

The Gospel Preceptor

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

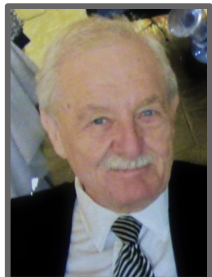
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“Yea, Hath God Said...”

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The first introduction to man's adversary in the Bible is in his question to Eve. “Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?” (Gen 3:1). In his first appearance to mankind, Satan came in the role of a preacher, or religious adviser. It was probably a surprise to find this evil one in such a perfect place as the Garden of Eden, discussing God's commandment. But, to the discerning, his presence there comes as no surprise. You see, Satan is found in churches, even in our day. In fact, he has his own churches and ministers. He does not confine his work to the Church of Satan, but is active in the denominations about us as well. Paul said it was no marvel that false teachers worked among the Corinthians.

For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works (2 Cor. 11:13-15).

Satan's ministers are pious and lovely in many respects. They project an air of righteousness, kindness, compassion and love, but they serve the wrong master. Yes, indeed, Satan's ministers occupy pulpits in our city and across the land today. They can be found in the persons of Billy and Franklin Graham, Kenneth Copeland, John Hagee, and thousands of others like them. They are in every denomination because denominations belong to Satan. Jesus did not establish them, and denominational preachers serve Satan—not Christ.

Satan perverted the scripture in his temptation of Eve. When she said God had commanded them to refrain from eating of the forbidden fruit, “lest ye die” (Gen. 3:3), he replied, “Ye shall not surely die” (Gen. 3:4). When he tempted Jesus, he perverted Psalms 91:11-12 and was corrected by Jesus (Matt. 4:6-7). You see, Satan is a liar and the father of liars (John 8:44). He will use any ruse or device to trick people into avoiding obedience to God. His single purpose is the eternal destruction of man and he incessantly seeks whom he may devour (1 Pet. 5:8).

Satan's Opposition to Baptism

Like him whom they serve, Satan's modern day ministers are notorious for perverting scripture, and handle well the tools of their master. One example—and an important one—is their almost unanimous opposition to baptism for the remission of sins. Jesus said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16) and Peter told the Pentecostians, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38). From Acts 2, through the end of that book, there is not a single case of conversion that leaves out baptism into Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. Yet, Satan's ministers, prominent among whom are Baptist preachers, will fight tooth and nail to negate the Lord's command and, like Satan, pervert the scriptures. Jesus said belief, plus baptism, equals salvation, but Baptist preachers teach that one is first saved, then should be baptized. In reality, Baptist opposition to baptism for the remission of sins is Satan's opposition, so it should be no surprise that they oppose the very act from which they take their name. Liars and their father have

no scruples.

There are only two great kingdoms in the world—Christ’s and Satan’s. All persons on earth are either in the kingdom of Satan, serving him through sin, or in the kingdom of Christ, serving him through righteousness (Rom. 6:17-18). The greatest tool Satan possesses to damn men’s souls is denominationalism. He knows denominations arose from the wisdom of men and that they are opposed to the church which Jesus built. Knowing this, he uses deceit to convince denominational members that they are part of the church of Christ.

Satan also knows that the Lord accepts no one without gospel obedience, which includes faith (Heb. 11:6; John 8:24), repentance (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38), confession (Matt. 10:32; Rom 10:10), and baptism (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:28; 1 Pet. 3:21). These things are the sum of primary obedience to the gospel and all are necessary for salvation. Satan’s ministers have no problem with any of them except baptism. The reason? He knows that baptism is the culminating act that puts one into Christ, and, thus, into Christ’s kingdom. So long as his ministers oppose baptism for the remission of sins, Satan knows that he will not lose a single soul to Christ who believe them. Neither faith, repentance nor confession removes one from Satan’s kingdom and puts one into Christ’s. So far as faith is concerned, Satan believes in Jesus Christ. James said, “the devils also believe and tremble” (Jas. 2:19), but the devils are not in Christ’s kingdom. Demons also confessed Jesus Christ as God’s Son (Matt. 8:28-29), but demons are not in the kingdom of Christ. Nor does repentance—a change of will followed by a change of life (2 Cor. 7:10; Matt. 21:28-29). A person may change his manner of living and do good works, but that does not make him a subject in Christ’s kingdom. One such person was Cornelius, “...a devout man who feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always” (Acts 10:2). But Cornelius was in Satan’s kingdom and was told to, “Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; who shall tell thee words whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved” (Acts 11:13-14). Despite his exemplary life, Cornelius was lost. But when Cornelius obeyed the word of the Lord, spoken by Peter, he was baptized into Christ, had the guilt of his sins washed in the blood of Christ, and left Satan’s kingdom (Acts 2:41, 47).

Satan’s Questions From Ulterior Motives

When I recall a Baptist preacher’s question to me several years ago, I am reminded of Satan’s question to Eve—“Yea, hath God said?” The Baptist preacher asked me what Peter meant when he wrote, “The like figure whereunto baptism doth now also save us, (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God)...” (1 Pet. 3:21). I knew he did not believe that divine statement and told him that it meant what it said, that “baptism doth also now save us.” Then he began to argue against baptism for salvation. Like his master, Satan, his question was asked for an ulterior motive. It was asked not to learn the truth, but to twist and pervert the scriptures, as Satan, asked a question to Eve for the purpose of discrediting God’s commandment.

Questioning the truth is a ploy of Satan and his denominational henchmen. They may ask questions in a pious manner, but their motive is to oppose God’s will and cast doubts in the minds of those they question. Satan did that to Eve and to Jesus. He told Jesus, “If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread” (Matt. 4:3). Satan well knew that Jesus is the Son of God, but expressed doubt (“If thou be the Son of God”) in order to trick the Lord into demon-strating His deity. The same ploy was employed by false teachers in the synagogue who asked Jesus, “Is it lawful to heal a man on the Sabbath day” (Matt. 12:10). Luke says they sought to find a way to accuse Jesus of wrongdoing (Luke 6:6-11).

There are no greater servants of Satan than pious, morally upright, kind, gentle, loving, merciful preachers and members of denominations who oppose the plain commands of God. They will far outnumber those who will be cast into hell for atheism. (Matt. 7:21-23). Do not be duped by Satan’s ministers who come to you piously intoning, “Yea, hath God said...?”

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

What the Bible Says About Hell

Gary W. Summers



If there is a God who will damn his children forever, I would rather go to hell than to go to heaven and keep the society of such an infamous tyrant. I make my choice now. I despise that doctrine. It has covered the cheeks of this world with tears. It has polluted the hearts of children, and poisoned the imaginations of men. It has been a constant pain, a perpetual terror to every good man and woman and child. It has filled the good with horror and with fear; but it has had no effect upon the infamous and base. It has wrung the hearts of the tender, it has furrowed the cheeks of the good. This doctrine never should be preached again. What right have you, sir, Mr. clergyman, you, minister of the gospel to stand at the portals of the tomb, at the vestibule of eternity, and fill the future with horror and with fear? I do not believe this doctrine, neither do you. If you did, you could not sleep one moment. Any man who believes it, and has within his breast a decent, throbbing heart, will go insane. A man who believes that doctrine and does not go insane has the heart of a snake and the conscience of a hyena.

These words were composed by Robert G. Ingersoll, the notorious orator, political leader, and atheist of the 19th century (1833-1899). They contain some truth. The Biblical doctrine of hell has caused many people to fear and many to sorrow over loved ones they know are lost. Many have undoubtedly also been driven to prayer on behalf of loved ones or themselves and lost sleep as well. However, neither of these reactions proves that the teaching is false. Some have also feared financial loss, sorrowed over it, and lost hours of sleep. A loss of one's wealth, however, remains a fiscal possibility. The problem with Ingersoll's approach is that it does not take into consideration all of the facts that will result in someone being consigned to hell. He is looking at the doctrine from a human rather than a Divine perspective. However, someone who truly wants to explore the issue should look at it from all angles.

Does a Place of Torment Exist?

Does God want anyone to be lost and forever be in torment? No (2 Pet. 3:9). Do the vast majority of human beings want anyone to experience hell? No. It has become so unpopular that many who have professed Christianity have given up on the doctrine and decided that it is not true. Many denominational *clergymen* gave up on it a long time ago, and some in the Lord's church have followed suit, agreeing with Edward Fudge's book, *The Fire That Consumes*.¹ Because some brethren have switched from eternal torment to the theory of annihilation, denominational pastors virtually preach everyone into heaven, and since atheists abhor the idea, then who is keeping the doctrine alive—and for what purpose?

The main proponents of this largely-discarded tenet of Christianity are **truth** and **reality**. If the Bible is the inspired Word of God (and it is), then hell exists whether or not anyone believes that it is so. If Jesus is to be trusted (and He is), then there is a fire that shall never be quenched (Mark 9:43). (Why does the fire eternally burn if the souls of men are annihilated in a few seconds?) Our Lord also specified that the punishment lasts as long as the reward—they are both eternal (Mat. 25:46).

So, without question, hell does exist. The question mankind ought to concern itself

with is: “Who will be there?” Revelation 20:10 declares that the devil, the sea beast, and the earth beast (the false prophet) shall all be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone. “And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.” Probably, few people have any difficulty comprehending that the devil deserves to be there in payment for his centuries of deceiving mankind and bringing nothing but sorrow and misery to the earth. But the Bible also teaches that hell will be the final abode of many human beings—in fact, the majority (Mat. 7:13-14). Jesus taught that many would hear these words on the Day of Judgment: “Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (25:41). Did Ingersoll ever lose sleep over the fact that the devil would be in hell? Did it drive him insane that angels will be there? Or did only human beings concern him—because he is one?

The Reality of Sin

What people made in the image of God need to understand is the concept of sin. Everyone sees manifestations of it. Murder, for example, is understood to be sin by everyone. Unfortunately, it started early in man’s existence with Cain killing Abel. From 1974 to 1996, just the United States alone averaged 20,000 murders per year. Since that time, the number has averaged 16,000. This information comes from statistics on a chart titled: “United States Crime Rates 1960-2010.” It also includes statistics on robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, theft, and rape. The existence and results of evil cannot be denied.

Although we readily see sin at work in people’s lives, we must go to the Bible to find out what God’s definitions are. *Sin* is the transgression of the law (1 John 3:4—KJV); it defies God’s laws of morality and ethics. *Sin* is lawlessness (1 John 3:4—NKJV). Murder is against the laws of our nation, as well as against God’s law. The one who murders disregards the law of both God and man. If man punishes a murderer by putting him in prison for life, can we therefore fault God for putting him in prison for eternity? The question, then, is not, “Should sinners be punished?” but “What is the appropriate punishment?” Many think that eternity in the lake of fire is too severe, but, to understand the situation properly, we must obtain the spiritual perspective that God has concerning sin.

God's Holiness and its Implications

God is **holy**. Actually, God possesses many characteristics. For most people, **love** is often the first one that comes to mind. It is the one thing that Christians and atheists know about God—that He is love. Unfortunately, many people begin and end with that one quality even though a number of others are mentioned in the Bible—including His holiness, justice, and wrath. These lesser-emphasized characteristics must be understood, however, before we can understand God’s grace, love, and mercy. There are five words in the Old Testament translated *holy*, most of which are related to each other. Following is a composite definition from all five words: “hallowed, dedicated, consecrated, clean ceremonially and morally, pure, pious, religiously kind, good, sacred.” The New Testament words for *holy* are also related to each other, and they have the same approximate meanings.

It may be difficult for human beings to imagine that the ideal of holiness, which we fall short of, is absolute in God. He is totally untainted by any kind of corruption or immorality. Although aware of evil, He never desires to sin or to practice wickedness. How fortunate for us—since we probably could not even **imagine** a universe under the control of a malevolent, all-powerful Being, let alone **live** in one so constructed. God’s character is such that He can neither practice corruption nor fellowship it.

His spiritual creation was perfect. He created the heavenly host, however, with free will; Satan took advantage of this freedom and led a rebellion against God (some of the other angels foolishly hearkening unto him and joining him). They recklessly discarded the pleasures of heaven and the safety that exists in submitting to the will of God. This transgression was repeated on earth. Mankind chose to disobey God’s commandment, also, and, in so doing, lost the earthly paradise that God had granted to Adam and Eve.

A pure and holy God cannot allow evil to remain in heaven. Therefore, He could not

“spare the angels who sinned, but cast *them* down to hell” (2 Pet. 2:4). (The Greek word translated *hell* in this passage is *Tartarus*, and it refers to the place of torment for the wicked in the Hadean realm.) This is a temporary separation from God, but it will be made permanent later on when this portion of Hades is cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:13-14). Just as God had to remove the angels who sinned from the heavenly realm, so He will likewise remove to *Gehenna*, after the Judgment, all who have sinned on earth—and not repented. Goodness and evil cannot commune (2 Cor. 6:14-18). God has no choice but to bring about this separation. His very essence demands it. He cannot possibly be anything other than what He is. Whether the angels or men like or approve of this fact is irrelevant. This is the way God is; He cannot change. Nor, if we comprehended the blessings of His righteousness fully, would we want Him to even try.

Descriptions of Hell

All that a person can do is just try to imagine what existence would be like without any of God’s blessings. What would it be like if He withdrew His goodness, holiness, righteousness, and all other good things from the world? Such is the essence of hell. However vivid our imaginations are, they probably cannot match this reality; we should live in such a way (faithful obedience) that we never find out. The punishment of the unjust is away from the presence of God (2 The. 1:9). God and the righteous will live in one spiritual region; the ungodly and the unsaved will be in their own region far, far away with no possibility of the inhabitants of either kingdom ever interacting. Following are some of the descriptions of the awful final abode of many.

1. The first image that usually comes to mind is that of **everlasting fire**, which Jesus used quite frequently (Mat. 5:22; 18:6-9; 25:46). All human beings are aware of the properties of fire and what happens to those who are engulfed in flames. Hell consists of eternal flames; the burning sensation never ceases (Jude 7); never does abatement or relief arrive.

2. A second notable feature of hell is its **darkness** (Mat. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30). To have both fire and darkness may seem like a contradiction, but perhaps the smoke of torment (Rev. 14:11) is so thick that no one can see anything. What a horrible yet appropriate punishment for those who choose to walk in darkness instead of the light! What makes this aspect of hell terrifying is the loss of sight and our fear of the unknown. All should want to avoid the “blackness of darkness” (Jude 6, 13).

3. The third horrifying feature of hell is **excruciating pain**, the response to which is described as “weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Mat. 8:12; 13:42, 50; 24:51; and 25:30). No doubt Jesus intends to underscore the severity of the pain, the very things that Ingersoll and the atheists protest is incompatible with a loving God. These descriptions are intended to show, however, what life without God (totally without Him) is like. Are these intended to be literal descriptions of hell? The soul is a spiritual entity, but we can only understand and respond to the things that afflict the body. Physical pain is used to describe the suffering that the soul will experience in hell, and it will be every bit as painful as what is described in these passages.

4. Hell is a place of **no rest** (Rev. 14:11; 20:10). Heaven is the realm where the soul enjoys that blessing. In hell there will never be a time of relief or respite—no matter how brief. Many are the days on earth that people work hard and look forward to that rest in the evening. However, in this kingdom of darkness, rest never comes.

5. **No requests** will be granted (Luke 16:19-31). The rich man was tormented in the flames of Tartarus, prison where the ungodly await the final judgment. He asked for a little relief but was refused. No requests will be honored in the permanent fiery residence, either.

6. Perhaps the worst feature of hell is that it is a place of **no hope**. As it has often been stated, “While there’s life, there’s hope.” Prior to death (or the Lord’s return), all have hope, no matter how dark or grim a situation appears, but in hell nothing will ever improve. Therefore, there can be no comfort of better days ahead. No prayers for abatement will be heard; petitions will be futile. The suffering never ceases. For that reason, when Paul was encouraging the brethren about the dead in Christ having hope and as-

ceding to Jesus first, he mentioned that the church should not sorrow over their lost ones as others who have no hope (1 The. 4:13).

7. God promises everlasting life to the faithful, but hell is mentioned in 2 Thessalonians 1:9 as a place of **everlasting destruction** (Mat. 10:28; 2 Pet. 2:3), which is also called **the second death** (Rev. 20:14; 21:8).

Hell is a place that no one would want to even visit for as little as one minute, let alone dwell there. Someone might ask. “Haven’t these descriptions bolstered Ingersoll’s claim that God is an ‘infamous tyrant’?” God is not cruel for revealing reality to us. In fact, the opposite is true. What human beings need to understand is that: (1) God is holy; (2) God must eradicate sin from His presence; He cannot associate with or fellowship it; and (3) hell is as horrible as it is precisely because nothing of God or His goodness resides there. Given God and His nature, along with the fact that part of man is eternal, the future cannot be any other way.

God's Love

Nevertheless, God is love. Most people know that fact, but they seem to have forgotten **how** and **why** this is a true statement. God’s wondrous love is seen first of all in that He has warned us to avoid hell by describing it to us. We cannot see it with our physical eyes; none of our other senses can reveal hell’s awfulness to us. The only way we could be warned about it is through God revealing it to us. Imagine driving on a winding road through hills. As soon as one rounds a corner, he sees that a bridge is out. Unable to stop in time, he begins a constant crashing descent to the rocks and trees below, thinking all the way, “Why didn’t somebody warn me?” If those who knew of the situation failed to put up a sign, “BRIDGE OUT—ONE MILE AHEAD,” they would be the most callous individuals ever! By erecting the warning sign, they show care and concern for all travelers.

God cannot change the fact that evil must forever be separated from righteousness, but He can and did give mankind abundant warnings concerning the two alternatives. Additionally, He offers great exhortations to make the right choice. Furthermore, He undertook to do something about our sins, which would keep us out of heaven. He initiated, at great cost to Himself, a means of redeeming man. He did not create mankind with the intention of finding additional fuel for the fires of hell. He did not create the angels for such an end, either. The existence of free will is what makes sin possible; Satan chose that course, and he has since persuaded many angels and men to follow him. The angels were already in heaven when they chose to sin; thus, there could be no redemption for them. People, on the other hand, as a combination of spirit and flesh, live in a fleshly realm, during which they choose their eternal abode by either accepting God’s plan of salvation from their sins—or rejecting it.

We cannot truly speak of God’s grace and mercy except as it pertains to our sins. God is always love (as seen in His creation of a perfect world for us to inhabit). However, His grace and mercy only come to the forefront of our attention because of our sins and the need for their forgiveness. God wants human beings to dwell with Him in eternity, but our sins must be removed so He can fellowship us. Of course, this requires **repentance**, which includes the desire and the determination to cease from sinful ways and practices, and **baptism**, during which the blood of Jesus washes away sins (Acts 22:16; Rev. 1:5). With our sins washed away, we are also sanctified and justified (1 Cor. 6:11). We must remain faithful until death (Rev. 2:10), walking in the light, and confessing our sins to God as we recognize them (1 John 1:7-9).

God's Justice

Most people have heard of God’s love in connection with sending Jesus to die for our sins (John 3:16), but they have, through the influence of Satan, minimized God’s holiness and justice. God has always made His disposition toward sin clear. He has provided us with numerous examples so we will have no doubts concerning those attributes. **Adam** and **Eve** became convinced of God’s justice as they departed from Eden. **Nadab** and **Abihu** served as an object lesson to their fellow Israelites that the profane cannot be mixed with the holy. They offered a strange fire to the Lord which had not been set apart (made holy) for that purpose, and fire came out from the Lord to de-

stroy them (Lev. 10:1-2). These men were priests, sons of Aaron, but they were not exempt from obedience or the consequences of sin.

David was “a man after God’s own heart” (1 Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22); if God were going to overlook sin in human beings, surely David would have been the one for God to exempt. Nevertheless, God held him accountable just as He does everyone. David suffered grievously because of his sins (2 Sam. 12:10-24). By His very nature, God cannot merely ignore sin.

Uzzah had the best of motives when he reached forth his hand to steady the ark of the covenant so it would not fall to the ground. So far as we know, it was not his fault that the ark was being transported improperly, but nevertheless he was struck dead for violating God’s commandment (1 Chr. 13:9-10). Whether Uzzah knew of the penalty for touching the holy objects is irrelevant; God had declared the death penalty for doing so, and it was recorded in the law (Num. 4:15). Uzzah did not realize that he was as profane as the ground; though sincere, he lost his life because he transgressed God’s law. What a striking reminder of the fact that **sincere motives are not enough; obedience is also necessary**. God punishes sin because He must. No man’s death brings Him pleasure (Eze. 18:32), but to let the sinner escape justice would violate His very nature. For this reason Jesus had to pay the full, horrible price for our sins. Only through a legitimate, perfect sacrifice could the demands of justice be met and the price for our sins be paid. Through the blood of Christ, prompted by God’s grace and love, He offers forgiveness for our sins. His plan of redemption is the only means of removing our sins and restoring fellowship with Him. God’s justice also validates the righteousness of His children by rewarding their obedience. Just as He promised (Heb. 5:9).

The Habitants of Hell

That Satan and his angels will be cast into the lake of fire is acknowledged by nearly everyone, but who else shall suffer eternal destruction? Every human being of accountable age is at risk because sin is that which separates us from God, condemns us, and places us in need of salvation. People must understand that, if God assigns us a place in torment, the reason will be for sins that are not forgiven. God has revealed to us that He cannot fellowship sin and that we must have forgiveness of them to be fit for heaven. He has further made Jesus taste death for every man (Heb. 2:9) so we never have to experience it. However, we must respond to God in the way He has specified to have forgiveness. Many choose not to obey the Gospel; they will therefore be lost. Certain categories of those who will be condemned are listed below.

1. **Unbelief** will prevent the proper response to God and leave a person in his sins. “But without faith *it is impossible to please Him*” (Heb. 11:6). Everyone has the evidence for the existence of God (Rom. 1:18-20). Those who have made no attempt to know God are among the lost (2 The. 1:8).
2. One might believe in God but **reject the evidence** for Jesus being His Divine Son and our Savior. Unless we believe that Jesus is He, we shall die in our sins (John 8:24). The blasphemy against the Holy Spirit involved a rejection of the miracles as evidence of the Deity of Jesus (Mark 3:22-30).
3. Some may come to a knowledge of God but have **chosen not to partake of God’s plan** for removing sin. A knowledge of truth is not sufficient unless one acts upon it. Would someone say, “So, the bridge is out one mile ahead. I think I’ll press on anyway”? Those “who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” shall also be “punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power” (2 The. 1:8-9).
4. Even those who have obeyed the Gospel can be at risk—if they become **hypocritical or self-righteous** (Mat. 23:13-33), if they adopt a sin they **refuse to repent** of (1 John 5:16; Luke 13:3), thus making something an **idol** (1 John 5:21), if they become **lazy** or **neglectful** (Mat. 25:1-13; Heb. 2:1-4; Rev. 3:14-22), if they are ensnared or **overtaken by the world** they had previously escaped (2 Pet. 2), if they fall prey to one or more **false doctrines** (1 Tim. 4:16), or if they grow **discouraged** and quit (Heb. 12:1-3).

In other words, God expects all human beings to know, love, and serve Him. We owe Him these things because He created us and offers eternal life to us as well. His constant care and love for us demand a loving response and a willingness to obey Him in all things (Heb. 5:9). It is during this brief, unpredictable life on earth that we make the choice as to whether we want to continue to live with God throughout eternity or whether we would like life better without Him; hell is the realm where God is absent. **Now** is the only hour that we are guaranteed. The decision to obey God must be made **now** (2 Cor. 6:2). With whatever time remains, we must grow, perfect ourselves, and engage in service that will honor Christ and build up His kingdom.

Faith and Rest

Do preachers believe in the doctrine of hell? Ingersoll charged that we do not. For what purpose would a man devote his life to warning people if he thought there was no danger? Of course, not all who call themselves preachers do so. Some think of themselves more as a class of professional ministers and pastors and devote themselves to managing the congregation's affairs. Others preach well in public, which is not as effective as it once was (not that the Gospel lacks power, but people do not come to hear it), but spend little time evangelizing. Preachers can never be content to maintain the status quo without having a goal and a plan for saving souls.

Although Ingersoll's conclusion is wrong, neither preachers nor members have been as evangelistic in our thinking as we ought to have been. Do we have the attitude of Paul that we are **debtors** to all men (Rom. 1:14)? Do we agree with him **in practice** when he wrote: "I have become all things to all *men*, that I might by all means save some" (1 Cor. 9:22)? Perhaps Ingersoll did not perceive in the lives of the **preachers** of his day the urgency that existed in the New Testament, or he may have simply not noticed it. One thing is certain—if we do believe that men are lost in sin and will forever suffer because of it, then we cannot relax in our efforts to save them. Many churches are small and dying—sometimes they are satisfied with the status quo, and this attitude is itself sinful. Congregations need a strategy for vitality. Inward individual, spiritual growth is both necessary and wonderful, but numerical growth is crucial for the continuance of the body of Christ and to defeat Satan by snatching souls out of the fire (Jude 23). If we were growing and maturing as Christians, would we not be growing numerically, also, as a result of our evangelistic efforts?

This admonition to ourselves is necessary because we cannot ever allow conditions in the world or in the church to cause us to settle for complacency. There is too much to do—too many lost to be rescued—to allow ourselves a measure of self-pity due to poor conditions, discouragement, or persecution. Regardless of our individual situations, we must continue marching to Zion with determination and vigor.

Can we sleep at night? We do because the physical body needs rest—and because we know that everything does not depend on us. We are but servants; we pray, work, and leave it up to God to give the increase. We also know that people have freedom of choice, and that, sadly, most are choosing to be lost. We know that because many turn down requests to study or to act on the knowledge they have. If we have taught and encouraged sinners to obey the Gospel, and they do not, we cannot bear that responsibility. We are at fault if we fail to present the good news of salvation. May God bless our efforts and grant us wisdom to do the best we can in reaching those yet lost in sin so they do not have to experience hell. Then we and those who respond properly to the Gospel may rest together in the presence of our God, Creator, and Savior.

Endnote

1 See this writer's analysis of that book in *Profiles in Apostasy #1*, published by *Contending for the Faith* in 2010, pages 51-87.

Works Cited

All Scripture quotations are from the New King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

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Reprinted from the 2012 Bellview Lectureship, Pensacola, Florida, *What the Bible Says About*, Ed. Michael Hatcher

Almost Persuaded

Kent Bailey



New Testament Christianity is brought into one's life by the element of persuasion. By such we refer to the element of argumentation, expostulation, or entreaty to a course of action. In Acts chapter 26 Paul makes a defense of the gospel system. Such serves as an example of the great and fundamental truth that such is the power of God unto Salvation. The purpose of Paul's defense was not that of saving his own life, but rather to persuade Agrippa of his need for Salvation.

As we give note to the text we find that Paul discussed his background including his persecution of Christians, his conversion to the truth, and his commission from Christ to preach the gospel. In this account Paul discussed his obedience to that commission as well of his arrest in the temple. Within this specific defense, Paul argued that he had preached nothing other than what the Old Testament prophets had spoken. Finally, Paul appealed to Agrippa to acknowledge his belief in the prophets. Because of his acceptance of what the prophets had stated, Agrippa should have been willing to obey the conditions of the gospel and become a New Testament Christian, a member of the church of the Lord.. However, the text indicates that Agrippa avoided making such a commitment.

There are three fundamental truths affirmed in Acts chapter 26. In the context of this study we note:

The possibility of persuasion (26:1-3). The truth of God has within itself the power to disturb individuals by convicting them of their personal sins. Such was illustrated by Paul's preaching to Felix (Acts 24:24-25). According to the historian Josephus, Drusilla was a daughter of Herod Agrippa, whose persecution of the apostles of Christ wrought great havoc to the church of our Lord. She was not only from a notorious family, but also was considered a woman of remarkable beauty as well as being the lawful wife of Azizus, King of Emesa. History attests to the fact that she was living in the sin of adultery with Felix. Concerning Felix, historical records attests to the fact that he exercised authority with virtually every type of cruelty and lust imaginable. Upon hearing Paul's preaching dealing with righteousness temperance and judgment he was filled with fear and dread regarding God's punishment concerning sin.

In every account of conversion as recorded in the book of Acts one will note that the preaching of the gospel brought about conviction of sin within the lives of the hearers. Such conviction resulted in persuasion in bringing individuals to a point in life where they obeyed the gospel of Christ, or else they rejected such. The truth of the gospel of Christ is so designed by God as not to be neutral. It is on the cutting edge. Because of the nature of objective truth (which exists separate and apart from the human mind), accountable humanity does indeed have the ability to reason correctly regarding such revealed truth and be persuaded to obey such truth, which will bring freedom from sin (John 8:32-36; Rom. 6:16-18).

The necessity of conversion (26:4-20). By the term conversion we refer to that of turning or change. In understanding the consequences of sin one will thus ascertain the need for all accountable individuals to be turned or changed from a lost state of being alienated from God in sin to a saved state or condition of coming into the fellowship of Christ by obedience to his saving gospel.. Such requires more than sincerity in what one believes, or in how one lives. Such requires more than simply being religious. Not all religions are of divine origin. As a matter of fact Christ only has one acceptable religion which is his church (Matt. 16:18-19; Acts 2:47; Col. 1:13-18; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4; 5:23). Such requires more than to only claim to follow Christ. One must obey from the heart the form of doctrine as set forth in Romans 6:3-18. All accountable individuals outside of Christ are lost (Rom. 3:23; 6:23; John 14:6)

Upon one's becoming guilty of sin and being alienated from God one stands in need of New Testament conversion in being brought into a saved condition. There are four elements where in one converts to truth:

- Faith changes one's trust (John 1:12; 8:24).
- Repentance changes one's mind (Acts 17:30; 2 Cor. 7:10).
- Confession changes one's allegiance (Rom. 10:9-10; Acts 8:37).
- Baptism changes one's condition or state (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:3-4; 1 Cor. 12:134; 1 Pet. 3:21).

The need for action (26:24-29). When the New Testament of Christ affirms the reality of Salvation from sin such requires action and/or activity. It necessitates humanity's obedience to conditions of pardon that has already been discussed. It also brings about the act and reality of forgiveness wherein God removes from his divine mind the record of one's sins. Forgiveness thus takes place not in the life of a sinner, but rather within the mind of God.

Agrippa did not argue against the truth. The record does not indicate that he denied the need for a Messiah. There is no indication that he denied the Deity of Christ, nor the work of Christ. Paul made a very significant observation when he stated, "For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner. King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest." Because Agrippa believed the message of the prophets he of necessity believed in the Deity of Christ. Such disproves the false doctrine of Salvation by faith only. To be saved one must be completely persuaded and obey from the heart the gospel of Christ (Rom. 6:17-18).

Editor's Traveling, Preaching, and Writing

We were the guests of Dub and Diane McClish in Denton, Texas April 2-5 when we attended the Gospel meeting at the Northpoint church of Christ. Jess Whitlock did his usual superb preaching of the simple Gospel of Christ. I preached for the Yukon, Okla. church of Christ on April 9 and I preached for Pioneer and Bell in Elk City, Okla. on the Lord's Day morning on April 16. We finished April with the Yukon, Okla. church, April 23, and returned to Denton on April 30 where I preached for the Northpoint church of Christ. Requests continue coming in for copies of my book, *"The Thing Than Hath Been..." The Cycle of Apostasy* and we ordered the fourth printing on April 14.

Where the Worm Never Dies

Mike Demory



Atheists, materialists and some religious people believe that man is composed of a body and life force. They contend that there is no soul that is separate and distinct from the physical body; a soul that will live on eternally after the body has died. However, the Bible says that we are composed of two parts. First, the physical body (flesh and blood), which God formed from the dust of the earth, and is destined one day to so return (Gen. 2:7; 3:19, 27); and secondly, we are composed of the "inward man," which is the soul or spirit given to all men and women by God at conception (Eccl. 12:7; Zech. 12:1; Heb. 12:7).

Hell is no longer as frightening a word as it once was. Society in all its skepticism refuses to believe that a loving God could possibly condemn anyone to an eternal realm composed of eternal torment. In a poll taken among Americans only 58% said they believed in hell. Irreligious people flippantly use the word "hell" in their daily conversation to add profanity, emotion or force to what they are saying. This casual use of the word does nothing more than desensitize us to the eternal punishment awaiting all that fail or refuse to turn to God through Jesus Christ.

There will come a day when Christ will return to judge the wicked and the righteous; separating the sheep from the goats, and casting ungodly souls into everlasting fire, where there will be much weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matt. 25:31-46; 2 Thess. 1:9; Rev. 20:12-15; Mark 9:44-48). It is important that we understand why God would con-

demn to hell for all eternity every person that sins and refuses to repent and serve Him.

God is infinitely holy (pure; undefiled), hating with a perfect hatred everything that is morally evil (Isa. 6:3; 57:15; 1 Pet. 1:15-16). Having given each of us a free will to choose right or wrong (Gen. 1:26-27), we are accountable for our own sins (Rom. 3:23). God’s holiness, mercy, love, goodness, wrath, justice and fairness demands both punishment as well as reward. Paul said, “Behold therefore the goodness **and** severity of God:..” (Rom. 11:22, emph.MD). His love and goodness is unwavering toward all that conform to His will (Psa. 100:5). All who refuse to obey God and live ungodly must face His wrath and punishment (Rom. 1:18; Eph. 5:6; Col. 3:6).

God’s justice was right and perfect when Cain was punished for murdering his brother Abel (Gen. 4:10). God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). He treats everyone fairly and according to their own actions, whether good or bad (2 Cor. 5:10; Gal. 6:7; Col. 3:24-25). According to the Word of God, eternal punishment of the soul is justified. The choice is yours to make—will you obey God and miss Hell, or will you continue to rebel and suffer the consequences?

The Word of God teaches us that hell is eternal (Matt. 25:46). If this is true—and it is—then is it not reasonable to conclude that there will be **no** escape or second chances? God created the earth as our one and only probationary period. It is here in this life that we have been given the opportunity to make the right choice—to serve God. The author of Hebrews wrote, “and inasmuch as it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this cometh judgment” (Heb. 9:27). Jesus taught, “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). As good as the doctrines of Purgatory, Reincarnation and baptism of the dead may sound, they are totally foreign to Scripture. No, there are **no second chances** after we pass from this life into the next. If you fail or refuse to obey the gospel while still alive in the flesh, you will have missed your chance to escape eternity in torment (Rom. 2:4-9; Matt. 25:34-46; 2 Cor. 5:10).

Jesus warned, “Enter ye in by the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many are they that enter in thereby. For strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life, and few are they that find it” (Matt. 7:13-14). Our Lord believed in the eternal abode of punishment to which He said **many** would enter in. Those who do believe there is an eternal hell, tend to believe that only “really bad” people (i.e. Hitler, serial killers, etc.) will be the only inhabitants in such a place. Most believe that the average person, who doesn’t take part in “really bad or evil” things, will not qualify or deserve the punishment of hell. Yet the Word of God (the Bible) does not draw such a line of distinction between “really bad” or “little” sins. God considers **all** sin as “really bad or evil.” From out right serial killers to the common gossip or liar, God sees them all as evil people who deserve the fires of hell for all eternity (Matt. 25:31). It is God’s will that no one be sentenced to the pits of hell, but it will be our own fault if Hell becomes our eternal dwelling place (2 Pet. 3:9).

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“It Still Means What It Says”

Marvin L. Weir



The story is often told of the Bible class teacher who reads a verse of Scripture and someone asks, “What does it mean?” The teacher quickly replies, “It means what it says.” Although this answer is not suitable for every question that is raised, it does cut to the heart of the matter regarding the accuracy and finality of the Scriptures. God cannot lie (Heb. 6:18), and neither will His Words “pass away” (Matt. 24:35). Jesus warned people regarding His unchanging Word during His earthly ministry in stating, “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day” (John 12:48).

Most religious groups today teach that baptism is **not** necessary for one to become a child of God. The question asked on Pentecost was easily understood and so was the answer:

Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do? And Peter said unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:37-38).

What does Acts 2:38 mean? It means what it says. Baptism **is required** for one to have remission of his sins and become a member of the Lord’s church.

Jesus said to the apostles, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned” (Mark 16:15-16). This verse clearly states that the gospel requires one to be baptized to be saved. It means what it says!

Ananias told Saul of Tarsus, “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name” (Acts 22:16). Is it not easily understood that baptism is necessary in order to wash away one’s sins? If Saul of Tarsus was saved per denominational teaching, he was saved in his sins! Such is not true! The Lord knew that “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23), and thus He warned his audience in declaring, “Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3). A careful Bible student will also observe that Paul’s “praying” and “fasting” did not remove his sins (Acts 9:9-11), but baptism did wash away his sins. The Scriptures state, “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name” (Acts 22:16). This Scripture means exactly what it says!

Another popular false doctrine today is that a child of God cannot sin so as to be lost. Many folks believe in the “once saved, always saved” dogma in spite of what the word of God clearly states. Paul said to the Galatians who had obeyed the gospel, “Ye are severed from Christ, ye would be justified by the law; ye are fallen away from grace” (Gal. 5:4). How can one “fall away” from grace if he were never saved?

Peter warns, “For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the last state is become worse with them than the first. For it were better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after knowing it, to turn back from the holy commandment delivered unto them. It has happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog turning to his own vomit again, and the sow that had washed to wallowing in the mire” (2 Pet. 2:20-22). What do these verses of Scripture mean? They mean exactly what they say. It is possible for a child of God to choose again a life of sin and fall from the grace of God. There is absolutely no way for anyone to **explain away** what the apostle Peter teaches. Common sense and logic screams that one cannot fall from somewhere he has never been!

Another popular false doctrine today is that one is saved by “faith only.” The Bible

teaches, however, “Ye see that by works a man is justified, and **not** only by faith” (Jas. 2:24, emph. MLW). To make sure there is no misunderstanding the Holy Spirit continues in saying, “For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, even so faith apart from works is dead” (Jas. 2:26). These verses mean exactly what they say—one **cannot** be saved by **faith only**!

Can one who desires to go to Heaven attend the church of his choice and please God? The Bible says, “And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 16:18). This verse means what it says. Christ promised to build **His** church (singular). The apostle Paul teaches that there is only “one body” (Eph. 4:4) and that God “put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all” (Eph. 1:22-23). These verses mean exactly what they say. There is only **one body** over which Christ is **head** and it is the **church** that He built! Christ declares that He is the savior of His body and no other (Eph. 5:23)!

What does it mean to “seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness” (Matt. 6:33)? What does it mean when it says, “not forsaking our own assembling together” (Heb. 10:25)? What does it mean to “love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind” (Matt. 22:37)?

The Bible (God’s Word) has always meant what it says! Man can choose to ignore the Scriptures, but such does not change the fact that he will one day be judged by **exactly** what God has said (John 12:48). Do the Holy Scriptures mean exactly what they say? Absolutely! And no one or anything in this world will ever change this truth!

What Can Wash Away My Sins?

Lee Moses



“Patriarch” Kirill, the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, recently gave his encouragement to Vladimir Putin’s efforts to round up more soldiers for Russia’s prolonged invasion of Ukraine. Kirill said of such Russian soldiers, “We believe that this sacrifice washes away all the sins that a person has committed.” There is not much difference between his statement and the Islamic teaching that Muslim men who die waging jihad against non-Muslims are guaranteed salvation almost regardless of anything else they have done. Although to Kirill’s credit, he left out the false Muslim promise of seventy two virgins. Kirill’s pronouncement is not the first occasion of professed Christians claiming sins can be absolved by unscriptural means.

The Roman Catholic Church has a long history of doing just that. For one, they teach that a human priest has the power to pronounce sins forgiven, typically after a member of the Catholic laity has confessed sins to a priest and performed priest-assigned acts of “penance.” And note the words of the (Roman Catholic) Council of Trent: “The absolution of the priest...is equivalent to a judicial act, by which sentence is pronounced by him as a judge.” However, this is claiming for men a power held by God only. True, Jesus told the apostles, “Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained” (John 20:23). However, Jesus was not authorizing the apostles to remit sins using any means they saw fit. Jesus’ statement is parallel with the other Gospel accounts’ record of the Great Commission in which He commanded the apostles to preach the Gospel to all the world (cf. Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-20; Luke 24:47-48). When the apostles and other Christians would preach the Gospel, the sins of those who obeyed that Gospel would be remitted while the sins of those who rejected the Gospel would be retained (cf. Acts 2:36-41; 13:44-46; 18:5-6). from the Roman Church to avoid consequences of sin. Among the consequences they could allegedly avoid was punishment in Purgatory. As he peddled indulgences, Vatican-appointed salesman Johann Tetzel would recite his catchy advertising jingle, “As soon as a coin in the coffer rings, a soul from purgatory springs.” Recall what the

apostle Peter said to Simon the erstwhile sorcerer: “Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money” (Acts 8:20). The “gift of God” Simon sought to purchase with money was the ability to confer miraculous gifts on others—how much less could the gift of forgiveness from sins be purchased with money? (cf. 1 Pet. 1:18).

This is the point of Jesus’ statement, and no “absolution” pronounced by a Vatican appointed priest can remit anyone’s sins. The Roman Catholic Church also forgave the sins of those who participated in the Crusades. This is despite the fact that engaging in literal warfare is not the work of the church (John 18:36; 2 Cor. 10:4). This is also despite the fact that many of the soldiers who fought in the Crusades committed terrible and unrepented of atrocities. Jesus warned, “I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3).

The Roman “Pope” Gregory I developed the doctrine of Purgatory. According to this doctrine, the souls of the righteous yet require purification from their sins after death, which is accomplished in an intermediary place in the afterlife that Catholics call Purgatory. In this place, “There is a purgatorial fire, where the souls of the righteous are purified by a temporary punishment, that entrance may be given them into their eternal home” (*Catechism of the Council of Trent*). However, this teaches the cleansing of sins by a process unknown to the Scriptures. Furthermore, one’s final destination is sealed at death: “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Heb. 9:27).

Related to the doctrine of Purgatory is the sale of indulgences. Roman Catholic laity could purchase these indulgences from the Roman Church to avoid consequences of sin. Among the consequences they could allegedly avoid was punishment in Purgatory. As he peddled indulgences, Vatican-appointed salesman Johann Tetzel would recite his catchy advertising jingle, “As soon as a coin in the coffer rings, a soul from purgatory springs.” Recall what the apostle Peter said to Simon the erstwhile sorcerer: “Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money” (Acts 8:20). The “gift of God” Simon sought to purchase with money was the ability to confer miraculous gifts on others—how much less could the gift of forgiveness from sins be purchased with money? (cf. 1 Pet. 1:18).

The Bible clearly teaches that the blood of Jesus washes away sins: “And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood” (Rev. 1:5; cf. Matt. 26:28; Eph. 1:7; Heb. 9:14; 1 Pet. 1:19; 1 John 1:7). Of course, each man and woman must do something to **appropriate** that blood’s cleansing power, as Jesus “taste [d] death for every man” (Heb. 2:9); yet not every man will be saved from his sin. As Jesus said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16). As Ananias told Saul of Tarsus, “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). When Saul was baptized—following his belief (John 8:24), repentance (Luke 13:3), and confession of Christ (Rom. 10:10)—he would wash away his sins because **Christ** with His own blood would wash away Saul’s sins. As Saul, or Paul as he was later better known, would ask, “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?” (Rom. 6:3). It is only at Scriptural baptism—immersion in water intended for the remission of sins (Acts 8:38; 2:38)—that one appropriates the blessings of Jesus Christ’s death and blood.

As such, those who teach salvation by “faith only” or by a “sinner’s prayer” teach a bloodless salvation. Intentionally or not, they are teaching that one is saved before he ever contacts the blood of Jesus. “Faith only” and the “sinner’s prayer” are unscriptural means of salvation just as surely as offering God’s forgiveness for fighting carnal warfare or any of the Roman Catholic “sin cleansings” mentioned previously. The question is often sung, “What can wash away my sins?” Remember, nothing but the blood of Jesus Christ appropriated by Scriptural baptism can wash away my sins.

Can One Be Baptized Into Christ Believing That He Was Saved Before Being Baptized?

Thomas B. Warren



Almost all Protestant denominations teach that the alien sinner is saved (becomes a child of God) at the point of faith in Jesus Christ before and without any further act(s) of obedience. The Bible makes clear that this is false doctrine. It can be seen to be false, for a number of reasons.

- 1.** It is false because Jesus said, “Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). This means that no one can enter into the kingdom of God without being baptized in the name of Christ (cf. Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:3-5; Mark 16:15-16; et al.) If one is baptized (undergoes some religious acts involving water) without understanding that being baptized in the name of Christ is an act of faith which is essential to salvation, then he is not saved, because he has obeyed a mere human doctrine and not the doctrine of Christ. But one must obey Christ to be saved (Heb. 5:8-9; Mat. 7:21-23).
- 2.** It is false because it affirms (by implication) that the alien sinner is saved (becomes a child of God) by a dead faith. Yet, James 2:24-26 teaches that faith without works is dead. Since whatever is dead is powerless, inoperative, unable to accomplish anything, then obviously no one can be saved by faith only (a dead faith). One is saved only when—because of living faith—as penitent believer in Jesus Christ, he is baptized in the name (by the authority of) Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38).

3. It is false because it affirms that one can be saved without doing the will of God. Yet, Jesus said, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven” (Mat. 7:21). One is not saved merely by (1) being religious, (2) being sincere in religion or by (3) crying out, “Lord, Lord.” While all of the above matters are necessary, they are not sufficient.

One is saved either (1) before he is baptized or (2) when he is baptized or (3) after he is baptized. These are the only possibilities, the truth of the matter is: one is saved when (as a penitent believer) he is baptized into Christ (Acts 2:38; 22:16; Gal. 3:26-27; etc.) The other two possibilities are false. So, no matter how religious, how sincere, how zealous, and so on a person may be, if he has not been baptized into Christ, then he is not a child of God, he is not a Christian.

Every child of God (that is, every Christian) is a member of the church of Christ (the church described on the pages of the New Testament, the church which Jesus bought with His own blood). There is not one Christian living on earth today who is not a member of that church. Every other church is of human origin and, thus, is not authorized by God. Salvation is only in the church which Jesus bought with His blood (Acts 20:28).

May every person deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow Jesus—not men or the doctrines of men (Luke 9:23).

(The Bible Only Makes Christians Only and the Only Christians. Moore, OK: National Christian Press, Inc. 1986, pp. 100-101.)

**Our Website Preaches the Gospel Around the World, 7 Days a Week, 24 Hours a Day
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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.

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Christ Our Passover

Nana Yaw Aidoo



In 1 Corinthians 5:7, the apostle wrote: “For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.” What can we learn from this great text?

The Passover as most Bible students well know is an Old Testament reality, a feast that has its basis in that series of events we read about in the book of Exodus. Due to the Pharaoh’s hard heartedness, God decided on the killing of the first-born children of all Egyptians as a means to get the king to let His people go. At a specific point in time the Lord would make an appearance in Egypt with the express purpose of killing the first-born Egyptian sons (Exo. 12:12). The reality is that every single first-born son on Egyptian soil, be it Hebrew or Egyptian, was on death row at that specific point in time. It was “all the firstborn in the land of Egypt” that God was going to smite.

However, God gave a condition to the Hebrews. In order that He not end up killing them in addition to the Egyptians, they had to kill a lamb, smear the blood on their lintels and on their doorposts and stay indoors till morning (Exo. 12:22). That way, the blood would serve as some form of a lens through which God would view those indoors (Exo. 12:13). In a sense the blood covered those behind the blood-marked doors. Those behind the blood-marked doors would thus be freed from death not because they were sinless or worthy but because of the blood. It so happened that on the day the Lord made His appearance not a single person died who was behind a door marked with blood (Exo. 12:27).

In like manner, Jesus Christ was born to die not for dying sake but to free men from death, which is the penalty of sin. Just like the first-born sons in the land of Egypt all men today are on death row because all men have sinned (Rom. 3:23; 6:23). And just as those in the days of old were freed from death because they were covered with the blood of the lamb, those who today would actually be freed from death would have to be covered with the blood of Christ.

Christ is our Passover because that event as we read about in the Old Testament was a type or a shadowy reality of the real substance, Jesus Christ. Just as God looked at the blood of the lamb and freed from death those behind the blood marked lintels or those covered by the blood, so today God looks at the blood of Christ and frees from death those who are covered by the blood of Christ. In this dispensation of time, there is no spiritual amnesty except in and through Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:3). By Him, and through Him and in Him only is there freedom from the condemnation of death.

How then are men covered by the blood of Christ? The Hebrews were covered by the blood of the lamb when they obeyed God’s word to paint their lintels and doorposts with the blood of the lamb. In like manner, today, we are covered by the blood of Christ when we obey God’s word to be baptized for the remission of our sins. The risen and victorious Christ declared: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16).

What is the link between baptism and the blood of Christ? The link is that baptism is that act, which brings us into contact with the blood of Christ. Paul wrote:

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:3-4).

Since Jesus Christ shed His blood in His death, and since when we are baptized, we are baptized into His death, then we are baptized into that realm or place where Christ shed His blood thereby coming into contact with the blood.

Christ died for the sins of all men and thus all men have the opportunity to be washed in His blood (Tit. 2:11). However, be minded of the fact that the letter to the Corinthians was written to those who were already in Christ (1 Cor. 1:2). Hence, in a very real sense, Jesus Christ is the Passover lamb of only those who have obeyed His require-

ment to be baptized for the remission of sins (Heb. 5:8-9).

Have you been baptized for the remission of your sins? If yes, then Christ is your Passover. If no, then why not (Acts 22:16)?

“What Saith The Scriptures?”

Harrell Davidson



The next question, among six others in our que, is, “How one can seek true and Real God in this multi religious confusion world?” I am changing the wording a little in the question to this: **“How can one seek the true real God in the multi-religious confused world?”**

I would go to God’s Word and seek the everlasting eternal God that made heaven and earth and all the things therein including man (cf Gen. 1:1-31). I would follow this through the entirety of the Bible, which comes from God. Paul, in writing to his son in the gospel, reminded Timothy that “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

If you wish to be a man of God, follow Him. He will never lead you astray, and He will teach, command, and lead through His Word to only Him. Notice that all scripture is given by inspiration of God meaning, according to the original language, “God breathed.” That is, God gave every Word of the marvelous Bible to the Holy Spirit who gave it to inspired penman, some 40 writers of the entire Bible, who devotedly used God’s true faithful words to convey God’s mind on all matters that are needed to both know Him and His Son and how to be saved eternally.

His Word gives us His doctrine and that of His Son. “Reproof” here means that His Word will convince a man of his sins, of the truth and claims of religion. Almost all religious institutions “claim” to follow the Bible, but God’s Word will either prove them right or wrong. Either teaching the truth or error and the Bible, and the Bible alone, will be the standard. All error will be defeated, and all truth will be upheld by the Book Divine.

His Word will correct us in our pilgrimage through this life. The design of His Word is instructive; by this, I mean it shows us how to live and gives us the principles of how to make a life that is worth living. Notice these words of the apostle Peter: “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). His Word gives us all we need for life and how to have a life that is pleasing in His sight. Isn’t that what the question is asking? None of the man-made religious books in the world will do that.

The man of God is throughly or completely furnished with all he needs to be saved eternally. It lacks nothing we need for our salvation, and we must not add to it. If one adds to or takes away from God’s Word, they are lost eternally (cf. Deut. 4:2; Rev. 22:18-19).

God’s Word reveals that Jesus was in the beginning with God. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1), which takes one all the way back to Genesis 1:1: “In the beginning God...” In Genesis 1:26 notice this phrase: “Let **us** make man...” (Emph. HDD). The Word is explained further in John. “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

Verse 18 of John 1 says, “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” The purpose of this book is to help us see what God is like. “In the bosom of the Father” suggests the close

relationship between the Father and the Son. Out of that Jesus came into the world to reveal to us what God is like. The word *declared* is where we get our word *exegesis*. This means to interpret or bring out of the Scriptures what they really mean. Jesus came into the world to bring out to the mind of man and help us see what God is like. This is what we need to understand in the study of the New Testament. Jesus revealed God to man so that man might understand God. Look now at John 14:8-9: “Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?” Thus, Jesus was/is the interpretation of God to man. Through Jesus we can understand not only Himself but also the Father.

“God so loved the world that he gave....” (John 3:16). God made man and wanted him saved and gave His Son for that purpose. Christ promised to build His church (cf. Matt. 16:18). He selected twelve helpers—apostles—and commanded them to go into all the world to every creature, to every nation, teaching and preaching the Gospel of Christ to all people in all the world (cf Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:15-16).

His church began in Acts 2 on Pentecost day. Those who repented and were baptized were added to the (His) church (cf. Acts 2:47). They joined no church; they were **added**. They were saved—forgiven of past sins. The church in the New Testament was told how to worship in order to be acceptable in the sight of God and how God is Spirit, and we must worship Him as He has commanded (cf. John 4:24). Jesus said, “In spirit and in truth,” meaning for mankind to be sincere and worship according to what the New Testament has commanded. All may be sincere, but that is one half of the equation. Worship according to the truth, i.e, what the New Testament commands.

When you have found all these elements, you will have found the one true living God, the **real** God, not an idol or religion made or established by some man or men. Search the Scriptures always. They will never lead you astray.

From the entrance of sin in the world, Satan has attempted to stop Christ and His church. His first attempt was through the promised seed. If he could have done away with that, he would have won the battle, and Christianity would never have been born into this world, but he failed miserably. There have been and will be false teachers as there were false prophets. There have been several so-called “revelations” where false teachers said that they had a revelation from God. Not one of them agrees with the other, and none of them agrees with the Bible. This is, as should be, a red flag in the eyes of anyone who loves the Bible.

Thanks for your interesting question.

The Cross of Christ Made of None Effect

Jesse Whitlock

Paul wrote in First Corinthians 1:17-18,



For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

It is the preaching of the Gospel; hence, the preaching of the cross of Christ that convicts and converts the sinner. We need a return to preaching in the perspective of First Corinthians 2:2 today, “For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”

How does one go about this business of making the cross of Christ of none effect? I realize there are numerous ways. I would ask you to consider one for now. There are those who simply deny the Bible’s teaching about the time of Christ’s return for the purpose of judging this world. We know that the false prophets are legion. By misap-

plication and failure to study passages from Daniel, Revelation and Matthew many attempts have been made to predict the time of Christ's final coming:

1. William Miller set the date for 1843 and was wrong. He then set the date for 1844, but was wrong again.
2. Charles Taze Russell (founder of Jehovah's Witnesses), said the date had been 1874 (a secret and invisible coming of Christ). However, he later set the time for 1914. Both of these dates were wrong. Various false prophets set dates in 1910, 1918, 1925 and 1931, etc. As a matter of fact, false prophets are found in abundance in every century from the first to the present indicating Christ would come in that time.
3. Hal Lindsey made a fortune in his book and movie: *The Late, Great Planet Earth*, in which he set the date for Christ's return as being by or before 1988.
4. Billy Graham had previously set the date shortly after 1950. Seeing he was obviously wrong, he jumped on the Hal Lindsey band-wagon. Guess what? Wrong again!
5. Joseph Smith (Mormonism) said the time was 1891.

Already the false prophets are working on still another date for the final return of Christ. Notice all the prophets previously listed have a perfect record: Every date dead wrong! To realize this all we need to do is look to see the earth still stands where it has always stood. With Christ's return this earth will cease to exist. Psalm 102:25-26, "Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens [are] the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed." Again, Isaiah 51:6, "Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment." Now, please notice Second Peter 3:10, "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." Finally, in Revelation 21:1, "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea."

Therefore, the false prophets are exposed and marked by the powerful Word of God. We see the hopelessness of trying to set the time for Christ's final coming in Christ's own words of warning. He stated in Matthew 24:36, "But of that day and hour knoweth no [man], no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only." He declared in Matthew 24:42, "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come." Hear Him again in Matthew 24:44, "Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." Some have dared to ask the question of whether or not God can tell time. I believe that God can tell time. I also believe that God knows His time frame better than anyone on earth. God's only begotten Son stated clearly that no man on earth knows the precise time when Christ will return! Christ does not know that time. The angels in heaven do not know that time. Jesus said His "Father only" knows the time!

There is a new breed of false prophets in the past few centuries predicting a new "time frame" for the end. It is a novel and daring approach. Rather than going forward they have gone backward in time, to the date of A.D. 70. This is the time of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman armies under General Titus. In this new horde of books we are told that Christ's final coming, the final judgment, the final abode for all men was settled once and for all in A.D. 70. A casual acquaintance with Scripture proves this theory to be heresy. Was the earth burned up (2 Pet. 3:10)? No! Were all the dead raised from their graves (John 5:28-29)? No! Was all mankind judged and consigned to either heaven or hell in that day (Mat. 25:31-46; 2 Cor. 5:10)? No! Now, really think about this one: Was the last enemy destroyed? First Corinthians 15:25-26, "For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." If Christ returned for the final advent in A.D. 70, then it follows, the last enemy (death) has been destroyed (no longer exists). I have put this question to the A.D. 70 errorists on several occasions. It puts the heretic between the proverbial

rock and the hard place. It must be either physical death or spiritual death, i.e., sin. Which of these is non-existent today? If you say there is no physical death, you have lied. Lying is a sin (Rev. 21:8); since sin is spiritual death, you are still wrong!

No wonder the world is confused about this subject. Even the false prophets cannot find agreement in their heresies. Some look to future dates. Now, this new breed of false prophets are going back to the future! If Christ's final coming and consummation of all things took place in A.D. 70, as these false prophets assert, then all their debates, writing, preaching, lectureships, etc., are all a waste of time. If the final judgment took place in A.D. 70, then my sentence, your sentence, their sentence were all sealed and set for all time and eternity in A.D. 70. Even if you or I could be persuaded to believe this heresy, what would it profit? There is not one thing that you or I could do to change the judgment given by God in A.D. 70. Not one!

The A.D. 70 errorists placed themselves in the same category with our friends caught up in Calvinistic and Jehovah's Witnesses error. We are dealing with the concepts of election and non-election. The teaching that certain ones were elected to be saved and others were not elected. The Jehovah's Witnesses found themselves in a dilemma when it was figured that the 144,000 were already in heaven! The late brother Marshall Keeble has a good answer to the concept of predestination as taught by Calvinists and now, Kingettes. He said, "The elect are the whosoever—wills and the non-elect are the whosoever—won'ts." Isn't it a shame that we must now use the same rebuttal, not only with Calvinistic false preachers, but with those of our own number who have gone out from us? If the final judgment took place in A.D. 70, then why try to win me over to your heresy? The only plausible answer I can find is that this is a hobby horse. I know the A.D. 70 errorists insist that this is no hobby. I was recently given a business card (second hand) belonging to a preacher in this movement. It gave the usual information, name, location, times and phone. Now, in order to reach this preacher in his study you **must dial** the usual prefix and then: 7070. Out of the hundreds of thousands of millions of possible number combinations, what are the odds? Seventy-seventy! What are the odds?

We started with Paul's writing in First Corinthians 2:2, "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." When I hear the preaching, read the articles and listen to the tapes of this A.D. 70 foolishness, I wonder if they would not like to re-write the apostle Paul? Perhaps they would have him to say that he "determined not to know any thing, save the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70." This present heresy has made the cross of Christ my Lord to become of no effect. How tragic to take Christ and His cross out of the picture. How sinful to replace the cross of Christ with the destruction of the city of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

New Testament Baptism

Dub McClish



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

The "What" of Baptism

In the minds of most people, baptism is an act that may be administered in any of three ways: sprinkling water on the candidate, pouring water on the candidate or immersing the candidate in water. Some English dictionaries state that baptism is admin-

istered by any of these three actions (Neilson, 216). However, we must remember that modern English dictionaries merely reflect the **current** usage of words, rather than their original meanings.

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

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

A study of the Greek word translated *baptism* yields the same conclusion. *Baptize* and its related forms was not an English word, originally. It was transferred into English directly from the New Testament Greek word, *baptidzo*. One may consult any standard lexicon of the Greek New Testament and learn that *baptidzo*, means to dip, plunge, submerge, or immerse when used literally (Analytical, 65; Baur, 131; Thayer, 94). When used figuratively (e.g., Mark 10:38), it 2 means to overwhelm. If this Greek word were translated, rather than merely transliterated, our English New Testaments would read “immerse” everywhere they presently read, “baptize.”

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

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

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

The “Why” of Baptism

There are two basic schools of thought on the purpose of the baptism commanded by Jesus Christ: One holds that baptism is an act of obedience of one who has **already been saved**, providing access to denominational membership after salvation has been granted through faith alone. In this view, baptism is part of one’s obedience to Christ **because** he is already a Christian. The other view contends that baptism is the final act of obedience to which one submits **in order to be saved** or forgiven of his past sins. In this view a person is not saved until 3 he is baptized, at which time the Lord adds him to His church **because he is saved**. What does the Bible say?

Jesus told the apostles that as they preached the Gospel, “He that believeth and is bap-

tized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). Note the order: (1) believe, (2) baptized, (3) saved. The order is not: (1) believe, (2) saved, (3) baptized. In this verse, Jesus definitively makes baptism a condition of salvation, as plainly as He makes faith.

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

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

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

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

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

Summary

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

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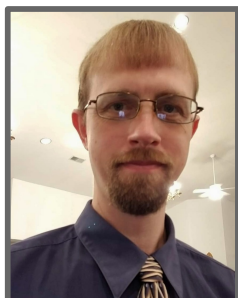
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They Have a Zeal of God But Not According to Knowledge, No. 2

Donald E. Smith

Introduction



In the March issue of *The Gospel Preceptor*, we began this series of articles regarding a manuscript this writer sent to a Pentecostal “pastor,” and the subsequent exchange of correspondence that followed with his wife, Julie Jackson. The topic covered the Bible’s teaching on the cessation of miracles, but proceeded into several other subjects as well. All of this was initiated by the request of this family’s son, Micah Jackson. Initially, the miraculous was scripturally defined and a chronology was outlined in how the miracles were given. The manuscript next delves into the nine miraculous gifts as listed in 1 Corinthians 12. It is recommended that each reader go back and review the March article in this series before proceeding.

The Nine Miraculous Gifts of the Spirit and Their Purposes

In this portion of our study, I will be drawing heavily from a commentary on 1 Corinthians by Ramond C. Kelcy.¹ As we consider each one of these gifts, it will become apparent that they variously served three ends: (1) to reveal God’s Word (especially through the apostles [John 16:13]), (2) to confirm the revealed Word (John 20:30-31; Heb. 2:3-4), (3) and to “profit” all by edifying, exhorting, comforting, and teaching Christians in the infancy of the church (1 Cor. 12:6-7; 14:3, 31). All of the gifts surely served to profit the saints. These purposes must be recognized if one would understand this subject. Let us now delve into the study of these gifts so that the Way of God may be expounded more perfectly (Acts 18:24-26). Paul listed the gifts of the Spirit as follows:

For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues (1 Cor. 12:8-10).

1. The first in the list is the **word of wisdom**. As *Word of wisdom* suggests, this gift enabled one to utter wise words. These words of wisdom would come as the Holy Ghost would teach, providing a revelation of the Word of God. Notice the way the apostles were taught:

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual (1 Cor. 2:12-13).

Purpose: to reveal God’s Word

2. Next in the list is the **word of knowledge**. This gift seems to be the revelation of the knowledge of God (the Word of God) to men by direct means through the Holy Ghost. We now have that knowledge preserved in the Scriptures, as Paul even speaks of writing that knowledge down that he received from the Holy Ghost so that others may understand: “How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)” (Eph. 3:3-4).

Purpose: to reveal God’s Word

3. Then, in the list we have **faith**. This gift of faith has reference to a special gift whereby one was enabled to perform supernatural deeds. Remember, Biblical faith involves fulfilling the requirements of God's Word (Heb. 11; Jam. 2:14-26). According to ancient historical writings, such as those of Josephus, murderers used poisoning, more often than now, to dispose of those the murderer would deem undesirable. In first century Christianity, persecution sometimes extended to murder (Acts 7:59-60; 9:1; 12:2). But disciples who were being guided by the direct means of the Holy Ghost to spread the Word were assured that by this miraculous faith, they would be protected. If they drank any deadly thing, it would not hurt them. Not even serpent bites could stop the Word from being spread. Survival of such experiences confirmed that they were truly speaking the Word of God: "They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover" (Mark 16:18).

Purpose: to confirm God's Word

4. The list moves on to the **gift of healing**. This gift has reference to the healing of various diseases. It was obviously given to Philip through the laying on of the apostles' hands (Acts 6:5-6). By this gift the people were assured that Philip was truly speaking the Word of God (since they did not have it in written form yet). Use of the gift provided undeniable confirmation:

And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed (vv. 6-7).

Purpose: to confirm God's Word

5. Fifth in the list of the nine miraculous gifts is the **working of miracles**, which seems to be a broader designation that "healings," indicating other types of miraculous works. One of those types of miraculous works is Paul's cursing of Elymas the sorcerer with blindness, which is the opposite of the blessing of healing. Employment of this gift proved that Paul was teaching the doctrine of Christ (remember, they did not at this time have the doctrine of Christ in written form, enabling them to examine the Scriptures to confirm the spoken Word (cf. Luke 16:13)).

Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him. And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand. Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord (Acts 13:9-12).

Purpose: to confirm God's Word

6. **Prophecy** referred to the ability to communicate specific messages from God. This is clearly the relaying of His Word to the people. Philip's daughters had this gift (Acts 21:9) (obviously to teach other women), as did some of the Corinthians:

I would that ye all spake with tongues but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying.... For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted (1 Cor. 14:5, 31).

Purpose: to reveal God's Word

7. Then we have listed the gift of **discerning the spirits**. This gift enabled one to determine whether a prophet was true or false. John described some Christians who exercised this gift:

They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things (1 John 2:19-20).

John here explained to his brethren that the false teachers went out from them, which demonstrated that they were not of the Truth. He **then** went on to remind those saints that they had already recognized the false teachers (included in “all things” they knew) by their miraculous ability. This gift gave them the ability to know whether God’s Word was truly being taught, before it had been written and distributed among the churches.

Purpose: to confirm God’s Word

8. Paul’s list next takes us to the miraculous ability to **speak in tongues**. These “tongues” were clearly other known languages spoken and understood by ordinary people of the world. The “tongues” involved in this gift, wherever mentioned in the New Testament after Acts 2:4-6, are defined by the miraculous tongues spoken by the apostles on Pentecost:

And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. (Acts 2:4-6).

Notice that *other tongues* (v.4) is used interchangeably with *his own language* (vv. 4, 6). Those people from various areas of the world did not ask, “What is the meaning of these unintelligible words, this babbling?” Rather, they asked, “And how hear we every man **in our own tongue**, wherein we were born” (v.8, emph. DES)? The New Testament **nowhere** even hints that the miraculous tongues were otherwise (e.g., “ecstatic utterances,” “heavenly” languages, etc.). The only difference between those with this gift and others who can speak in various known languages is that those endowed with this gift never had to study and learn the languages. Those who profess to have the “gift of tongues” today must go to language school when traveling to speak in an area of the world that does not speak their language. The Holy Ghost gave some the ability to reveal the Word of God in these languages besides in their native tongue.

And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God... And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied (Acts 10:45-46a; 19:6).

Purpose: to reveal God’s Word

9. Finally, we have the miraculous gift of **interpretation of tongues**. For those who did not know the language being spoken, those with this gift were able to interpret/translate it into their native tongues. Again, this gift dealt directly with relaying the Word of God, which was not available in written form at the time. Paul described the use of this gift: “If any man speak in an *unknown* tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret. But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God” (1 Cor. 14:27-28).

It is important to note that the word *unknown* in the foregoing passage is italicized, which indicates that it does not appear in the Greek New Testament, but was supplied by the translators. The literal reading should be, “If any man speaketh in a tongue,” as reflected in the American Standard Version and other reliable versions.

Purpose: to reveal God’s Word

As we have seen from the preceding information, the miracles of God served very specific and necessary purposes. We have also seen **results** of the miracles that were be-

yond the purposes for them, resulting in great blessings, such as healing the sick.

Likewise, many of Jesus' miracles were an expression of His compassion (e.g. Matt. 14:14; 15:32; 20:34; Heb. 4:15; et al.), but their primary purpose was to cause mankind to believe He was God the Son (John 3:2; 20:30-31). Earlier we have repeatedly stated that the various miracles performed by the apostles and others partook of a two-fold purpose. The Scriptures directly stating said purpose have been reserved to this point. Hopefully, this will help the diligent student to remember this purpose. Were the miracles really meant to serve as confirmation of the word of God? The record states:

And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and **confirming the word with signs** following. Amen (Mark 16:17-20, emph. DES).

These signs certainly happened, as we have already demonstrated. The Bible directly states that the Word was confirmed by signs. One who believes the Bible should not need further evidence, but there is more:

How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was **confirmed** unto us by them that heard him; **God also bearing them witness**, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will (Heb. 2:3-4, emph. DES)?

Again, Scripture states clearly that God bore witness to the words of salvation by "them that heard" Christ (i.e., the apostles). How did God bear witness? With "signs, wonders, divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost."

These miracles thus served the primary purpose of confirming the spoken Word as coming from God. Only those who possessed these gifts could credibly claim they were revealing God's Word.

Next in the manuscript that was sent to the Pentecostal preacher (and to which only his wife replied) is a section titled "The Duration of Miracles." We will cover that subject in the next article in this series in June. Though this may be initial learning for some, it may also help to put ourselves in the shoes of the recipient of this manuscript. What should they be learning from this? How should a diligent student respond to such when they find themselves in such grievous error?

Endnotes

1 Kelcy, Ramond C., *First Corinthians* (Austin, TX: R.B. Sweet Co., Inc.), 1967, pp. 55-56.

Getting Back to Basics

Earl West

Whatever happened to the old-fashioned idea that the church exists to preach the Gospel and that the purpose of the Gospel is to save souls?

Judging from some of the bulletins we see and some announcements we are asked to make, some churches of Christ today appear to have gone over to the YMCA.

We are all for families knowing how to make money, and we are equally happy to see people make a success out of their lives, but churches of Christ should be concerned to preach in today's world the same Gospel that was delivered in primitive times—to save souls from sin. Using that Gospel as a guideline, they ought to teach people how to grow spiritually and be prepared for heaven.

The church today is in serious danger of falling victim to a materialistic gospel—how to make money, how to get rich, how to be successful in business, in social life, in school,

etc. One of the surest signs that we are more interested in material values than in spiritual is when these types of lectures, because of their novelty, are more attractive than the message of a redeeming Savior.

One of the denominational journals we get had a lead article recently titled, "The Disease of the Health and Wealth Gospel," and the editors were deploring the popularity of a so-called gospel that tells us how to be either "healthy or wealthy."

If the denominations, who make no attempt to practice New Testament Christianity, have come to denounce this type of emphasis for its complete lack of spiritual content, it is indeed strange how churches of Christ, who are supposed to be set for the defense of the Gospel can justify such spiritually empty messages.

The preachers who go around with this type of message betray a total lack of conception of what New Testament Christianity is all about. Elders who allow this sort of thing are either ignorant of the Bible or unable to withstand the pressure of a generation of super salesmen preachers. In both cases it is a disgrace to the cause of New Testament Christianity.

If the central theme of the Gospel is not Christ and Him crucified, as Paul delivered it in Corinth, then, in the words of the lamented Foy E. Wallace, Sr. "We have been reading the wrong book."

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