesus Christ made in John 8:24 and John 8:58, is the identical claim that God made in Exodus 3:14 in Midian. In those passages, Jesus said,

I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am *he*, ye shall die in your sins (John 8:24).

Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw *it*, and was glad. Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am (John 8:56-58).

In John 8:24, Jesus was **not** saying, "if ye believe not that I am **he**..." The word *he* was not in the original Greek. It too was added by the translators. Jesus' meaning in that passage was, "if ye believe not that **I am**, ye shall die in your sins." In John 8:58, Jesus clearly stated that "Before Abraham was, **I am**." There was a time when Abraham **was not** but Jesus Christ, the Logos, was always everlasting to everlasting, "thou God."

He is the Alpha of the Creation

Jesus, the Word, is the Third Person of the Godhead and was in the beginning with God. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made" (John 1:1-3).

The Word, or the Logos, was one of the *us* to whom God spoke at the beginning of the creation:

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his *own* image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. (Gen. 1:26).

And Paul summed up His preeminence:

Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether *they be* thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all *things* he might have the preeminence (Col. 1:15-18).

The Omega of Creation

Jesus Christ's second coming will signal the judgment and the Omega (the end) of material creation.

Seeing *it is* a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power (2 Thess. 1:6-9).

When He returns in judgment, the heavens and the earth, of which He is the Alpha, will pass away:

Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as *they were* from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day *is* with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up (1 Pet. 3:3-10).

The Alpha of Salvation

The Hebrews writer referred to Jesus as The Alpha and Omega of salvation, “the author and finisher of faith” (Heb. 12:1-2). “Christ was the Creator of the universe for the Father. So now he is the Consummation of redemption. (*Robertson's Word Pictures*, e-Sword). Salvation originated in God's eternal counsel before the world began (Eph. 3:11). Christ, The Lamb of God was “foreordained before the foundation of the world”

Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation *received* by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you (1 Pet. 1:18-19).

The Omega of Salvation

When Christ comes in judgment, He will be The Omega of Salvation.

And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by *that* man whom he hath ordained; *whereof* he hath given assurance unto all *men*, in that he hath raised him from the dead (Acts 17:30-31).

When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth *his* sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal (Matt. 25:31-34, 41, 46).

Finally, when He comes in judgment, He will deliver the kingdom up to the Father.

Then *cometh* the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy *that* shall be destroyed is death (1 Cor. 15:24-26).

Jesus Christ is the Alpha and Omega of all Divine authority for men today (Heb. 1:1-2; Matt. 17:5; Matt. 28:18). Whatever is done in teaching or practice that does not have Christ's approval is sin (Col. 3:17). He is the beginning and end of all authority and all salvation for men today, and there is none beside Him (John 14:6).

Notice, that He will **deliver up the kingdom** to God. That **one passage—1 Cor. 15:24-26—destroys the false doctrine of millennialism** that says Christ will reign 1,000 years in Jerusalem. He is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end of all things.

Links to Bible Study Resources

The Scripture Cache

Precept Upon Precept You Tube

Spiritual Perspectives - Gary Summers

Yukon, Okla. church of Christ

Berea church of Christ, Rives, TN

South Seminole church of Christ

Did Jesus Christ Have Long Hair?

Dub Mowery

Where did the idea that Jesus Christ had long hair originate? Certainly not from the scriptures. The scripture that relates to the physical appearance of Christ is as follows: "For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, *there* is no beauty that we should desire him" (Isa. 53:2).

Someone may be ready to say, "but what about the pictures of Christ." There is no known picture or painting which dates back to the first century. Most of the paintings of Christ by noted painters of the Middle Ages portrayed Christ according to their own surroundings, time and religious concepts. The average picture of Christ during this

period gave Him appearance of a Frenchman, including reddish hair and a pale complexion. He was also portrayed as feminine in appearance instead of masculine. At least, the paintings of more recent times reveal Him as being masculine in nature.

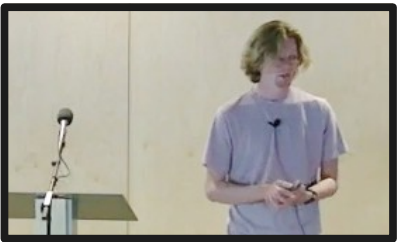
There was a picture of Christ at Bacone College in Muskogee, Oklahoma that gives Christ as appearance of being Indian. He also has been portrayed as a Negro. Of course when our Savior lived in the flesh He lived as a Jew. However, in eternity He is not physical in nature but spiritual. Christ is not partial to any race; He loves all mankind.

The Lord has always demanded a distinction between male and female. In the Old Testament God instructed the Israelites to keep a distinction in the dress of male and female. The scripture is as follows: “The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so *are* abomination unto the LORD thy God (Deut. 22:5). In the New Testament the scripture plainly condemns the practice of males attempting to become like females or effeminate:

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. 6:9-10).

The length of hair is directly related to the matter of keeping a distinction between male and female. “Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for *her* hair is given her for a covering” (1 Cor. 11:14-15). Females who cut their hair short and dress like the men are not respecting this principle of distinction between the sexes.

The pictures below from the church of Christ in Purcell, Okla. and the Canyon church of Christ in Phoenix, Ariz. indicate how little respect that people have for the Word of God. Are they male or female? Maybe their elders know.



We should consider who set the style of wearing long hair in our day and time. The rebellious class of people known as “hippies” are the ones who brought on the wearing of long hair in our society. This is not to say, however, that every male who wears long hair does so to emulate “hippies.” Nevertheless, the wearing of long hair has become a symbol of rebellion. We should also keep in mind the plain teaching of God's word on this matter. Even if the stigma of long hair being a symbol of rebellion in our society could be removed this would not eliminate the instructions of the word of the Lord concerning the matter: “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away” (Matt. 24:25).

The question may now come up: “How long is too long?” We might ask this question in the reverse, “When is hair too short on a female?” The answer to both questions is when the distinction between male and female is violated.



Can One be Saved Outside the Church?

Lester Kamp



This question is an important one. There continue to be many who claim that the church is non-essential to salvation. They say that as long as one has a “personal relationship with Jesus Christ,” one can be saved without being in any church. It should be noted that, according to the New Testament, the church is the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23). It is, therefore, absurd to think that one can be in Christ (saved) without being in His body, the church.

As we proceed to answer this question that has been raised, it is important to empha-

size that “the church” in the question refers to the church built by Christ (Mat. 16:18), the church purchased by the blood of Christ (Acts 20:28), the church into which people were added in the New Testament (Acts 2:47; Col. 1:13). We are **not** referring to any or all man-made churches that did not even exist in New Testament times. We can say without hesitation that salvation is possible without any of these churches. Therefore, in other words, is it possible for anyone to be saved without being in the church (i.e., being a member of the church)? Let us see what the Scriptures teach. What is the Biblical answer?

First, if one can be saved without the church, then one can be saved without a savior. “For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body” (Eph. 5:23). Since Christ Jesus is the savior of the body and the body is the church (Eph. 1:22-23), if a person needs a savior (and we all do according to Romans 3:23), then that person needs to be in the body where Christ is savior. Since Christ is only “the savior of the body,” He is not the savior of any outside the body.

Second, if one can be saved outside the church, then one can be saved without the benefits of the death of Christ. “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it” (Eph. 5:25). Christ “gave Himself” (laid down His life, died) for the church. If the church is not essential to man’s salvation, why would He do such a thing? If a person desires the benefits of Christ’s death on the cross, that person must be in the church.

Third, if one can be saved without being in the church, then one can be saved without the benefits of the blood of Christ. Suppose a person had \$100 with which he purchased a jacket. To enjoy the benefits of the \$100, a person would need to wear (i.e., be in) that jacket. Consider: “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed **the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood**” (Acts 20:28, emph. added, lk). Therefore, to receive the benefits of the blood of Christ, the purchase price of the church, one must be in the church.

Fourth, if one can be saved without being in the church, then one can be saved without being reconciled to God. Sin causes man to be lost because sin separates man from God (Isa. 59:1-2). Until man is reconciled (i.e., brought back) to God, he remains lost. “And that he might **reconcile both** (i.e., Jew and Gentile, lk) **unto God in one body** by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby” (Eph. 2:16, emph. added, lk). Remember the “one body” refers to the church (Eph. 1:22-23). Where is a person reconciled to God? The answer: in the one body, the church. If a person wants to be reconciled to God, he must be in the church. Outside the church, there is no reconciliation to God!

Fifth, if one can be saved outside the church, then one can be saved without being in Christ. “Therefore I endure all things for the elect’s sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory” (2 Tim. 2:10). Clearly, salvation is in Christ. How does a person get into Christ? According to Romans 6:3-4, baptism is that act of obedience that brings him into Christ. The same act (baptism) brings a person into the body of Christ, the church (1 Cor. 12:13). The same act that causes one to enter Christ causes one to enter the church. Therefore, how is it possible to be in Christ without being in the church? It is not possible!

After looking at these Scriptures, we can answer the question that has been raised. Without reservation, we can conclude that no one can be saved without being in the church.

Editor's Traveling, Preaching, and Writing

I preached for the Yukon, Okla. church of Christ on May 7. On May 14 we were with the Pioneer and Bell church of Christ in Elk City, Okla. I preached in Yukon again on May 21 and finished the month preaching for at the Eastside church of Christ in Lexington, Okla. on May 28. Requests continue coming in for copies of my book, “*The Thing Than Hath Been...*” *The Cycle of Apostasy*. The Fourth Printing of the book was received May 8 and we now have plenty of copies to fill requests. The book and postage are **FREE**.

Are You Spiritual?

Mike Demory



More and more we are hearing individuals who claim to be Christians asserting that they are stronger in the faith or spiritually superior because their brand of liberty has no bounds. Several years ago, a brother in Christ and myself took the opportunity to visit with erring brother Pat Boone. He was promoting a new CD, so we stood in line for quite some time to speak with him about his soul. Brother Boone was very cordial, and gave us 10 minutes to speak to him about the gospel, after which he informed us that when we grow mature in the faith, we will become as spiritual as he was. It's amazing how people can twist the Scriptures and convince themselves that they are conforming to God's will, when their fruit reveals the exact opposite.

One of my sisters who is involved in Pentecostalism, thinks that she is more spiritual than I am, because her church allows her to give testimonies, and witness, and other such non-sense not found in the New Testament. I've heard Christians tell me that their denominational friends look at them as non-spiritual because we don't sing with mechanical instruments, sway back and forth with hands lifted into the air, or fall on the floor in ecstatic writhing's. What we must keep in the back our minds when doubt is cast our way by those who "seem to be somewhat," is that it is **they** who are **not** spiritual. Roman Catholic Monks and Nuns are looked upon as being more spiritual than others, as are those who walk on their knees up the sides of mountains to pray to Mary. If it is the case that such "spiritual" individuals are involved in things not authorized by God, and most of the time it is; then why would we ever assume that they understand the meaning of being spiritual?

Being spiritual has **nothing** to do with emotionalism, sensationalism, asceticism, or denominationalism in general; but everything to do with our attitude; our mindset. It doesn't matter how many things we deprive ourselves of, or the number of ceremonies we take part in, or the things on the outside that appear to be very religious, if it's not prompted by the correct attitude, motive and emphasis, then it is all done in vain. The Corinthians thought that they were spiritually superior because they (1) Followed the ones who baptized them; (2) Sought preachers who were great motivators; (3) Allowed incestuous relationships; (4) Ate meat offered to idols without thinking of others; (5) Bragged about their spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians). Paul let them know in no uncertain terms that the wisdom of men was foolishness with God (1 Cor. 3:19); and they were not spiritual, but carnal (1 Cor. 3:3).

Men and women can fool themselves all they want to, God will allow them to delude themselves when their attitude is such that they are not trying to find the truth (2 Thess. 2:10-12). The Pharisees certainly saw themselves as spiritually superior as in the case of the one who thanked God he was not like other men (Luke 18:10-14). Yet, Jesus revealed their lack of spiritually when He pronounced upon them Woe after Woe because they thought ceremonies and outside appearance was what pleased God (Matt. 23:1-33). When our emphasis in life is to observe God's will with a whole heart (Psa. 119:33-38); then our Motivation will be loving God and keeping **His** commandments (John 14:15). Being spiritual has everything to do with our attitude, which comes before our actions. Jesus said, "By their fruits, ye shall know them." By a persons actions, we are able to tell who is truly spiritual, and who is not. **If** our attitude is such that in all our ways, we will acknowledge Him (Prov. 3:6), then we can say we are spiritual.

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Observations of the Five Foolish Virgins

Marvin L. Weir



God has always warned His people of judgment which is to come. The fate of Jerusalem, the temple, and the Jewish nation is described in Matthew 24:4-34. The unbelieving Jews will be destroyed by Roman soldiers as God's judgment of wrath is unleashed upon them. The Second Coming, the end of this world, and the judgment of all nations is addressed in Matthew 24:36 through Matthew 25:46.

Although many people have listed “signs” and have “set dates” for the end of this world such information has been proven to be false. The Second Coming has **not** occurred, and this world still remains. Who can deny it? Signs did indeed precede the destruction of Jerusalem (Matt. 24:15-22), but no signs will be given for the destruction of this world. The Scriptures clearly state:

Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. But of that day and hour knoweth no one, not even the angels of heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only. And as (were) the days of Noah, so shall be the coming of the Son of man. For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and they knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall be the coming of the Son of man. Then shall two men be in the field; one is taken, and one is left: two women (shall be) grinding at the mill; one is taken, and one is left. Watch therefore: for ye know not on what day your Lord cometh (Matt. 24:35-42).

Three parables are given in Matthew 24 and 25 that demonstrate the need for one to be prepared for the coming of the Lord. The parables clearly teach the Lord's return will be unexpected, and thus the need to be sober and watchful. In this study, let's focus upon the lessons we can learn from the five foolish virgins. Let us note:

Their Blameless Character! By such it is meant that these five foolish virgins were not called such because they were immoral, cruel and vindictive, indifferent or lazy. These virgins represent members of the body of Christ today who profess to be faithful and are striving to avoid the sins of this world. It seems safe to assume that these virgins were not troublemakers, but rather courteous, congenial, and likeable persons. But all was not well with these virgins in the eyes of God and therein is the lesson God's children need to learn today!

Their Noble Intention! They “went forth to meet the bridegroom” (Matt. 25:1). The wise virgins are going and so do the foolish. They are willing to expend the effort to “go.” They were willing to make **some** sacrifice to share the marriage feast with the others. They seemingly believe that they will meet the bridegroom and enjoy his presence.

Noble intentions abound today! There are those within the body of Christ who are not

living immoral lives, who are decent and honest people, but never once question whether or not they are worshipping “in spirit and truth” (John 4:24). There are also those who are seemingly convinced that the last command that mattered was to obey the gospel. Upon becoming a child of God, however, they have not **studied** and **grown** in knowledge of God’s Word as is required by the Creator (2 Tim. 2:15; 2 Pet. 3:18). And, some fall into the habit of forsaking the assembly of the church (Heb. 10:25). Oh, one day when they are not so busy they **intend** to study more and to be more involved in the Lord’s work. Even though their **intentions** are good, they allow the busy routine of living in this world to blind them to their own needs! May people see what is truly important!

Their Unconcerned Neglect! “For the foolish, when they took their lamps, took no oil with them” (Matt. 25:3). A lack of continual preparation can ruin a good beginning. The wise virgins took the time to secure extra oil so that if the oil in their lamps ran out they would have the needed oil for light. These foolish virgins thought they would have the necessary time to prepare for the coming of the bridegroom.

There are many Christians today who believe that the Lord will indeed come again as promised in the Scriptures. The problem is that they are doing as the foolish virgins did and they will be caught unprepared. The Bible is clear regarding the obligations, duties, and responsibilities of those who are members of the Lord’s church. The Lord pleaded with those who would hear in the Sermon on the Mount, “But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt. 6:33). Jesus also emphasized that “We must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work” (John 9:4). The foolishness of being unprepared is an ever present threat to one’s soul!

Their Slumbering And Sleep! “Now while the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept” (Matt. 25:5). The foolish virgins planned on all events occurring on their timetable, but God has His own timetable! The time of waiting can be viewed as a time of trial. Instead of immediately seeking additional oil the foolish virgins slept. The Scriptures warn: “...now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Cor. 6:2).

Their Hopeless Request! “And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are going out” (Matt. 25:8). The bridegroom had arrived, and the foolish virgins lack much needed oil. The oil cannot be borrowed! They are not **prepared** to go in, and the door of mercy is about to be shut tight! Preparation is an individual matter, and no one can do for another what he must do for himself.

Their Earnest Endeavor! “And while they went away to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage feast: and the door was shut” (Matt. 25:10). Earnestness at the wrong time is useless! So many today “hope” they are ready but they have not **prepared** for His coming. One who desires to save his soul will be prepared and diligently watch for the Lord’s coming!

“Preachers” or “Pastors”?

Dub McClish



Those who become upset with people who devote their lives to religious work sometimes call them some very unflattering names. However, that’s a subject for another time. Rather, let’s consider—in light of Bible teaching—a commonly used title applied to those in “full-time church work.”

Pastor may be the word most frequently used to describe a preacher’s work (e.g., “John Smith is the pastor of the _____ church”). This term is also used as a title of address (e.g., “Pastor John Smith will now speak”). Roman Catholics and Protestants alike thus employ the word. Does the Bible sanction this usage?

Pastor is a Biblical term, but the New Testament never uses it to refer to preachers, priests, or their work. It speaks of preachers/evangelists, but it knows nothing of spe-

cial priests in the church. Rather, **every member of the church** is a “priest” with direct access to the Father through the one Mediator, His Son (1 Tim. 2:5; 1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6).

The Bible distinguishes “pastors” from evangelists/preachers, apostles, prophets, and teachers (Eph. 4:11). *Pastor* simply means “shepherd.” The New Testament identifies pastors/shepherds with men also known as “elders” (Acts 20:17; Phi. 1:1; Tit. 1:5; 1 Pet. 5:1; et al.), “bishops” or “overseers” (Acts 20: 28; 1 Tim. 3:1; et al.), and “the presbytery” (1 Tim. 4:14). Both Paul and Peter use the verb form of *pastor* to describe the **work** of elders/bishops/presbyters in a church (i.e., *feeding/tending*; Acts 20:28–29; 1 Pet. 5:1–2). Thus, the Bible uses *pastors*, *elders*, *bishops*, and *presbytery* interchangeably.

New Testament congregations never had and still do not have **only one** elder/bishop/pastor (Acts 11:30; 14:23; 20:17, 28; Phi. 1:1; et al.). Thus there is no Biblical authority to call a man “**the** bishop,” “**the** elder,” or “**the** pastor” of a church merely because he is “the preacher.” (While John twice identified himself as “the elder,” he did so in reference to age rather than congregational office [2 John 1; 3 John 1]). Specific qualifications are required of pastors/elders/bishops (1 Tim. 3:1–8; Tit. 1:5–11). Among them, he “must be the husband of one wife” and have “believing children” (1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:6). Other factors aside, no Roman Catholic priest can ever qualify as a “pastor” and be true to his celibacy vow. Further, many so-called Protestant “pastors” simply have not met these qualifications.

“The One-man Pastor System” is foreign to the church the Lord built through His apostles. The **plurality** of elders/pastors/bishops in a congregation have authority over that entire church—including the preacher (Acts 20:28), not vice versa.

Authority In Religion

Early Arceneaux



It is just as essential to be right religiously as it is to be religious. This proposition must be approved by common sense. And it certainly must be accepted as true by every man who believes the Bible is what it claims to be, the authoritative word of God. There runs through the Bible the story of the conflict between genuine, divinely approved religion and counterfeit, humanly approved religion.

When God placed man in the garden of Eden, he spoke to him. He told him what he wanted him to do. He also issued one prohibition. He forbade his eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God thus placed before Adam a reminder that he was under authority. He must let that fruit alone because, and only because God said, “Of it thou mayest not eat.” Thus the principle was established in the very beginning that when God speaks, man must hear; when God commands, man must obey.

And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto Jehovah. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And Jehovah had respect unto Abel and to his offering: but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect (Gen. 4:3-5).

God is no respecter of persons, but he respects character and conduct and respect for his authority. We are very plainly told in the New Testament that Abel's offering was “more excellent” than Cain's and why. It is all summed up in two words...“by faith”—“By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he had witness borne to him that he was righteous, God bearing witness in respect to his gifts: and through it he being dead yet speaketh” (Heb. 11:14). Cain and Abel were both believers in God. In that sense they both had faith. They were both religious. They both offered sacrifice to God. What was the difference? By faith Abel offered. “By faith” modifies offered. His offering was an act of faith. That can mean but one thing. He of-

ferred what God had required. He offered by faith. But faith comes by hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17). "By faith" also tells us why his offering was more excellent than Cain's. Then, of course Cain's offering was not by faith. He did not offer the same thing. Abel offered animal sacrifice. But he offered by faith. Therefore God had required the animal sacrifice. Cain offered fruit. He did not offer what God required. Therefore he did not offer by faith. An unauthorized act cannot be done "by faith." If it could, to say an act was done by faith would signify nothing.

In such case there would not have been any difference between the offerings of Cain and Abel. But there was a vast difference. God accepted one and rejected the other. In Cain's case we have the "genesis" of "will worship" and innovation, the beginning of substitution of what man wills, and is pleased to do, instead of what God requires. It is a fearful thing to have one's worship of God rejected.

Man in the beginning knew God. But he forgot God and went into idolatry (Rom. 1:18-23). He professed to be wise and became a fool. He substituted human reason for divine revelation. But he was still religious. Paul said to idolaters at Athens, "I perceive ye are very religious" (Acts 17:22). They had gods many and lords many. They worshipped and served the creature rather than the creator. They had the wrong kind of religion and were without God and without hope in the world (Eph. 2:11-12).

Let us look more closely at the significance of this little phrase, **by faith**. "By faith Noah prepared an ark" (Heb. 11:7). It so happens we have a very clear exposition of the meaning of this sentence in the account in Genesis of Noah's building the ark. God commanded him to build the ark. Without this command he could not have built it "by faith." He was commanded to build it of gopher wood. He could not have used any other material **by faith** (Gen. 6:14). God also said, "This is how thou shalt build it" (Gen. 6:15). Plans and specifications were given. Now Paul says Noah prepared the ark "by faith." But Moses has told us, "Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he" (Gen. 6:22). In this case **by faith** includes complete obedience, and nothing else. The same thought appears in Heb. 11:8, "By faith Abraham obeyed."

After mankind had gone into idolatry, God called Abraham to be the head of a chosen race. The mission of this race was to preserve the knowledge of the true God in the world and to maintain true religion. It was in response to this call that Abraham "obeyed by faith" to go where Jehovah directed him to go. When God promised Abraham that he would make of him a great nation, Abraham, in spite of apparently insurmountable natural obstacles, believed God. In fulfillment of the promise Isaac was born. "And it came to pass after these things, that God did prove Abraham, and said unto him, take now thy son Isaac and offer him for a burnt offering" (Gen. 22:1-). Abraham was in the act of carrying out the command when the angel of the Lord called upon him and said, "Lay not thy hand upon the lad, for now I know that thou fearest God" (Gen. 22:11-12).

And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham a second time out of heaven, and said, By myself have I sworn, saith Jehovah, because thou halt done this thing, and hast not withheld thine only son, that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heavens, and as the sand which is upon the seashore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice (Gen. 22:15-18).

Have you thought this great gospel promise (Gal. 3:8) was unconditional? If you would like further proof that it was conditional, read what God said to Isaac, "And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws" (Gen. 26:4-5).

"By faith Abraham offered up Isaac" (Heb. 11:17). He did it only because God commanded him to do it. Do you think he could have sacrificed Isaac **by faith** if God had not commanded him to offer his son?

Thou believest that God is one; thou doest well: the demons also believe, and shudder. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith apart from works is barren? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, in that he offered up

Isaac his son upon the altar? Thou seest that faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect; and the scripture was fulfilled which saith, And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness; and he was called the friend of God. Ye see that by works a man is justified and not only by faith (Jas. 2:19-24).

We come to God by faith. "He that cometh to God must believe that God is and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him" (Heb. 11:6). Without faith it is impossible to please him. But, "that which Israel seeketh for, that he obtained not" (Rom. 17:7). "But Israel, following after a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law. Wherefore (why)? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by works" (Rom. 9:30-33) they rejected Christ, they did not obey the Gospel (Rom. 10:16); they did not submit to the righteousness of God, but sought to establish their own (Rom. 10:3), and were lost. Believing in God (Heb. 11:6) is one thing. Coming to God is another thing. But we must come in order to have life (John 5:40). We come by doing every thing the gospel requires as conditions of salvation (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Rom. 10:8-10).

After we come to God for salvation, we must "walk by faith" (2 Cor. 5:7). "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and he was not found, for God translated him: for he hath witness borne to him that before his translation he had been well pleasing unto God" (Heb. 11:5). The testimony borne to him is this: "Enoch walked with God three hundred years...and he was not; for God took him" (Gen. 5:21-24).

Fortunately we have a clear and full discussion of our subject by Christ himself. The people "were astonished at his teaching because he taught as one having authority, and not as their scribes" (Matt. 7:28-29). But the discussion to which I refer is recorded in the 15th chapter of Matthew and the 7th chapter of Mark.

And there are gathered together unto him the Pharisees and certain of the scribes, who had come from Jerusalem, and had seen that some of his disciples ate their bread with defiled hands. (For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands diligently (or, up to the elbow, margin, Revised Version) eat not, holding the tradition of the elders; and when they come from the market place, except they bathe themselves, they eat not; and many other things there are, which they have received to hold, washing of cups, and pots, and brazen vessels). And the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat their bread with defiled hands? (Mark 7:1-5).

His answer,

Why do ye also transgress the commandments of God because of your tradition? For God said, Honor thy father and thy mother... But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, That wherewith thou mightest have been profited by me is given to God; he shall not honor his father (or his mother). And ye have made void the word of God because of your tradition (Matt. 15:36).

Ye leave the commandment of God, and hold fast the tradition of men. And he said unto them, Full well do ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your tradition and many such like things do ye (Mark 7:8-13).

It will greatly assist us in understanding the full force of what is recorded in these passages to have some knowledge of the history and meaning of Jewish tradition. Ages after the time of Moses the tradition arose that when Moses received the law at Mt. Sinai, God also gave him an oral law. This was handed down, so it was contended, from generation to generation by word of mouth. This unwritten law began to be written down at about the time of Christ. Later, "comments, opinions and disputations" upon it were written. The oral law was called the *Mishna*. The commentary was called the *Gemara*. The two constitute the *Talmud*. Jesus referred to it as "the precepts of men" in sharp contrast to the word and commandment of God.

The report of our Lord's miracles seems to have given great uneasiness to the scribes and Pharisees at Jerusalem; and some of them had come in order to watch his conduct, and to seek for matter of accusation against him. But not finding that he, or his disciples, neglected any part of the divine law, they objected to his disregard of "the tradition of the elders." It was pretended by them, and still is by modern Jews, that these traditions were originally received from God by immediate revelation, and were of equal authority with the written law; and that they had been delivered down, by word of mouth, from one to another, through successive generations. Thus the scribes, who were the supposed repositories, and interpreters of them, had the power of altering them, and imposing them on the people, according to their convenience in the same manner as the church of Rome long maintained its usurped authority, by dictating to the whole Western church under similar pretensions; and as it still maintains that usurpation through many populous regions.

Whosoever despiseth the washing of hands, is worthy to be excommunicated, he comes to poverty and he will be extirpated out of the world. He that eats bread with unwashen hands, does as bad as if he committed whoredom. R. Aquiba, being in prison, and not having enough water to drink, and to wash his hands, chose to do the latter, saying, "It was better to die with thirst than transgress the traditions of the elders...The religions of old did eat their common food in cleanness...and they were called Pharisees. And this is a matter of the highest sanctity, and the way of the highest religion, that a man separate himself, and go aside from the vulgar; and that he neither touch them, nor eat or drink with them: for such conduceth to the purity of the body from evil works, the purity of the body conduceth to the cleansing of the soul from evil affections, and the sanctity of the soul conduceth to the likeness of God...Whosoever hath his seat in the land of Israel, and eateth his common food with cleanness, and speaks the holy language, and recites his phylacteries morning and evening; let him be confident that he shall obtain the life of the world to come.

Jewish writers, quoted by Whitby.

All additions to the laws of God are an infringement of his legislative authority; and a presumptuous imputation on his wisdom, as if he had omitted something necessary which man could supply; and, in one way or the other, they always clash with the divine precepts: so that an attachment to human traditions necessarily leads men, in some circumstances, or in some respects, to disobey God; and it is evident that our Lord had expressly taught his disciples to disregard them. Doubtless they, at this time, observed the ceremonial distinction of meats, and other divine appointments. Jesus therefore answered the scribes by asking them, "Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your traditions?" "The words of the scribes are lovely, above the words of the law, and more weighty than the words of the law or the prophets." Quotation in Whitby.—Our Lord then selected one instance, in proof of this charge. The law, delivered from Mt. Sinai, and written on the tables of stone by God himself, contained this command: "Honor thy father and thy mother." (By honor is meant all kind of duty which children owe to their parents.) Beza. (Note, Ex. 20:12) And in the judicial law, he had commanded, that "he who cursed father or mother, should be put to death." (Marg. Ref. g, h.) Now it must be as wicked to do evil to parents, or to withhold the good due to them, as to wish that evil might befall them; especially as the latter might be done in a sudden passion, and the former must be deliberate and habitual. Yet the scribes had decided, by their traditions, that in case a son should say to his parents, however aged, poor, and distressed, that he had vowed to the treasury whatever he could spare, and by which he might have assisted them; and should thus excuse himself from showing respect, gratitude, or kindness to them, leaving them in indigence, whilst he lived in plenty; he must not only not be required, but he ought not to be suffered, to do anything for them: it being, probably, expected from him to put money from time to time into the treasury, (of which the scribes and priests had the charge,) by way of compensation for his omission. Thus, from a vain

pretence, they directly repealed God's law, and rendered it of "none effect by their traditions:" and, as this was only one instance out of very many, their traditions must be disregarded and opposed, in order that the law of God might be honored and obeyed.—If a man can answer his parents, when they need any relief, and tell them, I have bound myself with an oath, that I will not do anything to the relief of my father or mother: or, as some understand it, O father, that by which thou shouldest be relieved by me, is a gift already devoted to God, and cannot without impiety be otherwise employed; and by this piety to God I may be profitable...to thee; for God will repay it to me and thee in our needs: he is under obligation not to give it to his father A father, being in want, requires relief from his son; the son answers, that he hath vowed he will not; so that to him it remains not lawful to relieve him; and the Pharisees approve of this practice; that he may thus evacuate his duty to his parent: and though quite contrary to the precept of honoring and relieving them, yet it was by them thought obligatory to the frustrating of that commandment. And many cases are set down, wherein it doth so, in Maimonides and the Rabbins.' Hammond.—The pretence of devoting to God the property thus withheld from the parent, as the occasion of the oath seems implied.—'A man may be so bound by them,' that is by vows, 'that he cannot, without great sin, do what God by his law required to be done. So that if he made a vow, which laid him under a necessity to violate God's law that he might observe it, his vow must stand, and the law be abrogated.' Jewish canon from Pocock.—This specimen is sufficient to lead any reflecting person to conclude, that human traditions and the law of God cannot subsist together; but the prevalence of the former must inevitably lead to make void the latter; and this consideration shows the reason of our Lord's most decided opposition to that system of tradition (*Scott's Bible Notes and Practical Observations*).

From the viewpoint of these Pharisees and scribes, it was no trivial question they asked. It was a crucial one. They were putting Jesus on the spot as to his attitude toward the whole body of their tradition. They selected the washing of hands as an example. It was washing of hands, not in the ordinary sense, but as a religious rite to remove ceremonial, legal defilement. They did not ask why his disciples transgressed the commandment of God in the law, but why they transgressed the tradition of the elders. They taught however that these traditions had all the force of divine commands. The reply of Christ was an uncompromising condemnation of tradition as making void the word of God, as a rejection, of the commandment of God. They not only required what God had not commanded; but freed men from obligations to what he had commanded.

What command of God did they reject in requiring the washing of hands? Had God said, "Thou shalt not wash your hands before you eat?" No. But He had said, "What thing soever I command you, that shall ye observe to do: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it..." (Deut. 12:32). Christ teaches in these passages that there is a conflict between God's word and man's traditions. You cannot be governed by both. He said, quoting Isaiah, "But in vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men" (Matt. 15:9).

The Jews did what has been done repeatedly by professed followers of Christ; they introduced practices which were not authorized by the word of God. They became fixed customs. Then years or centuries later they began to contend that these practices were authorized by the word of God all the time. Men do not like to admit that their religious practices are without divine authority.

It has been called to your attention that the washing of hands had not been forbidden. But that did not authorize it. God could not very well authorize a practice by saying nothing about it—**by His silence**. It should also be observed that the washing of hands was, in itself, an entirely harmless, innocent act. But when men made a religious rite out of it, Christ condemned the practice and refused to submit to the man-made law. Yet two of the most popular arguments today in defense of unauthorized religious practices are these:

1. “It is not forbidden. The Bible does not say not to do it.”
2. “There is no harm in it. It is an innocent act.”

Those who make these arguments certainly have learned nothing from the fierce conflict between Christ and the scribes and Pharisees. What harm was there in the washings of cups and pots and brazen vessels or in the taking of a bath? (Mark 7:4).

Learning From Judas

Ray Stone



The Bible is, more than anything else, a book of examples. Just think of the Old Testament prophets; our Lord, “I have given you an example, that ye also should do as I have done to you” (John 13:15); or the apostle Paul, “Brethren, be ye imitators together of me...” (Philp. 3:17). Elders are also presented as examples 1 Pet. 5:3; as well as preachers (1 Tim. 4:12). Examples are powerful learning tools!

An example generally is considered a positive thing. From that viewpoint, our title seems to be an oxymoron (self-contradiction) at best. Yet the concept of “negative examples” is common in the Bible as well. “Remember Lot's wife...” (Luke 17:32). Concerning Esau's mistake (Heb. 12:16). “These things (Old Testament sins) were our examples, to the intent that we should **not**...” (1 Cor. 10:6), do as they did. Negative examples can be just as powerful, useful, as positive ones. The big difference is that positive examples point to rewards to be gained by doing right, while negative examples dwell on the punishment that wrongdoing brings. Valuable lessons can be derived from both.

So we come to the epitome of negative examples: Judas Iscariot, the betrayer of our Lord. That act was so contemptible his name has become synonymous with betrayal throughout the whole World, even among nonbelievers. What makes betrayal in general, and this betrayal in particular, so despised is that it is a violation of trust. Psalm 55:12-14 expresses this aspect clearly:

It was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him. But it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together; and walked unto the house of God in company.

It is particularly painful and despicable when that very trust is used as an actual tool to betray. Judas' “kiss of treachery” makes this an especially contemptible act. “Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me” (Psa. 41:9). Anyone who has ever had the misfortune of being backstabbed by a supposed friend can identify with these sentiments.

And there is yet one more factor magnifying the heinous nature of Judas' betrayal: His motive! This is important, for **why** one does **what** he does, makes a difference. Bad actions done for pure motives at least have that redeeming quality: “He meant well, even though he did wrong.” Good actions done for evil motives are worse, but it can be said “At least he did right, even though for the wrong reason” (cf. Philp. 1:15-18 for Paul's comments on this very thing). But evil actions done for evil, selfish motives have no redeeming quality at all; nothing can be said about it but that it's just evil, through and through. Such was the case with Judas: Cold cash was his motivation—the infamous “thirty pieces of silver” (Matt. 26:15). Incidentally, 30 pieces of silver was the going price for an injured slave (Exo. 21:32).

All that being said, it is all too easy to demonize Judas—paint him as the personification of evil all his life. But that would be a huge mistake: Judas was not “born that way” nor was it “the way God made him”, as some use as an excuse today for their wrong actions. Judas was born innocent, just like every other child ever born (Matt. 19:14; Isa. 7:16.) It is occasionally said of hardened criminals, to remind us of their basic humanity, “They all have mothers.” So it was with Judas. He had a mother and a father. We

may assume they were good Jewish parents with the same hopes and ambitions for him that any parent has for their child.

So Judas was raised under the Law of Moses, and apparently as an adult was a faithful follower of that Law. He was of such character that Jesus chose him as one of His hand-picked 12 to further His teaching in the World (Mark 3:19). As testimony to his original purity of heart, we have those Psalm passages we've referenced already that assure us he was Jesus' "own familiar friend"—as were all the apostles (John 15:15). And after Judas was called by Christ and joined that little band, he wasn't bad—yet. For we read in Matthew 10:1 that Jesus, "called to Him His twelve disciples, and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of disease and all manner of sickness." Just to be sure we understand "the twelve" included Judas, the following verses list them all specifically, including Judas (Matt. 10:2-4). So he was given, along with all the others, the ability to work miracles, including casting out demons.

Now that's telling: Consider Matthew 12:24, when some Jews were accusing Jesus of casting out demons by using the power of Satan: Do you remember His reply? He said, "That doesn't work!" He said, Matthew 12:25, "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand: And if Satan casteth out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then shall his kingdom stand?" He said, pure logic makes it clear: "I by the Spirit of God cast out demons"—so, too, did the apostles, including Judas! (v. 28). At that time, early in Jesus' ministry, Judas was as pure and faithful as any apostle.

But, though he started out as a full-fledged, faithful apostle, Judas had a weakness--and that is lesson No. 1 we can learn from him. **Money** was the name of that weakness. Judas loved money—and that's as serious a character flaw as you'll ever see, one that leads directly to countless others. In 1 Timothy 6:10 puts God's understanding on it: "For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil..." and hear the rest of the passage with Judas particularly in mind: "...which some reaching after have been **led away from the faith**, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows." That describes accurately what ultimately happened to Judas.

How important is money to you? Skeptics sometimes say "Everyone has his price" but that is why they're called skeptics—it just is not true of everyone. Yet it can be a great temptation, and is to many people. Here's God's warning, a fact proved every day: "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver, nor he that loveth abundance, with increase; this also is vanity (emptiness)" (Eccl. 5:10). That's a dead-end road.

Judas started out a faithful apostle—but circumstances required the group to establish a treasury (the Bible calls it their "bag" John 13:29), and Judas became their treasurer, "keeper of the bag." And that marks the circumstance of his slide into sin, being tempted daily in his weakest spot. From that point on, he is depicted as more and more materialistic, then evil, as he even stooped to petty theft (we would call it embezzlement). The event marking his descent is found in John 12, at the house of Jesus' close friends Mary and Martha and their brother Lazarus. Mary sought to honor her Lord. She took "a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair..." (John 12:3). Here is Judas' reaction: "Why was not this ointment sold for 300 pence, and given to the poor?" (John 12:5). But John goes on, "This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein" (John 12:6). The ASV version translates this, "took away what was put therein."

So here is lesson No. 2 we can learn from Judas: Know yourself, both your strengths and where you're not so strong, and don't risk temptation in your area of weakness! The principle of 1 Cor. 8:9 and Rom. 14, that we are to avoid placing stumbling-blocks of temptation in our brothers' way, applies to putting those stumbling-blocks in our own paths as well. Satan doesn't need the help! Judas should have known himself well enough to "regrettably decline" the responsibility of "holding the bag" so avoiding the temptation to take advantage of the group's trust. But he didn't; and deliberately put squarely in his own path, temptations peculiar to himself; and ultimately proved the

truth of Matthew 6:24, “No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.” Judas had his loyalty to Christ on the one hand, and his lust for riches on the other—a dangerous position; and he had done it to himself! Know yourself well enough to avoid his mistake.

We all know the final result of this: His bargain with the chief priests to deliver Christ to them, under cover of night, for thirty pieces of silver. Peter noted that Judas “by transgression fell from this ministry and apostleship...that he might go to his own place” (Acts 1:25). And even before the betrayal, Jesus, knowing it was as good as done, said in His prayer to the Father, “Those that Thou gavest Me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the Scripture might be fulfilled.” Judas’ love of money cost him his soul.

But wait. Didn’t Judas later repent? After all, Matthew 27:3-5 says,

Then Judas, which had betrayed Him, when he saw that He was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? See thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.

A penitent sinner is always forgiven, isn’t he? How then could Judas be lost?

A good word study is in order here: The Greek word most often translated *repent* is *metanoeo*. This is the word used by John the Baptist, Matt. 3:2, 8; 4:17). It is used in the well-known passages about the necessity of repentance, as Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 17:30. In fact, it is used some 58 times in the New Testament and is always translated *repent* or *repentance*. Its literal meaning, interestingly, is “to have another mind!” So it is commonly defined as “a change of mind.” However, a more complete definition is “a change of mind followed by a change of action”—remember John preached “bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance” (Matt. 3:8). Intentions are good, but there must be also the follow-through of a changed life.

But this is not the word used of Judas in Matthew 27:3. There it is the related but different word *metamelomai* a literal meaning of which is “to be concerned with regret.” It is used only 6 times in the New Testament. Both of these Greek words are used together in 2 Cor. 7:10, “For Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the World worketh death.” The **first** *repentance* our first word that describes **true** repentance; the **second**, *repented* our second word that describes a concern for, or regret; and in fact is so translated in the ASV in this verse: “For Godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation, a repentance that bringeth no regret; but the sorrow of the World worketh death.”

Within that context, it is easy to see the case of Judas: He **regretted** his actions, but **didn’t truly** repent. It could be said that his Worldly sorrow brought his death—physical and spiritual. If Judas had truly repented, he would be confessing it to Jesus if possible, to the other apostles who witnessed it surely, to God Himself certainly—but no, he went only to the very ones who had tempted him to sin in the first place—the chief priests and elders. Regret—being sorry—is not repentance. It may be a start, but it isn’t enough. Judas lost everything. He lost the money. He lost his life. Most regrettably, he lost his eternity.

So what do we learn from Judas?

1. Beware of the sin of covetousness; of “love of money” (1 Tim. 6:10). It can be as addictive as any drug.
2. Beware of deliberately putting temptations into your own path (1 Cor. 8:9). Satan doesn’t need the help. Know yourself well enough to know what to avoid!
3. If you find yourself in sin in spite of all, confess it to God in repentance (1 John 1:9) as well as to anyone you might have sinned against (Jas. 5:16). There is no other way to gain forgiveness and avoid eternal consequences.

This is a Hard Saying

Nana Yaw Aidoo



In the sixth chapter of John's Gospel account, we see our Lord Jesus Christ deliver His "Bread of Life" discourse. Due to the figures that our Lord used in this discourse, some suppose He was talking about the Lord's supper. Not so. Notice if you would that in the 47th verse, our Lord said believing in Him leads to eternal life, and also in the 54th verse, He said eating His flesh and drinking His blood leads to eternal life. But we know that our Lord taught elsewhere that there is only one way to eternal life (cf. John 14:6. Notice the use of the definite article).

Therefore, unless in this discourse our Lord was teaching two different ways to eternal life, then it is the case that eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Christ is tantamount to believing in Him. All our Lord sought to do was to impress on the unbelieving Jews the necessity of believing in Him in order to receive life (cf. John 8:24) and not to teach about the Lord's supper.

Our focus, however, is not on what our Lord meant by eating His flesh and drinking His blood but on the response of His auditors to His message. John noted that as our Lord taught, His auditors complained (v41 NKJV), murmured (v43), quarreled among themselves (v52) and were offended (v61) at His message. Their reaction to our Lord's message is summarized thusly: "Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, **This is an hard saying**; who can hear it?" (verse 60). The Jews reacted just like most people do when they hear a message they do not like. At this point, and with this kind of reaction to the message, many people would have beaten themselves up over a supposed absence of "tact." "Church growth experts," if they were present at this time, would have told our Lord, "Come on now Jesus! You won't catch many flies by using this method." No doubt some others too who are present in our time would have accused our Lord of insulting or verbally abusing His audience, if they were around back then.

What would our Lord do now? Would He change His message and probably preach love and grace or some "relevant" message? He would have to in order to get a positive reaction from the auditors of His message, wouldn't He? No doubt some would have so advised. Not the Man who left us an example that we should follow in His steps (1 Pet. 2:21). He, in spite of all the negative reactions to His message, **continued** to speak the truth as forcefully and faithfully as He knew how, even to the point "...many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him" (verse 66). That the audience felt our Lord was preaching a **hard saying** and that they were offended by His message in no way compelled our Lord to compromise His message or to change the truth of His message.

We can't help but ponder the many negative reactions to the message (some of which, unfortunately, is heard from the Lord's camp) that there is only one true church (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4), the church of Christ (Matt. 16:18; Rom. 16:16), which the Lord will save at His return (Acts 2:47; 1 Cor. 15:24; Eph. 5:23) and that men are added to this one true church, by faith, repentance, confession of faith and baptism unto the remission of sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:37; Acts 8:36-39; Rom. 6:3-4). "Are you trying to say all the other Churches are lost?" "Do you mean my grandfather who wasn't baptized is going to hell?" "You are behaving like Pharisees." "You have an identity crisis." "All you do when you preach in public is insult others." "You are preaching a 19th century message." "If you continue preaching like this the church would not be relevant in the eyes of others." "You are holding unto traditionalism." "It is your church doctrine." "The government would not call upon us if you keep on saying things like this." Well did the wise man say, "...there is no new thing under the sun" (Eccl. 1:9).

How great and many the lessons we can learn from the Man whose disciples we are. There simply is no excuse for insulting others under the guise of speaking the truth. We are told to put filthy language out of our mouths (Col. 3:8) and to let our speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that we may know how we ought to answer to every man (Col. 4:6). But let us not be self-deceived into thinking that cowardice,

neutrality, and the changing of the message of God's word is the way to go. Certainly, we need to speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15). However, before we can do it in love, we need to first of all speak the truth. It is written of the earliest of disciples that they turned the world upside down (Acts 17:6) with the truth of God's word so much that they were spoken against everywhere in the then Roman world (Acts 28:22). Surely, they all didn't lack tact if any at all? Surely, they weren't all going about insulting people if any at all? What makes us think if we preach the same message they preached, we won't get the same reaction they had?

God Almighty's commission to Ezekiel is especially relevant in this regard; "And go, get to the captives, to the children of your people, and speak to them and tell them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, **whether they hear, or whether they refuse**'" (Eze. 3:11 NKJV). May we with the power of God's word (Rom. 1:16), and without fear or favor, preach the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27), whether it fills up a room or drives people away.

"What Saith The Scriptures?"

Harrell Davidson

We will attempt to answer two questions in this issue of *The Gospel Preceptor*. The first question is "**How does God help man each day?**" As always, we appreciate all the questions, we receive month in and month out. We are still running about six behind but we will entertain even more. Thanks for sending them.



Now, how God helps man each day. I would like to do this in a very basic way. God promised that "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease" (Gen. 8:22). This was promised to Noah and all the remnants that would come then or now for as long as the earth remains. And, it is remaining this day. There will be no more floods like the great Noahic flood that gave mankind the ability to start all over again, but it did not eradicate sin from anyone's life. Sin started reigning again.

Notice this with me,

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

After the flood waters were gone there was still the earth, the soil, and the seed to bring forth as God promised. Have we thought seriously about this? Man can do many powerful things but he cannot make the soil nor can he make the seed that has the germ of life in it. God promised after the flood seedtime and harvest, cold and hot summer and winter and that these shall not cease.

Suppose there was the soil but no seed. Would any one be better off? Of course not. This was/is such a great blessing to man that we sometimes take for granted. There is a place in the United States of America where seeds are stored so that we may not lose that variety or brand of seed so that we can continue to grow our food and harvest our crops and sustain ourselves and those about us.

Do we ever think how God is helping us in this physical way? Without Him we would all starve to death. It also takes darkness to grow our crops as well is light. Full-time light and no darkness and we would have no food to eat. All darkness and no light the same is true.

Note now in the model prayer that Jesus told the disciples to pray this way, among other things, "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matt. 6:11). Does God still do that today? Of course, He does and it is one of our greatest physical blessings. Then how does it work? Remember that man cannot make the soil or the seed. God does that so that

man can sow and reap harvests that may be used for himself and others as well. The farmers take the seed, let us say wheat, sows it in the soil and at the proper time he harvests the crop and sells it to a grain company that sells it to another company that makes flour that the baker buy to make bread. God blesses man with the ability to work and earn a living so he can buy the bread that God proved by means listed above. What a great blessing!

If we can understand this surely, we can make a spiritual application. Man, Adam and Eve, sinned in the beautiful Garden of Eden (cf. Gen. 3). Man faced a predicament over which he, man, could not provide a way of escape from the awful predicament he was in. Man needed help. God chose to send His only begotten Son (John 3:16) to be born of a virgin (Matt. 1) and that Child was God in the flesh (John 1:1-14) The Son ultimately gave Himself on Calvary so that mankind could be saved from his sins. God gave his Word to guide us as lamp to our feet and a light to our path (cf. Psa. 119:105). This in order that man could have the remission of his sins (Acts 2:38) and be added to the Lord's church and be saved eternally with God forgetting all our past sins because they are washed away and He promised to remember them no more (Acts 22:16; Heb. 8:12; Heb. 10:17). This is only the start of ways that God helps man every day he lives. Thanks for the question.

The other question asks, **“When a man is sick how does God help?”** Man is made in the image of God.

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them (Gen. 1:26-27).

God gave man the ability to think for himself and make choices that man wished to make for himself. Man is made a free moral agent to think or do as he pleases.

Thus, man was to use the mind that God gave him to make the most out of life. Some were farmers like Cain others were shepherds liked Abel. On and on this progressed through time. Death came into the world by sin or because of sin. Physically God provided through various things herbs to be used as medicine and from this grew compounds many of which today are very complex. Doctors have studied medicine that God has made and given man the means of ascertaining an education in medicine, and the doctors prescribes a certain medication for a particular ailment.

God made the mind, brain if you will. Man learns and uses it as he sees fit. Now look at this. Without God, would there be a mind to learn? Could that mind produce the ingredients that are used in medicine? Others are trained to be nurses, etc. On and on this goes, none of which man without God could accomplish.

In the first century, there were inspired elders in the church who could pray over the sick and the sick be healed from the malady they faced. James the half-brother of Christ wrote,

Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him” (Jas. 5:14-15).

The anointing oil would have little medicinal benefits as far as healing goes, but the prayer of the elders would provide the healing needed for the ill person.

Notice verse 16 in the same context: “Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” We pray for the sick today. The time of the spiritual gifts has passed.

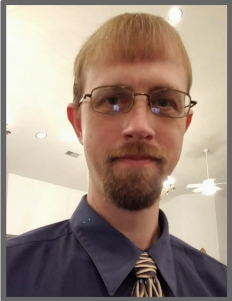
Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

We pray for the doctors, nurses, medication to all work together and for God's will to be done and not ours (Matt. 6:10; 26:42; Luke 11:2). Thanks for the question.

They Have a Zeal of God But Not According to Knowledge, No. 3

Donald L. Smith

Introduction



In this portion of this series, what the Bible teaches regarding the duration of miracles will be covered. This will also include the conclusion of the manuscript, "Have Miracles Ceased?", as well as an addendum of answered questions relating to the cessation of miracles. The entirety of the manuscript was basically building up to this point. As stated in the previous article in this series, let us put ourselves in the shoes of the recipient of this manuscript. Is it reasonable for this person to change their entire life based on the direction the teaching points them?

The Duration of Miracles

In light of the foregoing material, we now consider two pertinent questions: How long were the miracles to continue, and how much of God's Word was to be revealed? Let us answer the latter question first, and this answer will set the stage to answer the former. Jesus Christ Himself tells us exactly how much of God's Word (i.e., "the truth," John 17:17) was to be revealed to mankind through the apostles: "But the **Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost**, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you **all things**, and bring **all things** to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 16:13, emph. DES).

Again, He states to the apostles: "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into **all truth**: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come" (John 16:13, emph. DES).

The context of these verses begins with chapter 13, in which Christ and the apostles partake of the Passover, and the Lord institutes His memorial supper (Mat. 26:26-29). While still in that upper room, Christ began answering questions and requests from various apostles, including Peter, Thomas, Philip, and Judas (not Iscariot), as well as the rest (John 13:36-37; 14:5, 8, 22; 16:17-18). Only the 12 were with Him (Luke 22:14) until Judas Iscariot left (13:26-31). Therefore, when Jesus spoke the words quoted above, He was speaking only to the 11 remaining apostles. Jesus told them that the Holy Ghost would teach them **all things** and bring to their remembrance **all things** He had spoken to them. He also promised that the Holy Ghost would guide them into **all Truth**, referring to the Word of God (John 17:17). So, the very Word of God tells us here that the apostles would be given **all** of God's revelation to mankind, which came to pass. Since the question, "How much of God's Word was to be revealed?" has been answered by these promises, and since the miraculous gifts were confirming this spoken Word, just how long did that Word need to be confirmed by these suspensions of the laws of nature (i.e., miracles)? How long were miracles to continue?

To begin answering this question, consider Ephesians 4:8, 11-14:

Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men... And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning

craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.

Let us now review this passage and closely analyze a section of it. Verse 8 tells us that when Christ ascended to Heaven, He gave gifts (i.e., miraculous abilities) to men. In verse 11, in speaking of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, Paul is relating these offices/functions to the miraculous gifts mentioned in verse 8. Paul tells us in verse 12 that Christ gave these gifts “for the perfecting of the saints...” The Greek word translated “perfect” means “complete,” “mature,” “full-grown.” So, these extra helps (gifts) **were gradually making** the saints complete as God was gradually revealing and declaring His Word to them. This miraculous revelation and confirmation of the Word helped with “the work of the ministry” and “the edifying of the body” (which is the church [Eph. 1:22-23]).

How long were these gifts to continue? Verse 13 says “Till...,” but till when? “Till we all come in the unity of the faith...” Note that Paul is not here speaking of the unity of brethren with one another, but of “the unity of **the** faith,” referring to the fullness of the Gospel, which is God’s “system of faith” (Acts 6:7; Rom. 1:5; 1 Tim. 4:1; Jude 3; et al.). And why had Paul and his contemporaries not yet come into the unity of the system of “the faith”? It had not yet been fully delivered to them, hence the need for the miraculous gifts and functions. However, by the time Jude wrote his short epistle, “the faith” had been once for all “delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3). Did miraculous gifts and offices cease at this point? According to the Holy Spirit’s words through Paul in Ephesians 4:13, they did. In the same verse, Paul also wrote that these miraculous manifestations would continue “till we all come in the unity... of the knowledge of the Son of God...” Were Paul and his contemporaries ever equipped with that full knowledge at some point? Peter said they were: “According as his divine power hath given unto us **all things** that pertain unto life and godliness, **through the knowledge of him** that hath called us to glory and virtue” (2 Pet. 1:3, emph. DES). Apart from the miracles, how could they have the unified and perfected system of “the faith”? Without the miracles, how could they have the fullness of the knowledge of Him? How could they become “a perfect (i.e., complete, mature, full-grown) man” (Eph. 4:13)?

In Paul’s final epistle, just before he was executed, he declared: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God... That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:16-17).¹ Now consider: The man of God is “perfect” (complete) by means of the Scriptures, as just noted, and miracles were only to continue till the man of God was “perfect” (complete) (Eph. 4:13). Thus, the completion of the Scriptures rendered the miraculous gifts unnecessary. Further, with the completed Scriptures, the church possessed a standard—the standard—of the faith, by use of which they would “henceforth be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine...” (Eph. 4:14). The church in its infant years, referred to here as “children,” needed the miracles and direct guidance of the Holy Ghost, just as children in their early years need direct guidance from their parents. However, equipped with all of God’s revelation in written form, the church had the means of maturing, no longer needing that direct guidance and confirmation.

Again, Paul makes this very clear in one other passage we will analyze:

Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known (1 Cor. 13:8-12).

In showing that love (i.e., “charity”) would outlast **all** miracles, in verse 8 Paul declared that prophecies would fail, tongues would cease, and miraculous knowledge would vanish away. These three gifts are intended to represent all nine miraculous gifts Paul had earlier listed (1 Cor. 12:8-10). He named some of them, meaning all of them—since they were all interrelated as to purpose. Stating a part for the whole is a

recognized figure of speech called a synecdoche.

In verse 9, Paul employs the synecdoche again by referring only to two miraculous gifts—knowledge and prophesy. By referring to these gifts in this way, he means again to include all the miraculous gifts. *For we know in part, and we prophesy in part* shows us that God’s Word was being revealed part-by-part over a period of time while the gifts were still available.

In verse 10 Paul wrote, “But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away” (remember, *perfect* means “complete”). *That which is perfect* describes the completed revelation promised to the apostles (John 16:13). Once the Word was completed (i.e., all the “parts” had been revealed and recorded), the miraculous revelation and confirmation of the Word part-by-part would cease. As noted earlier, Paul tells us that the man of God equipped with the Scriptures is perfect/complete (2 Tim. 3:16-17). James called the Gospel “the perfect (complete) law of liberty” (1:25). Thus, Paul’s expression, *that which is perfect*, can **only refer** to the completed revelation of God to mankind, which we now have in the Bible.

Paul goes on to explain that the miracles were only meant for the infant church. He does so by likening this to a child’s growing into manhood: “When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things” (1 Cor. 13:11). This comparison lines up perfectly with what he wrote in Ephesians 4:8, 11-14, and with the rest of the Bible.

Paul then states in verse 12:

For now we see through a glass (mirror), darkly... (at that point in history they were only receiving the Word of God part-by-part, and therefore they could only see part of the picture of God’s revelation); but **then** face to face (the time was coming when they would be able to see God’s Will clearly, upon the completion of the New Testament): **now** I know in part (What did they know in part?—again, the Will of God); but **then** shall I know even as also I am known (the time would come when Paul would know the fullness of God’s Will in his lifetime, just as surely as God already knew him fully) (emph. DES).

Conclusion

So, our question is, “Have miracles ceased?” Would/did there come a time when men would/did grow to a spiritually mature state wherein God would entrust them, yea, even require them, to have faith—based on evidentiary proof recorded in a Book (i.e., the Scriptures)—that what is spoken is truly the Word of God? If not, why would any of the Word be written? We could simply base our faith on the “miracles” men yet claim to perform, and trust that they were speaking the Word directly from God—in which case we do not, and never did, need the written Word. To take this approach, though, will certainly be the difference between spiritual life and spiritual death.

To say that men are still performing miracles implies that more Truth has been coming forth and will continue to do so. Continued revelation of Truth after the time of the apostles would falsify what God said in John 16:13, wherein He promised the apostles the Holy Spirit would guide **them** into **all** Truth. It also leaves the man of God incomplete when equipped with the Scriptures alone, which means that Paul would have written an inaccuracy (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Further, if miracles are still truly being performed today, what is the meaning of 1 Corinthians 13:8-12 (wherein Paul clearly tied the cessation of the miracles to the completion of the Word, as he did in Eph. 4:8, 11-14)? Moreover, the “perfect” (complete) law of liberty” would not be complete (Jam. 1:25).

To hold that God is still giving miraculous gifts to men would mean that the church is still like a child (1 Cor. 13:11; Eph. 4:14). It would mean that we are **not** equipped with “all things that pertain to life and godliness” through the knowledge of Christ (2 Pet. 1:3), and that the faith was **not** “once for all delivered” (Jude 3), causing Peter and Jude to contradict Paul in 1 Corinthians 13 and Ephesians 4. However, were not they guided by the Holy Ghost to write what they wrote? So, how could they be incorrect and contradict other inspired writers? They were not, and they did not. Interpretations based on unfounded assumptions, plus unlearned and unstable handling of the Scrip-

tures, render said interpretations incorrect and contradictory of the inspired men. Wanting so badly for the miraculous gifts to continue, men twist the Scriptures to their own destruction (2 Pet. 3:16). However, the "honest and good heart" will humbly come out of this error and handle the Word of God rightly (2 Tim. 2:15).

We have observed the following facts in this study:

1. Jesus promised the apostles (and **only** the apostles) that the Father would send the Holy Spirit to them, and that the Spirit would "guide them into all truth" (John 16:13). (Thus, if further revelation occurred **after** the death of the last apostle [John, c. A.D. 100], the Lord did not fulfill His promise.)
2. The Holy Spirit provided miraculous gifts to the early saints, a major purpose of which was to confirm the truth being spoken as it was being revealed (John 20:30-31; Heb. 2:3-4; et al.).
3. The apostles **alone** possessed the power to transmit miraculous gifts of the Spirit to other disciples (Acts 6:5-8; 8:14-19; 19:6; 2 Tim. 1:6). Therefore, when the last apostle died, the means of empowering others died with him.
4. When the revelation was complete, the need for the miraculous gifts of confirmation would no longer exist and they would cease (1 Cor. 13:8-12; Eph. 4:11-14).

Revelation and confirmation ran on parallel tracks with the same point of termination. Before the last surviving apostle (John) died, the revelation of God to men had been fully, completely, perfectly given and committed to writing. Not only were the miraculous gifts no longer needed, but by Divine "coincidence," with the death of John the means of transmitting these gifts no longer existed. Thus, when the last brother or sister died, upon whom an apostle had laid hands so as to impart spiritual gifts, miraculous powers themselves were no more.

Miraculous gifts, like the scaffolding of a building, were necessary for the process of construction. However, as the scaffolds are temporary and are rendered superfluous and unnecessary with the building's completion, so it is with the Spiritual gifts. They were necessary, but temporary measures the Lord used to complete the "construction" of His New Testament—the Gospel, the faith. Once completed ("delivered," Jude 3), He removed the "scaffolds."

To claim that God has provided men with miraculous abilities since the first century and the complete revelation of "all truth," disrupts the order God has set out and causes the Bible to contradict itself multiple times. God will never do such even once (1 Cor. 14:33; Tit. 1:2; Heb. 6:18). Have miracles ceased? The Word of God emphatically answers, "Yes they Have!"

Endnotes

¹ Granted, *Scripture* in the immediate context likely refers to the Old Testament, which Timothy had been taught from his childhood (2 Tim. 3:15). However, by the time of Paul's writing those words (c. A.D. 68), he had written all of his other epistles, and other New Testament books had been written as well (e.g., Matthew, Luke, Acts, et al.). We know that at least some of these were in circulation (e.g., Col. 4:15-16) and were accepted as inspired writings at the time Paul wrote his second letter to Timothy. Moreover, Peter referred to Paul's writings as "Scripture" (2 Pet. 3:15-16). Thus, when Paul referred to "all Scripture," the term includes, in principle, all inspired Scripture that had been or would be revealed—including the New Testament Scriptures.

Addendum—Related Questions

What about Ananias' "laying his hands" on Paul (Acts 9:17)?

Notice that Jesus spoke directly to Ananias. This shows that this occasion was completely out of the ordinary. Saul (Paul) the man, his conversion, and his apostleship were all extraordinary—he was an apostle "born out of due time" (1 Cor. 15:8). But even considering all of this, the context of Acts 9:17 does not suggest that Saul received his miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost through the laying on of Ananias's hands. We dare not add something that is not there (Rev. 22:18-19) or reach a conclusion that causes a contradiction between passages of Holy Writ. Luke tells us that Ananias's pur-

poses for meeting Saul were (1) so that he might receive his sight (Acts 9:12), (2) to tell him what he must do to be saved (9:6, 17-18; 22:16), and (3) that Saul might “be filled with the Holy Spirit” (9:17). Ananias obviously possessed the miraculous gift of healing, otherwise he could not have healed Saul’s blindness (Saul’s healing was “immediate” and “at once” when Ananias laid his hands on him). Since, as previously proved, only apostles could empower others with miraculous gifts of the Spirit (Acts 6:5-6; 8:12-17; 19:6), we must conclude that at some point (likely before coming to Damascus Ananias had been in Jerusalem) the apostles had transmitted this power to him, as they had done in the case of the seven disciples and the Samaritan saints (6:5-6, 8; 8:6-7, 13).

Note that, while Ananias healed Saul’s blindness by laying his hands on him, Luke does not state that this would be the **means** of Saul’s being “filled with the Holy Spirit.” Ananias said the Lord sent him so that Saul’s sight might be restored and that he might be filled with the Holy Spirit (9:17). However, note also that the stated **result** of Ananias’ laying his hands on Saul was **not** that “he received his sight, and he was filled with the Holy Spirit,” but that “he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized” (v. 18; cf. 22:16). *Filled with the Holy Spirit* does not necessarily refer to miracle-working power; its meaning must be determined by the context.

The case of the seven disciples in Jerusalem is instructive in this regard. Significantly, Luke stated that they were “full of the Holy Spirit” **before** the apostles laid hands on them, thereby empowering them to work signs and wonders (Acts 6:3-6). Thus, *full of the Holy Spirit* in that context apparently referred to the “ordinary” non-miraculous “gift of the Holy Spirit” promised every person following his confessed faith in the Christ, repentance of sins, and baptism in water unto the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:37-38; cf. 5:32). One **must** have this “filling” (i.e., “indwelling”) of the Spirit (which implies no miraculous abilities), or he does not belong to God (Rom. 8:9-11).

He arose and was baptized tells the means by—and the point at—which Saul was “filled with the Holy Spirit” as a result of Ananias’s visit, that is, when he was baptized in water, **not** when Ananias laid his hands upon him. There is no record of Saul’s miraculous powers until sometime later as he and Barnabas are named among the “prophets” at Antioch (13:1; cf. Gal. 1:11-21). Paul’s first miracle is not recorded until after he and Barnabas entered upon their first preaching trip (Acts 13:9-12). Of course, there is no denying that Paul, being an apostle, was at some point baptized with the Holy Ghost, generally believed to have occurred while he was in Arabia (Gal. 1:17).

What about the gift that was given to Timothy “with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery” (1 Tim. 4:14)?

While “laying hands on” someone in the New Testament sometimes indicates the impartation of miraculous gifts (e.g., Acts 6:3-6, 8; 8:17-18; et al.), it does not in every case, as indicated above (Acts 9:17-18). *The presbytery* refers to the particular congregational eldership under which Timothy served, likely at the time that he joined Paul’s efforts, thus the elders of the church at Lystra (Acts 16:1-3). It was customary in that day for brethren to “lay hands on” men chosen for given responsibilities, thus indicating their approval of them (cf. Acts 13:1-3). Notice in 1 Timothy 4:14 that Timothy did not receive the gift **by**, but “**with** the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.” They were thereby demonstrating their approval of and confidence in Timothy as fully capable of the work upon which he was about to enter. That the gift Timothy received was given “by prophecy” likely means that Paul knew by inspiration that Timothy was a suitable young man for Paul’s endeavors. Whatever “gift of God” (i.e., spiritual gift) Timothy was given came through the hands of Paul (2 Tim. 1:6), not through the hands of the elders.

Since Philip could not give miraculous abilities to others (Acts 8:12-19), how did his daughters receive the gift of prophecy (Acts 21:9)?

Philip received miraculous gifts when the apostles laid their hands on him and the six other brethren in Jerusalem (Acts 6:5-6, 8; 8:5-7). After departing from the apostles, he went to Samaria (Acts 8:5), thereafter taking up residence in Caesarea (v. 40) in perhaps A.D. 38. His name disappears from the inspired record until Paul visited him in Caesarea in about A.D. 58. (21:9). Since we do not know the age of either Philip or

his daughters, it is possible that the daughters were old enough for the apostles to impart the gift of prophecy to them either while they lived in Jerusalem or when Peter and John visited them in Samaria. Further, as close as Philip was with the apostles, being a member of the Jerusalem congregation with them, it is certainly possible, even probable, that he met up with one or more of them occasionally over that span of 20 years. We know his daughters had met them at least once. Thus, there were ample opportunities for these ladies to receive the gift of prophecy through the laying on of the hands of one or more apostles.

Are not all who become Christians baptized by/in the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13)?

Paul wrote: “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:13).

As we have learned in the foregoing material, Jesus promised the apostles that the Holy Spirit would guide them into **all** truth (John 16:13) (thus **all** of God’s Word [17:17]). This guidance was accomplished by the miraculous powers provided by the Holy Ghost. This Word that was revealed to them was for the purpose of saving mankind. Christ stated that men must believe that revealed message—the Gospel—and be baptized in order to be saved (Mark 16:15-16). Baptism is for—in order to receive—the remission (pardon) of one’s sins (Acts 2:38), and the element of this baptism is water (Acts 8:36; 10:47-48; Eph. 5:26-27; et al.). Our sins are washed away by Jesus’ blood in the act of baptism (Rev. 1:5; Acts 22:16). Baptism saves us (i.e., in the sense that baptism in water is the point at which we are saved) (1 Pet. 3:21; cf. Mark 16:16a; et al.). It is the only way we can get “into Christ” (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27), being baptized into His one body, His church (Eph. 1:22-23), where **all** spiritual blessings are, including forgiveness of sins (Eph. 1:3, 7; 2 Tim. 2:10). Furthermore, Christ commanded **men** to administer this baptism (Mat. 28:19).

We therefore know that 1 Corinthians 12:13 does not refer to baptism in the Holy Ghost, for only God could perform that. How do we know all of this? Only by the guidance of the Holy Ghost—as written in His Holy Scriptures. He guided the apostles to write what they wrote, and we have that Word preserved for our guidance. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body... (1 Cor. 12:13) simply means that by the agency of this one Spirit—by His direction through His Word (Eph. 6:17)—we learn that we must be baptized (in water) into that one body, the church of Christ. This understanding of 1 Corinthians 12:13 is fully demonstrated in the events of Pentecost. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Peter commanded believers to repent and be baptized in order to receive forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38), whereupon about 3,000 who received (obeyed) the Holy Spirit’s Word (as preached by Peter) were baptized and “added unto them” (v. 41). That to which the Lord added them was His church (v. 47; cf. Mat. 16:18). Verse 47 also states that He has continued to add souls to His church every day as they are baptized in water unto remission of sins.

This concludes the portion of this series of the manuscript “Have Miracles Ceased?” In the next part of this series, the response of Mrs. Julie Jackson will be covered and analyzed. Her response is telling, and in typical fashion of denominationalists swamped in Pentecostalism. It cannot, however, be missed that she responded with a letter of significant length. Perhaps that is an indication that the manuscript unsettled her in the error she was (is?) steeped in.

How to Convert People

W.S. Boyett

And I, brethren, when I came unto you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in

demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God (1 Cor. 2:1-5).

This passage lends itself to the following considerations:

Proper Way to Convert People

God's way for converting people is by preaching the truth to them with simplicity. More preaching is being done today than at any other time in history, but the number of converts made by the preaching is lower. Paul teaches us that when we stand before an audience to preach, we are not there to display eloquence or superior wisdom, but to preach Christ and him crucified with simplicity. Paul was not an eloquent orator. He once said of himself: "For I reckon that I am not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles. But though *I be* rude in speech, yet *am I* not in knowledge; nay, in every way have we made *this* manifest unto you in all things" (2 Cor. 11:5-6). No wonder that we do not convert more people today, when much of the preaching they hear focuses their minds on the eloquence of the speaker rather than on "Christ and him crucified." Paul wrote so that those who read what he wrote might **understand** his knowledge in the mystery, and to make men **see** the dispensation of the same mystery (Eph. 3: 2-9). We will make more converts when we preach more like Paul.

The Proper State of Mind

"I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling." This was not physical weakness, but the state of the mind when he faced the grave responsibility of preaching Christ to the wicked city of Corinth. Charles Hodge says:

This weakness of which he here speaks was **not bodily** weakness...Here the whole context shows he refers to his state of mind. It was not in the consciousness of strength, self confident and self-relying, that he appeared among them, but as oppressed with a sense of his weakness and insufficiency (*Commentary on 1 Corinthians*, p. 31).

What preacher has ever preached on such subjects as "The Love of God," "The Holy Spirit," "The Godhead," without feeling this weakness and insufficiency?

The Success of the Gospel

This does not depend on the eloquence of the man but on the **power** of the message. The Gospel has the power (Rom. 1:16) and will convert people when in simplicity it is faithfully preached. The **power** is not in the **man**, but in the **message**.

The Foundation of Faith

"That is your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but In the power of God." The Gospel is the "power of God unto salvation," and it is the preaching of this Gospel that produces faith in the hearers (Rom. 10:17), "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." The faith of the hearers will be no stronger than the message that produced it. Faith that rests on the **Gospel, the power of God**, will wield a powerful influence in and through the one who possesses it. We must have strong faith in the hearts of those in the pews. The church's greatest weakness today is **weak faith** among the members, caused by weak preaching in the pulpits.



The Uniqueness of the Church of Christ

William S. Cline

The church of Christ stands unique and supreme. Simply to be unique is not a criteria by which to judge as to evil or excellence. In the sense that the word is used here it is to identify the church as being unique in that it is not the work of man. Inasmuch as God's ways are higher than man's ways, so the church is unique in that it is above the works, ways, and thoughts of man to the extent that it is supreme in all things.

Its Founder, Size, Purpose, Goals

The church was purchased (founded) by the shedding of the blood of Christ who, by His resurrection from the dead, proclaimed himself worthy of such a role as Savior and Redeemer of all mankind. The church can exist with the meeting of two or of thousands. Universally, all who have been baptized into Christ are children of God,

added to the body of Christ—the church. Uniquely, its only requirement is that each child of God submit himself to the righteousness of God, (not to any man) that he live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present life—lifted up and held there by the sustaining love and power of the King of kings. The goal of the church, and its efforts to spread the gospel of Christ for salvation of all mankind, regardless of color, sex, race, or condition of servitude, is in line with all other points of supremacy.

Its Constitution

Although numberless books have been written regarding the many facets of the Bible—this book remains alone and above all other books as a rule of faith and practice. It is so simple that the simple can understand yet so complex that it can challenge the most brilliant of minds and can challenge anywhere in between these two extremes. It does not stand in need of revision, correction, or omission. It is a revelation of the mind of God to man, and is usable by any man regardless of age, era, climate, Or culture. It is divine, eternal, complete; sufficient for man unto all good works and saving power. It can guide the attitudes, the thoughts, the actions of any Christian in this life and then past death into eternal life. Uniquely, no power on earth or in heaven can cut off the flow of love and power to mankind, except as each man may determine within himself to refuse such—as a person may refuse is as simple as that, water by shutting off the faucet. It and as complete.

Its Organization

With Christ as Lord and King, and the Word of God as rule for faith and practice, no organization is needed except as a group of local Christians combine to accomplish that which they cannot do alone. Elders of the local congregation represent the highest limited authority within the body of Christ and their authority does not extend beyond the operation and work of that congregation as it strives to extend the borders of the kingdom of Christ.

The Limitations of God

Kent Bailey

God does exist. When one looks at life in all of its forms and various modes logical and rational thinking necessitates the conclusion regarding the reality of the existence of God.



While the Bible is a logical book setting forth various arguments to prove its basic message, it is interesting to note that the existence of God, while addressed within the scriptures, is never set forth in the form of a logical argument. God has demonstrated Himself in such ways that His existence should be considered obvious. While logical and rational arguments have and are consistently made proving the existence of God the essence of both humanity and nature is a testament to God's very being.

With knowledge of the fact that God is a Spirit, absolute, personal, holy, infinite and eternal in His being and attributes, the divine cause of all of the universe; it goes without controversy to argue that neither humanity nor any other outside force or substance can limit the power of God. However the scriptures also reveal that because of God's attributes and essence He has placed limitations upon Himself. God **cannot** and thus **will not** so act as to contradict either His attributes or His essence. Such is the case because God cannot cease to be God.

Atheists often attempt to place those who believe in the existence of God in a hopeless dilemma. They will often times attempt to argue against the reality of God by raising the question, “Can God create a rock that is so large He cannot move it?” Such is an illogical, irrational question that is not even precisely stated.

When one understands correctly the affirmations of Biblical Theism, one will understand that God **cannot** so act in a way or means that would be contradictory of His divine attributes or essence. Were he so act in a contradictory manner He would cease to be God. God will never cease to be God, therefore God by his very attributes and

essence has placed limitations upon Himself. Therefore God would never create a rock that was so large that He could not move such; neither could He create a square circle, a heavenly and righteous demon, nor anything else that would promote a logical contradiction.

The true God of the Bible is not a being that is self contradictory. Were God to contradict Himself, such would be a denial of Himself and He would cease to be God. Such is an impossibility that can never happen!

Atheists are not alone in not properly understanding the Biblical affirmations regarding the attributes and essence of God. There are even those who do believe in the existence of God, yet because they do not understand the attributes and essence of God, they have a false view of God's being and person. They do not understand the limitations that God's existence requires.

God cannot lie. God will never place any divine requirement upon humanity and then at the final judgment state a divine decree through Christ that such requirements were really not absolutely necessary after all. God will not decree that a condition is essential to one's eternal salvation and then casually brush it aside to show partiality to some while condemning others to the eternal flames of torment for not obeying a condition or conditions that were components of a specific covenant to which those amenable to such a covenant were required to obey (Numbers 23:18; Titus 1:1-2; Romans 9:1; 2 Corinthians 11:31, Galatians 1:11-12, 20; 2 Timothy 2:10-13; John 17:17; 1 John 2:21; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10, Hebrews 6:13-20).

God cannot break any promise. None of the promises of God can be broken or even postponed. In Genesis 12:1-3,7 we note that God made unto Abraham both land and nation promises regarding his posterity. Such was fulfilled in Israel's exodus from Egyptian bondage (Exodus 19:4-6; 20:1-17; 24:1-8; 34:27-28). These promises were conditional. Faithfulness was required of Israel (Deuteronomy 28:1-68; Joshua 21:43-45). In Genesis 22:15-18 God gave Abraham even a greater promise that through his seed all of the nations of the earth would be blessed. Such was accomplished in the first coming of Christ (Acts 3:25-26; Galatians 3:16). In understanding the promises of God one can know with absolute certainty that God **cannot** break any promise made under the New Testament of Christ (Mark 16:15-16; Revelation 2:10). When one obeys the gospel of Christ God has promised to forgive sin (Hebrews 10:16-17). As a Christian God has promised eternal life conditioned upon faithful living (Revelation 2:10).

God cannot forgive sin separate and apart from His plan. We need to remind ourselves and those who hear us about God's attributes and essence. Because God is holy, just, and righteous His love and mercy can never be exercised arbitrarily and inconsistently with his other attributes or in opposition to His divine essence. God has provided for us a divine scheme wherein individuals can be saved from their sins in both this present life and in all eternity (1 Peter 1:18-23).

When one rejects the plan that God has provided for our salvation such a rejection makes it impossible for God to forgive those who reject such (2 Thessalonians 1:7-10). To reject the concept of the pattern authority of the New Testament in any area of divine revelation places one in sin (Colossians 3:17; 2 John 9-11). To remain in a sinful condition by rejecting God's standard for becoming a Christian, respecting the pattern for New Testament worship, work, organization of the New Testament church, as well as the basis and limits of Biblical fellowship brings about the rejection of both God and His divine Son.

To be saved the alien sinner must:

- Believe The Gospel of Christ
- Repent Of Sins
- Confess Christ
- And Be Baptized Unto The Remission Of Sins.

To be restored to the fellowship of Christ the fallen child of God must:

- Repent Of Covenant Sins

- Confess Them
- And Pray For God's Divine Forgiveness.

May we recognize the limitations of God. May we learn to truly love God and His Son, come to appreciate his divine scheme for us, and develop a true spirit of submission to God's plan to be saved in both this life as well as in eternity.

The Sins of Sodom and Gomorrah Have Come to be the American Way

Jess Whitlock

The Congressional Record of January 10, 1963 contains a list of “Current Communist Goals.” The list is gleaned from the book, “The Naked Communist” written by Cleon Skousen. Mr. Skousen was with the FBI for sixteen years. Communists desire to,



...eliminate all laws governing obscenity by calling them censorship...break down cultural **standards of morality** and promoting pornography...present **homosexuality**, degeneracy, **promiscuity** as normal, natural, and healthy...**discredit** the **Bible**...eliminate prayer or any phase of religious expression in the schools...**discredit** the **family**...

You might well say that as far as Communism's goals, they are on target!

There were numerous causes leading to the fall of Rome as discussed by Edward Gibbon in his six-volume study of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. There was antagonism between the Senate and Emperor, political corruption, decline in morality, the Praetorian Guard, decline in ethics, failing economy, et al. Did you notice the decline in morals?

During the Pax Romana era there were in excess of 32,000 temple prostitutes in Rome. The immorality included adultery, sex orgies and sodomite acts. Emperor Tiberius kept groups of young boys for his own pleasure. Emperor Nero was guilty of incest and had his own slave castrated so that he could take him as wife. Rome had adopted the pederasty of the Greeks, generally aimed at boys between the ages of 12 and 18. The Emperor Nero was said by the historian Tacitus (A.D. 56-117) to have a passion for free-born boys, and was married to other men and one boy! Read the history of Suetonius and Martial and in doing so you will become quite ill. So-called “gay marriage” was alive and well in Rome at the time of her demise! This sin is not new...several American Presidents have been exposed as being guilty of practicing homosexuality! For shame! As the late brother Dub Mowery once said, “There is no such thing as a so-called ‘**same sex**’ marriage.”

The wickedness of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah was a stench in the nostrils of God. “And Jehovah said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous I will go down now” (Gen. 18:20-21). In Genesis 19 two angels, in the form of men are granted a night's lodging in the house of Lot. Notice please,

...the men of Sodom, both old and young, all the people from every quarter, surrounded the house. And they called to Lot and said to him, ‘Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may know them carnally.’ (Gen. 19: 4-5).

Lot actually offered his two daughters to this mob. They only wanted the men! The angels pulled Lot into the house and shut the door. “And they (angels, JW) struck the men who were at the doorway of the house with blindness, both small and great, so that they became weary trying to find the door.” (Gen. 19:11). Lot and his family are allowed to leave the city, even though Lot's wife “looked back.”

“Then Jehovah rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from Jehovah out of the heavens. “So, He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground.” (Gen. 19:24-25). The Lord God destroyed the

cities of the plain because of the heinous sin of sodomy. God decreed that, “Thou shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination” (Lev. 18:22), and Paul later wrote in The New Testament:

For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise, also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due (Rom. 1:26-27).

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