

# The Gospel Preceptor

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

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## Wise Men Still Seek Him

Nana Yaw Aidoo

In the second chapter of the gospel account of Matthew, we have an account of some men from the East, who sought our Lord Jesus Christ when He was a baby, in order to worship Him. This incident plays a huge role in the nativity scenes and dramas of those who religiously celebrate Christmas. The nativity scenes portray the men as three people, who were present at the birth of the Christ in a manger. The Bible on the other hand, says a **great, big nothing** about the number of men, and plainly tells us that these men visited Jesus Christ in **a house** (Matt. 2:11),—not in a manger—about two years after the Christ was born (Matt. 2:7, 16). It says a lot that many would believe just about anything the Bible is alleged to teach, without verifying to see what the Bible actually teaches (Acts 17:11; 1 Thess. 5:21; 1 John 4:1). Little wonder so many believe that men are saved from their sins by saying a prayer or are saved at the point of faith, without further acts of obedience, all because they don't care about their souls enough to verify what the Bible has to say on the subject of salvation (Matt. 15:14).

However, in spite of the **abundance** of errors that surround the religious celebration of Christmas, foremost among them being the lack of scriptural authority (Luke 22:19; Col. 3:17), the birth of Christ and the circumstances surrounding this miracle, are facts that have been recorded in scripture and thus are “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” What then do we learn from these Eastern travellers who sought the Christ when He was a baby?

**First, we learn that the men who sought Christ were wise men.** It is written;

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came **wise men** from the east to Jerusalem, saying, where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship Him (Matt. 2:1-2).

The word translated “wise men” is *Magoi*. These Magi were men who ‘took their places among “the astrologers and star-gazers and monthly prognosticators” (*Smith's Bible Dictionary*, p. 374). As to how these men knew to associate the unusually bright star with Jesus Christ, it is my studied conviction that men from the Eastern part of the then world (Job 1:3), had pristine knowledge of the incarnation (see Job 19:25). Quoting from Ellicott, William Smith noted that “everywhere throughout the East, men were looking for the advent of a great king who was to rise among the Jews” (ibid., pp. 375). Whatever the case might be, it doesn't change the fact that these men who sought Christ are referred to as “wise men.”

In like manner, the Bible admonishes all men everywhere to seek the Lord. It is written; “Seek the Lord and His strength, seek His face continually” (1 Chro. 16:11). Surely, he is a “wise man” who follows in the steps of the Eastern Magi and seeks the Lord.

**Second, we learn that these wise men sought Christ diligently.** Opinions vary as to the country these Magi came from. However, the majority of scholarship agrees that they were either from Babylon or Medo-Persia. If it is the case that they were from

Babylon, then it is likely the journey took about five months. This is because, after the Babylonian exile, when Ezra decided to travel to Jerusalem to restore primitive Jewish worship, it took him five months (Ezra 7:9). That is a long time to travel friends. From the sighting of the star to the making of the journey, no doubt required hard work. Never mind the expense of gold, frankincense and myrrh. All this diligence, effort and industry, in order to seek the “King of the Jews.”

In like manner, not only does the Bible teach us to seek the Lord, it also admonishes that we seek Him diligently. The writer of the book of Hebrews noted that God “is a rewarder of those who **diligently** seek Him” (Heb. 11:6). All who teach and believe that man needs to do nothing in search of the Lord and His salvation, are in for a rude awakening on the day of judgment. Surely, he is a “wise man” who follows in the steps of the Eastern Magi and seeks the Lord diligently.

**Third, we learn that the wise men found Jesus Christ.** The diligent search of these men yielded results and thus it is written;

When they heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding joy. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary His mother, and fell down, and worshipped Him... (Matt. 2:9-11).

In like manner, all who diligently seek Christ with all their hearts will find Him. The Lord has declared; “And ye shall seek Me, and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart” (Jer. 29:13). About the Lord, David said to Solomon; “...if thou seek Him, He will be found of thee...” (1 Chro. 28:9). Oh, sinner friend, what are you waiting for?

**Finally, we learn that the wise men after finding Christ didn’t go back to where they came from, the same way.** Matthew records that after everything, “... they departed into their own country another way” (Matt. 2:12).

In like manner, all who seek and find the Christ will never return the same. The one who finds Christ will become “a new creature” (2 Cor. 5:17). The one who finds Christ will become a “servant of righteousness” (Rom. 6:18). And the one who finds Christ, will receive rest for His soul, in the sweet, by and by (Matt.11:28-20; Rev.14:13).

Dear reader, why not seek Christ today by believing in Him (John 8:24), repenting of all your sins (Luke 13:3), confessing your faith in Him before men (Matt. 10:32), being baptized unto the remission of your sins (Acts 2:38) and living faithfully for Him until death (Rev. 2:10)?

Wise man sought Jesus Christ two millennia ago and wise men still seek Him.

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## Making Void the Word of God

**Cled E. Wallace**

The chief indictment that Jesus made against the religious teachers of His time was that they were making void the word of God by their traditions.

And ye have made void the word of God because of your tradition. Ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, This people honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men (Matt. 15:6-9 ASV).

He called them blind guides and warned that all who followed them would fall into a pit with them. His instruction to the disciples was to let them alone and not try to mollify their wrath at the teaching of Jesus. He had only contempt for their traditional precepts, which they cherished more than the word of God. Regarding them, He said, “Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up” (Matt. 15:13).

It is a tragic fact today that many religious teachers are abroad in the land who make void the word of God by their traditions and humanisms quite as recklessly and

effectively as did the Pharisees who hated and opposed Jesus. They speculate, ride hobbies, build up parties, and write creeds to bind the consciences of men and hold them in the confines of sectarianism. If there ever was a time demanding that loyal believers “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3), that time is **now**. Multitudes with the best of intentions are blindly following their leaders into paths uncharted by divine revelation.

About the wildest, most irresponsible thing I have seen in a long time on the important subject of salvation appeared in a recent issue of the *Baptist Record*. J.E. Heath has an article entitled, “Anybody Can Be Saved In A Minute.” Then for fear that somebody might get the idea that a minute is too long a time to be saved in, he exclaims, “You can be saved in less time than a minute.” That just about sets a new record for getting saved quick. It hardly gives time for asking, seeking, or knocking. Mr. Heath makes short work of the old mourners' bench system the Baptists used to work so hard over after a long sermon on “Not Of Works.” This later model Baptist preacher opens up after this fashion:

The thing that keeps a lot of folks from being saved is that they get the idea that being saved is a hard thing to do; that there are a lot of things to give up and a lot of praying and getting ready to do. And they think that it is such a complicated affair that they are afraid to try to start. There was never a bigger mistaken idea in the world.

If all this is true, then the Baptists were a long time learning it. Think how much time has been wasted trying to get sinners “through” at the anxious seat! They were preached at, prayed over, and struggled with in about as big a mess of complications as the world ever saw. It took some of them weeks and months to “get” it, and some never did. Salvation under Baptist tutelage was formerly a very elusive thing. I **always** thought that “there never was a bigger mistaken idea in the world,” and now, lo, after these many years a Baptist preacher comes along and agrees with me. It is not often that I have a thing like that happen to me, and the sensation is peculiar. One extreme of error follows another, and now a sinner can be saved about as quickly as he can bat his eye, and with about as little effort. We will let Mr. Heath tell about it:

Why, anybody in the world can be saved in a moment of time, without quitting anything, without giving up anything, without doing anything. You do not have to quit sin—if we did nobody would ever be saved; you do not have to pray; you do not have to reform—if you are drunk you do not even have to wait until you get sober. You can be saved any time, anywhere.

This is a sample of Baptist doctrine, and makes void the plainest teaching of the word of God. Without reform or obedience, a sinner is saved in a moment of time and then can never be lost again, regardless of what he does! What a doctrine! The writers of the New Testament were not Baptists. When sinners asked what they must **do** to be saved, they were not told that they could be saved “in a moment of time...without doing anything.”

Hear a few plain texts and compare them with Baptist doctrine as stated in Mr. Heath's article:

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 ASV).

Jesus says that a man must come to Him, hear His words, and **do** them (Luke 6:46). “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven.” (Matt. 7:21 ASV). The man who obeys not the truth cannot be saved (Rom. 2:8). The Lord will take vengeance on them that obey not the gospel (2 Thess. 1:7-8). He is the author of eternal salvation to them that obey Him (Heb. 5:9). The New Testament abounds in such teaching. Yet a Baptist preacher teaches that a sinner can be saved “in a moment..without doing anything,” and knows it by the way he feels. Men who thus contradict the word of God

are not Christians. "Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it." (Luke 11:28).

As to the time it takes to save a sinner, he may have assurance of salvation when he obeys the gospel and not before (Rom. 6:17). "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved..." (Mk. 16:16). This is not a "hard thing to do" if a man wants to do it. There is nothing "complicated" about it. It is said of those that heard Paul preach, "...Many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized." (Acts 18:8). This was not a "complicated affair" like the old mourners bench system of some years ago. Nor was it as void of the time element as this modern do-nothing, quit-nothing, ask-for-nothing way of entering into life. But it was the way people became Christians when inspired preachers were in action, and that fact must not be concealed by such extreme and unscriptural positions as that advocated by the quit-nothing, do-nothing doctors.

"Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." (Jas. 2:24). A man who can, in the face of this, assert that a drunk sinner can be saved in less than a minute, without sobering up or doing anything else, needs to sober up himself. He is reeling with false doctrine.

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## The Conversion of the Samaritans

### George G. Hamilton

From Pentecost onward, the church in Jerusalem made rapid progress, even to the conversion of a great company of the priests (Acts 6:7). But with the stoning of Stephen, the first martyr of the cross, there began a great persecution of the church in Jerusalem, driving the disciples from the city and scattering them throughout Judea and Samaria (Acts 8:1) and even to distant parts (Acts 11:19). "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word" (Acts 8:4).

Persecution has never hindered or even retarded the progress of the gospel. Opposition to the preaching of the pure gospel of Christ by the sectarian world is a healthy sign. "Let the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing."

### Philip Goes To Samaria

Philip journeyed to Samaria and "preached Christ unto them" (Acts 8:5). The early disciples could not remain in idleness while the world about them lay in ignorance and wickedness. While waiting in Athens for the coming of Silas and Timothy, Paul busied himself preaching the gospel there (Acts 17:16-34). So Philip in Samaria waited not for the cessation of persecution in Jerusalem that he might return there in peace, but began a gospel meeting at once.

We know the Samaritans as a mongrel race of Jewish and Gentile blood, despised by the Jewish ruling class as an inferior people. Their religion was a corrupted form of Judaism. They accepted only the Pentateuch, and that differed much from the Hebrew text. To such a people, Christ Himself had preached (John 4:4-42), and to such a people Philip, the Jew, preached Christ.

### Character Of The Preaching

We know exactly what Philip preached, as he "preached Christ unto them." He preached "the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 8:12). He preached the gospel, the saving gospel, the only preaching that can save (Rom. 1:16). He proclaimed in substance what Peter proclaimed at Pentecost, and years later to the household of Cornelius (Acts 10). This was the same gospel that was afterward preached by Paul from Damascus, Jerusalem, and Antioch to every part of the ancient world.

The preaching of this gospel will always produce the same gracious and blessed results wherever it is proclaimed, believed, and obeyed. Of the Samaritans, it is said, "And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did" (Acts 8:6). "But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women" (Acts 8:12).

To the rule stated above, there are no exceptions. Whenever and wherever the pure gospel of Christ is preached, those who hear it and give heed to it by believing, repenting and being baptized “for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38) are saved. Such was true at Pentecost, and such was true in Samaria. Such was also true in the case of the Ethiopian eunuch, of Saul of Tarsus, Cornelius, Lydia and her house, the Philippian jailer and his house, and of all others in apostolic days. And such remains true in our day.

God's plan for the salvation of men has not changed. Those who proclaim otherwise than what is plainly set forth in the Scriptures are perverters of the word of God and come under the condemnation stated in Second Corinthians 11:4; Galatians 1:6-8, and Revelation 22:18-19. These are hard words, but they are the words of the unchangeable and eternal God, coming to us through men who “spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”

Philip told the whole story of the Christ—of His pure and matchless life, His vicarious death on the cross to atone for the sins of men who will believe and obey Him, of His triumphant resurrection from the dead, and His glorious ascension to the Father, the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost and the establishment of the kingdom on that glorious day.

### **The Case Of Simon**

Into the story of the conversion of the Samaritans enters the case of Simon Magus (the magician). The proponents of the doctrine, “Once in grace, always in grace,” contend that Simon was not truly converted. If he was not, then no others were, for there is nothing said of the Samaritans generally that is not also said of Simon: **1)** The Samaritans believed. So did Simon. **2)** The Samaritans were baptized. So was Simon. **3)** And something was said of Simon that is said of no other: “...he continued with Philip...” (Acts 8:13).

But when Peter and John came down from Jerusalem to perform a work that Philip, not being an apostle, could not do, Simon wanted the power which belonged only to an apostle. He knew from experience the power of money, and sought to buy this power to confer the gift of the Spirit upon others. For this, Peter condemned him (Acts 8:20), saying, “Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter...” (Acts 8:21). What matter? The matter which had called Peter and John to Samaria—that the Samaritans should receive the Holy Spirit. The matter of conferring miraculous gifts belonged only to the apostles.

Peter continued in Acts 8:20-21, saying Simon's heart was “not right in the sight of God” because he thought to obtain this special gift of God with money. He then called on Simon to repent and pray for forgiveness. That Simon was penitent is evident from his words to Peter: “Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me” (Acts 8:24). Simon was commanded to do just what every other Christian is commanded to do when he sins and comes again under the righteous condemnation of God—to repent and pray for forgiveness. The advocates of the unconditional, final perseverance of the saints can draw no comfort from the case of Simon Magus of Samaria.

### **Some Conclusions**

1. Any man who is a true disciple of Jesus Christ has divine authority to preach the gospel, as did Stephen, Philip, and others.
2. The gospel produced the same gracious results in Samaria as in Jerusalem. It is the same everywhere—in all the world through all ages—since Pentecost.
3. Superstition, wonder working, and false teaching cannot abide the light of God's truth.
4. But the one supreme thought derived from the lesson is that opposition and persecution never have halted, and never can halt, the onward march of the hosts of righteousness who march to victory under the banner of Christ, “King of kings and Lord of lords.”

# Denominationalism's Greatest Mistake

From *Gospel Digest*, Vol. 5, No. 3, May, 1947

So far as I know, all professed Christians of whatever creed or belief agree that there is a time when an alien sinner is separated from God. They are not agreed, however, on the place where reunion takes place when the alien returns to God. Some of them teach that it is when the sinner, in answer to prayer, receives the Holy Spirit into his heart. Others teach that it is when the sinner touches the blood of Christ.

This is one of the most important differences confronting the religious world today. On it hangs the destiny of millions of human souls. If the penitent sinner is reunited to God by the Holy Spirit coming into his heart in answer to prayer, then I unhesitatingly affirm that Christ shed his blood in vain. That kind of salvation is a bloodless salvation. But this cannot be, for God's word says, "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission" (Heb. 9:22).

Just where is this connection established? Perhaps most of the preachers in the world today will tell you that it is when God sends the Holy Spirit into the heart of the sinner and the sinner passes from death unto life. The sinner himself may believe this, and become very happy, and from that day forward live a prayerful, consecrated life and finally die believing with all his heart that he has been saved from his alien sins. But has he? Not if the blood of Christ has anything to do with his salvation. And who will say that he can be saved independent of the blood of Christ?

On the day of Pentecost the law of pardon for the alien sinner was made known (Acts 2). Peter and the other apostles first preached the gospel to the multitude. Those who heard them were pierced in their hearts and cried out, "What shall we do?" (Acts 2:36). By inspiration, Peter gave the answer. What did he say? Did he tell them they should pray, and then God would send His Spirit into their hearts and take away their sins? He did not.

He said, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38). "But," you say, "there is no mention of the blood of Christ. Only repentance and baptism are mentioned in connection with the remission of sins." That's true, but baptism is connected with the blood of Christ, and one reaches the blood of Christ **only** through baptism. Notice carefully:

"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).

The inspired Paul clearly says here that we are **baptized into the death of Christ**. He says we are buried with him by baptism **into death**. Now this much has been made clear: When an alien sinner has been pierced in the heart and wants to know what he must do to be saved, he is first told to repent and turn away from his sins. He is then told he must be baptized for the remission of sins. He is informed by Paul in Romans 6:3-4 that his baptism is to be a burial and that his baptismal burial is **into the death of Christ**. But what happened in the death of Christ? It was there where He shed his blood.

While Jesus was on the cross, the Roman soldiers came to break the legs of those who had been crucified. They broke the legs of each suffering thief, "But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs, but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water" (John 19:33-34).

Jesus, then, shed His blood in death, not in His life. This being the case, it follows that if I would reach His blood, I must do so by getting into His death, and that is done by being baptized into the death of Christ.

Now the question we are discussing is this: "Where does a penitent, alien sinner make connection with God to receive forgiveness of his sins? Is it in the Holy Spirit, or is it in the blood of Christ?" Denominational churches teach that the connection is made

when God, in answer to prayer, sends the Holy Spirit into the sinner's heart and takes away his sins.

The Bible teaches that the connection is made when the penitent sinner is buried with Christ in baptism into His death where His blood was shed and where it is contacted to remit sins.

If I were to call all the denominational preachers in the world together and ask them where the penitent alien sinner receives the forgiveness of his sins, the great majority of them would say, "At the altar," meaning that the sinner prays to God, that God hears his prayer, and sends the Holy Spirit into his heart. The Holy Spirit then takes the sin out of the sinner's heart, and he is then and there saved. He can now be baptized or not as he sees fit, by sprinkling or immersion, or as the church he wishes to join to become a member requires. "But," those preachers will say, "baptism has nothing to do with salvation. That was taken care of at the altar when the Holy Spirit entered his heart."

If these preachers are right, the Bible is wrong, for the Bible does not teach it that way. I will gladly go on the polemic platform with any denominational preacher in the land and examine every case of conversion since Christ died and prove that not one of them is right in asserting that salvation comes through prayer.

If these preachers are wrong, then they are leading millions of sincere people into the ditch of error. In this case, the blind are leading the blind and both will fall into the ditch.

We are saved by the blood of Christ, or we are saved independent of it. If we are saved by it, then we are saved when we reach it, or are connected with it. We reach it, or are connected with it when we are baptized—buried—into the death of Christ where His blood was shed. Since there is not a living man who can put his finger on one word of Scripture that shows any other way to get into the death of Christ than by burial in baptism, it follows that there is **no other way**.

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## **God Does Not Have A Plan To Kill People**

**Jerry C. Brewer**

When my brother died in 2014, an aunt pontificated, "That's God's plan for us." Having heard such tripe for longer than I can remember and, frankly, incensed at such Biblical ignorance from one who had delusions of wisdom, I replied, "No, that's the **devil's** plan for us. God does not kill people."

Her inane statement is typical of people across every hue of the religious spectrum today. The Calvinistic determinism that spiritual merchants have chanted for centuries is now generally accepted by most religions and their adherents. The lie that, "Everything happens for our good," or "That's God's plan," or that, "God took our baby," etc. ad nauseum, is the accepted conventional wisdom in the religious world today. And it's all **false!** God does not micromanage the world, nor does He cause people to sorrow.

When Satan persuaded Eve to disobey God in Eden and she persuaded Adam to do the same, sin entered the world bringing every illness, heartache, misery, death and suffering known to man (Gen. 3:1-24). There is not a single thing we suffer in this life that cannot be laid directly at the feet of Satan. Yet ignorant religionists are swift to blame God when catastrophe occurs in any family. They view God as a "Heavenly Puppeteer" who manipulates the strings on His human puppets in every action man takes. That is Calvinism gone to seed and absolutely denies the free will of man.

**"God Has A Plan For Your Life"**

When a man convinces himself that he is not responsible for his own actions, it becomes easy to assign all occurrences in his life to some mysterious, mystical "plan"

of God. He doesn't have any idea what "God's plan" for his life is, but he just knows what happens to him is "God's plan." If he loses a leg in war, he just **knows** that is "God's plan" for his life, or that, "It was meant to be". If he loses a loved one to death, he says, "God took him. That is God's plan". There is even a short piece often used in funeral memorials, and which I have seen on at least one gravestone, which says, in part, "God broke our hearts to prove that he only takes the best." God does not break men's hearts by "taking" our loved ones. If any blame is to be assigned for broken hearts at the loss of a loved one, it belongs solely to Satan who brought sin into the world by tempting Eve.

When my parents buried half of their children, was that because "God had a plan for their lives"? Did their infant son, Carl Edward, die in 1945 of kidney failure because God planned it? Did their 21 year old son, Phil, who was born with a heart defect, die during open heart surgery in 1971 because God planned it? Was his heart defect planned? Did my brother, Kenneth, contract Creutzfeldt Jakob Disease and die in 2014 because God planned it? To say God plans each of our deaths views Him as a sadistic fiend who takes great delight in killing people. That is blasphemous to the nth degree and not a syllable of that sort of stupidity can be found within the pages of Holy Writ.

Yes, God does have a plan for our lives, but **not** a plan for each person, in which He micromanages each life, then kills him. His plan for all of mankind is clearly stated by Solomon: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole of man" (Eccl. 12:13).

### **"Everything Happens For A Reason" Or "For Our Good"**

This is another statement meaning, "God has His reason for this happening to me." In concert with this, they often cite Romans 8:28, which says, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." This is, perhaps, one of the most misused passages in all of the Bible. I have heard it quoted countless times when tragedy has occurs—whether it's the loss of one's house in a fire, an auto accident, or the death of a loved one, and that application is **absolutely false!**

The person who quotes this verse omits the last part, and ignores its context. He simply says, "All things work together for good to them that love God" and omits, "...who are the called according to his purpose." The idea conveyed by perverting this verse is that, "Everything that happens to you, is for your good." Really? Think about it.

In 1973, six persons were killed in a head on collision in the Texas town where we lived. Four were local teenagers in one car, and in the other car was an elderly couple passing through town on their way from Amarillo to Fort Worth. Was that for their good? Was that for the good of their families? When Moslems flew planes into the World Trade Center, was that for their good? Was that for the good of the families who lost thousands of loved ones in that tragedy?

Those who misuse Romans 8:28 completely ignore Paul's meaning in this verse. The key to understanding it is the phrase, "all things", which is the plan of salvation. Look at the phrases, "all things", "the deep things of God", "the things of God", "the things that are freely given to us of God", and "which things also we speak" in First Corinthians 2: 10-13. Those are "the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" which Paul quoted in verse 9, from Isaiah 64:4—the scheme of redemption which was hidden in ages past, but is now revealed.

Romans 8:28 does **not** mean "everything that happens to us is for our good". The thesis of the book of Romans is that the gospel is God's power to save all of mankind (Rom. 1:16-17). In the development of that thesis, Paul discusses our inability to eradicate the guilt of sin from our own lives—that it takes the blood of Jesus Christ. In that connection, he discusses the inward battle we wage with sin and how it can be overcome (Rom. 7, 8).

The summation of his point is stated in past tense in Romans 8:28-30 where he explains what "all things" are and uses the past tense. Past tense is used because when God purposes a thing, it is as though that thing were already done. God spoke in past

tense when He told Joshua, “See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valor” (Josh. 7:2). He said “I **have given**” a full week before Jericho fell. In Romans 8, Paul is speaking of the scheme of redemption which was purposed in Christ (Eph. 3:11) and the entire scope of God’s plan is encapsulated in Romans 8:28-30. “All things” in this passage refers to the scheme of redemption. The “all things” that work together for good are only to, “them that love God”—those who seek to do His will (Matt. 5:6). They are the “called according to his purpose” (Eph. 3:11) and they are called out of the world by the gospel (1 Thess. 2:13-14). Here is the order of God’s plan to save men:

1. He foreknew a **people** and predestined them to be conformed to the image of Christ (v. 29; cf Eph. 1:4-5)
2. The predestined ones were “called” to salvation by the gospel (v. 30; cf 2 Thess. 2:13-14).
3. Those “called” ones were “justified”—saved (v. 30; cf Rom. 1:16-17).
4. The “justified” were “glorified” (v. 30; cf Rom. 8:18).

Romans 8:28-30 encapsulates the entire scheme of redemption, from God’s purpose before the world began, to the final glorification of His saints in heaven. God does not kill little babies, burn down houses, create wars, murder people, steal honest people’s goods, cause drunkards to abuse their wives, or create any other misery for the world. To say that the ills of the world, caused by man’s sin, are the works of God demonstrates ignorance of God and His word and is tantamount to blasphemy. God’s plan is to **save men**, not kill them.

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## If Philip Had Been a Baptist Preacher

**Jerry C. Brewer**

Anyone who has studied the New Testament and reads the *Standard Manual for Baptist Churches* is immediately struck by the great differences between them. Baptist theologians and preachers stoutly proclaim their devotion to the Scriptures but deny them in their faith and practice. That is illustrated by the following comparison of the Ethiopian eunuch’s conversion by Philip in Acts 8 with his conversion if Philip had been a Baptist preacher. That **true** account is recorded by Luke:

And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet. Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to *him*, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on *their* way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, *here is* water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and

they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing (Acts 8:26-39).

The eunuch was reading Isaiah 53 aloud when Philip approached the chariot and asked him if he understood what he was reading. That chapter was a prophecy of the humble, suffering Messiah at His arrest and illegal arraignment before the Sanhedrin, Pilate, and Herod. It describes His humiliation and death as a common criminal.

The eunuch admitted that he needed help in understanding the passage and invited Philip to sit in the chariot with him. He then asked Philip if Isaiah was writing of himself or someone else. “Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.” What does it mean to “preach Jesus?” Preaching is aimed at producing a Bible result, so we may determine the meaning of the phrase by looking at the result produced by preaching Jesus.

Before Philip went to the Gaza road and intercepted the eunuch, he preached in Samaria. “Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them” (Acts 8:5). What he preached in Samaria was the same thing. To preach **Christ** in Samaria was the same as preaching **Jesus** to the eunuch. His preaching of Christ in Samaria included preaching the kingdom of Christ and His authority. “But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women” (Acts 8:12). The kingdom of God is the church, as Jesus explained (Matt. 16:18-19), and “the name of Jesus Christ” referred to His authority (Matt. 28:18; cf Col. 3:17). Christ's authority as God's spokesman (Heb. 1:1-2) and His church—which includes His reign as head over it (Eph. 1:22-23)—were comprehended in the phrase, “preached Christ unto them” and those same things were included when Philip “preached Jesus” to the eunuch. Furthermore, it is obvious that his preaching included baptism for the remission of sins which Jesus commanded and Peter preached on Pentecost (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38) since that was the result in both cases.

Now consider the scene **if Philip had been a Baptist preacher.**

When the eunuch read the Isaiah passage and asked of whom the writer was speaking, Baptist Philip “opened his mouth” and preached unto him the Baptist version of Jesus which rejects baptism in order to the remission of sins. But upon coming to a certain body of water, the eunuch—failing to comprehend baptism in the Baptist scheme of things—said, “I want to be saved. What doth hinder me to be baptized?” Baptist Philip said,

Baptists believe that only penitent believers are scriptural subjects for baptism. Only such as have repented of sin, believed to the saving of the soul, been saved by divine power, regenerated by the Holy Spirit, created anew in Christ Jesus, converted to God, are prepared to receive the ordinance. Baptists believe that no one is a scriptural subject for baptism till he is already saved. All well-informed people know that we teach this: then upon what ground can they say we believe baptism essential to salvation? We believe it is a positive command, enjoined upon the believing, saved soul (J.G. Bow, *What Baptists Believe and Why They Believe it*, ND, The Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, p. 33).

Baptist Philip continued: “You have made the same mistake that a lot of folks make. You associate baptism with salvation. I can tell you now that baptism is not essential to salvation, but it is necessary.”

“Not essential, but necessary?” asked the eunuch. “Isn't that a contradiction of terms?”

“Not at all” Baptist Philip replied. “You see, Baptism is not essential for being saved, but it is necessary to get you into the Baptist Church.”

“You mean I can be saved and go to heaven without being in the Baptist Church?” the eunuch asked.

“That's right,” Baptist Philip replied.

“Then,” said the eunuch, “it's easier to get into heaven than it is to get into the Baptist Church.”

“Well,” drawled Baptist Philip, “I wouldn't put it that way. What we're saying is that you need to be in the Baptist Church and give your money to help us. After all, we have expenses and car washes and rummage sales just don't raise enough money to keep us going—especially to pay our Pastors' salaries.

The eunuch thought it over for a while, then said, “I'm penitent, I repent and I believe. I'm already saved by what you have told me. I feel like the Holy Spirit has regenerated me and now understand that baptism is not essential to salvation. And, I want to help pay salaries for Pastors and build nice buildings. Now can I be baptized?”

Baptist Philip smiled at him and said,

There are three classes of candidates, and modes of reception to membership [and one of those is] “By baptism—The church having listened to the religious experience of the candidate, and being satisfied with the same, and with his Christian deportment, votes to receive him to its fellowship, on being baptized. (Edward T. Hiscox, *Standard Manual for Baptist Churches*, 1903, American Baptist Publication Society, Philadelphia. pp. 19, 23).

“Okay,” the eunuch said, “now that I'm saved I want to join your church by baptism in this water.”

“You don't hear so well, do you?” asked Baptist Philip. “Listen again: The church has to hear your religious experience and if they are satisfied with what you relate to them, they will vote you into membership. However, while you cannot become a member without baptism, yet it is the vote of the body which admits you to its fellowship on receiving baptism” (Hiscox, p. 22).

“Ah,” said the eunuch as a Baptist light bulb appeared above his head, “I get it now. Where can we find a Baptist Church to vote me in?”

“That's difficult to answer,” Baptist Philip said. “We had better try to find one at Gaza, although I am not sure one is there. There is nothing in Jerusalem but churches of Christ and a bunch of apostles and they all preach that a person can be baptized any time “for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38) which adds him to the church by the Lord (Acts 2:47). Can you imagine? No vote or anything!”

So the eunuch did not command the chariot to stand still. Instead, they passed by a certain body of water since Baptist Philip could not baptize him without a vote of a Baptist Church. The Spirit did not catch Baptist Philip away and the eunuch had no reason to rejoice, so they both went on their way toward Gaza on a much wider road described by the **non-Baptist** version of Christ as “broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction” (Matt. 7:13).

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## A Challenge To The “Latter Day Saints”

Jess Whitlock

I recently finished teaching a class showing the myriad contradictions between *The Book of Mormon* (TBOM) and the Holy Bible. During that time I was having a discussion with two “elders” from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I also took advantage of the moment to study from *Doctrine and Covenants* and *The Pearl of Great Price*. The “elders” told me that all three of these volumes are inspired of God. It does not take long to realize that such cannot be the case. Reflect on just a few of our discussions together:

1. The Bible states that Christ was born in Bethlehem (Matt. 2:5; Luke 2:4-7). TBOM says He was born in Jerusalem (Almah 7:10) and it also says He was born

in Nazareth (1 Nephi 11:13-20). How could Christ be born in three cities? And, how could Mary be in three cities at the same time?

2. The Bible declares that when Christ was crucified the darkness lasted for three hours (Luke 23:44). TBOM states that the darkness lasted for three days (Helaman 14:20, 27; 1 Nephi 19:10). TBOM contradicts itself on where darkness lasted for three days; i.e., Helaman 14:20 says, “there shall be no light on the face of this land [America, JLW]” but 14:27 says, “darkness should cover the face of the whole earth TBOM contradicts not only the Bible, but itself!

3. The Bible claims to be all-sufficient (John 14:26; 2 Pet. 1:3; Jude 3). TBOM claims the Bible is not all-sufficient (2 Nephi 29:1-4). Furthermore, 1 Nephi 13:26ff states the Bible is incomplete, missing many “plain and precious parts of the Gospel” which were “kept back by that abominable church.” I ask any Mormon member to name **any** “plain and precious parts of the Gospel” that are missing that would prevent one from obeying God and being saved? I humbly submit that no part of the Gospel of Christ is missing, nor is any part restored in this “other testament”!

4. The Bible clearly shows the establishment of the church in A.D. 33 (Acts 2). TBOM goofed again when it speaks of some added to the church 147 years before Christ (Mosiah 18:7-17). Christ stated, “I will build my church” (Matt. 16:18). Did you notice the future tense? Also, He stated it would be **His** church; **not** the church of **Joseph Smith**.

5. The Bible states “disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.” (Acts 11:26). TBOM has some wearing the name Christian first in America 73 years before Christ (Almah 46:13-16). Is the Bible correct in its use of “first” first, or is TBOM correct in using “first” second? The Bible states, “yea, let God be true, but every man a liar” (Rom. 3:4). That includes “Another Testament of...” (Joseph Smith). Even the angel Moroni is not exempt. “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed” (Gal. 1:8).

6. The Bible states that “it is appointed unto men once to die” (Heb. 9:27). TBOM has an account about three men who are told they will live until the final return of Christ (3 Nephi 28:4-9). These three men are told they will “never endure the pains of death.” Christ has not returned. Where are these three men? Nobody seems to know: the “elders” told me they had not seen nor talked with these men and they did not know of any who had including their so-called “apostles” or “the 70” or their “president-prophet.” Deuteronomy 18:20-22 gives the test of a true prophet and Joseph Smith has failed miserably here.

7. The Bible tells of the institution of the Lord's supper; i.e., unleavened bread and fruit of the vine as emblems of the Lord's body and blood (Matt. 26:26-29; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:24-29). However, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints incorrectly calls it “sacrament” and then perverts the elements to water and light bread! TBOM states “bread and wine” repeatedly (3 Nephi 18:1-3; 5-9, 13). Joseph Smith apparently “forgot what he wrote” for in *Doctrine and Covenants* 27:2 he writes, “I say unto you that it mattereth not what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink when ye partake of the sacrament.” I asked my two visitors, “Could I use iced tea and cookies?” They said, “yes.” I asked, “How about cake and ice cream?” They said, “yes.” One of them offered, “You could use beer and pizza, if that's all you have.” I was shocked beyond belief. We then moved into a discussion of the silence of the Scripture which they could not quite comprehend.

Time would fail me to go through the remaining seven pages of notes that were taken during those discussions. After all is said and done I still keep coming back to the words of Christ to His only chosen apostles, who were apostles indeed: “Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come” (John 16:13). Yet, the Holy Spirit in guiding them into **all truth** and

showing them things to come did not guide them into one word concerning the conflicting doctrines of Mormonism, Moroni or Joseph Smith! I wonder why?

There are myriad contradictions between the Holy Bible and *The Book of Mormon*. *The Book of Mormon* even **contradicts itself** numerous times. *The Book of Mormon* contradicts the *Doctrine and Covenants*. *The Doctrine and Covenants* **also** contradicts the Holy Bible. *The Pearl of Great Price* contains contradictions with all the others. The numerous failed prophecies of Joseph Smith's writings speak eloquently of his identity as that of a false prophet.

They claim inspiration for *Doctrine and Covenants*, and I assume that includes 71:7 which reads, "Wherefore confound your enemies; call upon them to meet you both in public and in private; and inasmuch as ye are faithful their shame shall be made manifest." In light of what I have written, I assume that I am an enemy of the man-made denomination known as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. I have now challenged about a dozen sets of elders to meet with me in a public debate on the inspiration of *The Book of Mormon*.

Once again, my challenge to meet these matters in public debate was refused. That seems to be a flagrant refusal on their part to obey *Doctrine and Covenants* 71:7, and if not, why not? Therefore, taking their advice, I offer this public challenge to any so-called "elder," "apostle," "priest," the "president—prophet" or one of "the 70." I will go so far as to offer this challenge to any one of the three men mentioned in 3 Nephi 28 who are said to be somewhere on earth today, to do what they have been commanded to do!

### **Propositions For Public Discussion**

"Resolved: The Book of Mormon contradicts the Holy Bible and other doctrines of Mormonism; and therefore is not another testament of Jesus Christ."

AFFIRM:

(signed) Jess Whitlock

DENY:

"Resolved: The Book of Mormon agrees in every detail with the Holy Bible and other documents of Mormonism; and therefore is another testament of Jesus Christ."

AFFIRM:

DENY:

(signed) Jess Whitlock

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## **How to Receive the Prize**

### **Lee Moses**

Christians labor in the kingdom, living the Christian life, that God might be glorified and that souls of others might be saved. However, there is also an inestimable prize that they all desire to obtain for themselves—the prize of eternal life in heaven. Not that it is a prize that they desire to hoard to themselves; it is not a prize with a limited number of recipients. While "they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize" (1 Cor. 9:24), in the Father's house are "many mansions" (John 14:2). But even with a potentially limitless number of recipients of the heavenly prize, very few will receive it. When Jesus was asked, "Lord, are there few that be saved?", He replied, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able" (Luke 13:23-24). Even the faithful apostle Paul knew that he could become "a castaway" ("disqualified," New King James Version) from receiving the heavenly prize (1 Cor. 9:27).

But by no means did Paul resign himself to disqualification—he doggedly and determinedly pushed forward that he might receive his prize. And he strove for his prize according to a plan:

Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those

things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Phlp. 3:13-14).

### **Forget**

The ability to forget could be considered a truly Christian virtue. No, not the ability to forget where you parked your car, or to forget a person's name thirty seconds after you meet. But the ability to put out of the mind useless distractions that could easily become focal points can keep our major task from becoming unnecessarily difficult.

Before he obeyed the Gospel, Paul was the envy of the Jews. He was of high birth, the best training, exceptional ability, directed ambition; and because of this he was able to say, "[I] profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation" (Gal. 1:14; compare with Phlp. 3:4-6). But once Paul became a follower of Jesus Christ, his previous achievements and goals could no longer dominate his desires. And they did not: "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ" (Phlp. 3:7-8). But Paul goes beyond saying those things were "loss"; he goes beyond saying those things were "dung"—he says they were **forgotten**.

There are things that we all need to put behind us; there are things that we need to "forget" when we become Christians. Like Paul, we may need to put our past accomplishments behind us. Especially is this so if our "accomplishments" were actually contrary to the cause of Christ (compare with Acts 26:9-11). In addition to past accomplishments, we need to forget past failures. Sometimes people get it in their heads that they are doomed to failure. Of course, if that remains their attitude, they **are** doomed to failure.

We need to forget the past pleasures of sin. When one repents, he turns his back on all those ways that are repugnant to God, though that person may once have derived pleasure from them. "For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings ("drinking parties," NKJV), and abominable idolatries" (1 Pet. 4:3). We need to forget the times others have wronged us and have refused to repent. True, there can be no real forgiveness without repentance (Luke 17:3-4); but for one to go on harboring grudges hurts oneself far greater than the transgressor.

### **Focus**

Once one has put aside any unnecessary mental, emotional, and spiritual baggage, he is now ready to apply himself to the task at hand. When running a race, an athlete cannot be distracted by the spectators, other runners, or by his own anxiety. Every inch of his body and every thought of his mind are given to his goal. Likewise, Paul single-mindedly strove for his goal, "reaching forth unto those things which are before." He spoke of himself as doing just "one thing" (Phlp. 3:13).

If we desire to receive our heavenly prize, we must also single-mindedly strive for the goal. The Hebrews writer exhorts, ". . . let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12:1-2). To run the Christian race, any sins that arise must be addressed as quickly as possible, before they grow into greater problems. Paul knew that self-discipline was crucial to his receiving the prize (1 Cor. 9:25-27).

Also, the common encumbrances of life must be set aside as much as possible. While focusing on the minutiae of life, one can find the direction of his life completely altered from its heavenly course. There can be so many cares that fill our lives that we no longer have any place for the main thing. Jesus said, "Seek ye **first** the kingdom of God and his righteousness" (Matt. 6:33, emphasis LM). We must keep the main thing the main thing.

### **Finish**

The calling of God is a **high**, or "**upward**" (NKJV), calling. Some believe in a "plateau religion." The Judaizing teachers Paul opposed taught, "Climb up to this point, and you

are safe. Be circumcised, keep this list of commandments, and Heaven is yours.”<sup>[1]</sup> Some today convince themselves, “I have done enough; Heaven is my sure reward.” Such people might want to ask themselves, “Have I done more for the Lord than the apostle Paul?” In Philippians 3:12-13, Paul repeats emphatically that he has **not** yet arrived at his destination; he has **not** yet achieved his goal.

There are so many who enter the Christian race, but simply never finish. “The best-laid plans of mice and men often go awry.” Some simply lose their focus—they “are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection” (Luke 8:14). Others apparently come to decide that the Christian life is impossible to live. It is difficult—“For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise” (Heb. 10:36, NKJV)—but it is by no means impossible. As a matter of fact, the apostle Peter tells us that if you are consistently adding the Christian graces to your life, “ye shall never fall” (2 Pet. 1:10). He warns about one who fails to add them, “But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins” (verse 9). Such a person has lost his focus and his way, and thus has no hope of finishing. But if one begins correctly, in faith (verse 5); and continues correctly, by progressively adding virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity (verses 5-7); he is assured to finish.

“Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward” (2 John 8).

### Conclusion

There is nothing shameful in desiring to receive the heavenly prize. The only shame will be for those who fail to receive it when they could have. The apostle Paul by inspiration wrote of his plan to receive the prize by **forgetting**, **focusing**, and **finishing**.

As we obey the Gospel (Rom. 6:3-4), let us be willing to forget our past, all the while embracing our present in confident expectation of the future.

<sup>[1]</sup> Gary Summers, “Pressing on Toward the Goal,” in *Studies in Philippians and Colossians*, ed. Dub McClish (Denton, TX: Valid Publications), p. 147.

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## “I Am The True Vine”

G.K. Wallace

Isaiah used the vine as a type of Israel, planted and tended by the Almighty as the husbandman (Isa. 5:1). Israel was not the true vine. Christ is the true vine (John 15:1). In John 14 the Lord had just said to the disciples, “Arise, let us go hence.” He had just eaten the last supper with the apostles. He said that he would not drink of the fruit of the vine again on this earth. Likely on the table from which they had just risen was the fruit of the vine. And now he says, “I am the true vine.”

In the first eight verses of John 15 we find the following outstanding lessons about the vine and the branches.

1. That morality alone cannot save.
2. That there is but one true church.
3. That we should get in Christ, stay in Christ, and stay out of everything else or be lost.

Jesus said, “Apart from me you can do nothing.” Morality alone cannot save. Men can be morally good apart from Christ. Yet apart from Christ they can do nothing. There is no spiritual life apart from Christ. Cornelius was a moral man apart from Christ but he was unsaved (Acts 11:14). If morality alone can save then Jesus died in vain. There were just as good men morally to be found in the Mosaic age as there are now. If a man can be saved by his own goodness then Jesus died for no purpose at all. Why did he die if they could be saved by their own goodness? Let the moral man remember these words, “Apart from me you can do nothing.” There is no spiritual life apart from Jesus Christ, the true vine.

Thus we see that one must get **into Christ** to be saved. Paul says that we are baptized

into Christ. That makes baptism necessary to salvation in Christ Jesus. You cannot do anything apart from Christ but you can't get into Christ unless you are baptized (Gal. 3:27).

This "true vine" is the true church. The vine is the spiritual body of Christ. The church is His body (Col. 1:18). There is one body (Eph. 4:4). There is **but** one body (1 Cor. 12:20). Paul does not say "churches" but "**the** church." If one desires to be united with Christ let him obey the gospel and thus be added to the "one body," the church, the "true vine."

The objector says that Christ is the true vine and all the denominations are branches. Christ said, "I" am the vine and "ye" are the branches. "He" that abideth in me. Note the use of the personal pronoun. Do men refer to churches as "he" and "ye"? Is that the way they talk where you live? Is that the way your preacher talks? Would you say about the Baptist Church—he is a large church? The use of the personal pronoun shows that Christ was talking to his disciples and not to "churches." Individuals are the branches and not organizations. But just suppose for a minute that the branches are churches. In what branch are you? You say that I am in the Baptist branch. Yes, but wait, Christ said abide in "me." You should not abide in a branch but in the vine. If you are in a branch you ought to get out of it and get in the vine. Get out of the branch and get in the vine. "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." Abide in the vine or be burned. Do not abide in a branch. You cannot abide in a branch. A branch is a disciple or a Christian. Individuals are the branches and not denominations.

Did God set denominations in the vine? If so, which ones did He put in? If God set denominations in the vine it is strange that He never said anything about it. If He did mention them will someone please tell where?

For one to claim that denominations are the branches is an apology for something they know that is not mentioned in the Bible and a rank perversion of the 15th chapter of John. Denominations came into existence hundreds of years after Christ. They are of human origin and no one has a Bible right to belong to any of them.

The "true vine," the church, was established by Christ and all Christians are members of it (John 3:5). The church is God's house. God's house is His family (1 Tim. 3:15). God has no children outside of His family.

From this chapter we learn that we must bear fruit to please God. "Herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit; and so shall ye be my disciples." You cannot bear fruit apart from the vine. To bear fruit you must be in the vine. How does one get in the vine? He must believe (Mark 16:15-16). He must repent (Acts 2:38). He must be baptized (Gal. 3:27). These steps put one into Christ. Yet it is not enough to get into Christ. In Christ the branch must bear good fruit. The fruitless branch (disciple) will be lost. He will be cast forth and be burned (John 15:6). Our duty in regard to this is clear. We must get in Christ, stay in Christ, and stay out of everything else.

Someone may ask, "Can a man be saved and go to heaven and stay out of the vine?" No, for Christ says, "Apart from me you can do nothing." It is Christ or nothing. It is the true vine or no vine. It is the true church or no church. Christ here teaches that you cannot be saved out of the church and you cannot be saved unless you stay in the church.

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## Some Errors of Catholicism

### H. Leo Boles

There are many errors taught by the Catholics. Hence, this article is headed, *Some Errors of Catholicism*. All of their errors could not be discussed in one brief article. At one time, the Catholic Church published its doctrines in papers under the title, *Religious Information Bureau*. The general reading public never took the time to investigate the bold Catholic assertions and allowed them to go unchallenged by the truth.

### The Catholic Church

In their published “Information Bureau,” they declared that Christ built the Catholic Church and they affirm that he built only one church. In this assertion, they have some truth mixed with error.

It is true that Christ built only one church, but it was not the Catholic Church. The church that Jesus built belongs to Christ and not to the pope. Jesus said to Peter, “Upon this rock I will build my church” (Matt. 16:18). This shows that the church belongs to Christ. All authentic church history teaches that the Roman Catholic Church was not developed as we now have it until some centuries **after** Christ established his church.

It is an error for Catholics to claim that Christ established the Catholic Church. Many will not take time to investigate this false Catholic claim that “Christ established only one church and that was the Catholic Church.” A half truth is a lie. Christ built only one church, but that was **not** the Catholic Church.

The New Testament declares that the church Christ built is the “church of God,” the “body of Christ,” “the household of faith,” etc. The New Testament nowhere mentions the Roman Catholic Church. Neither does it mention anything about the pope, who is the head of the Catholic Church. The New Testament church was never cumbered with the ecclesiastical machinery that now belongs to the Catholic Church. Anyone who knows what the Catholic Church is and what the New Testament teaches can know there is the width of the poles between the Catholic Church and the church of Christ.

### **Church Not Built On Peter**

Another error taught by the Catholics is that Christ built his church on the apostle Peter. In the new translation of the *New Testament Revised by the Catholic Church*, we have this quotation:

Then Jesus answered and said, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood hath not revealed this to thee, but my Father in heaven. And I say to thee, Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it (Matt. 16:17-18).

In the notes of their *Revised New Testament*, we have this comment:

In the gospels the word church is used only here and in 18:17. In the Old Testament it designated the assembly of Israel. Here, in speaking of his church, our Lord means a society of men united to serve God as he had taught them to do. Compared with an edifice, it is said to rest on a rock, as did the house of the wise man of 7:24. That rock was Peter. Of course, the strength of the foundation comes from Christ.

It is a bold claim of the Catholic Church that Christ built his church upon Peter. This is false and is abundantly disproved by the New Testament. The Holy Spirit said through Paul, “So then ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but ye are fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief cornerstone” (Eph. 2:19-20).

Again, Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, “According to the grace of God which was given unto me, as a wise master builder I laid a foundation; and another buildeth thereon. For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3:10-11).

So Christ is the foundation upon which the church is built—not Peter. The fact that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, must be preached in order for one to truly preach Christ. When Catholics claim that the church was built upon Peter, they make a false claim, which contradicts the teachings of the Holy Spirit. This is a deadly offense against Christ.

“Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my church” (Matt. 16:18). The name *Peter* here means a stone (John 1:42) and in the Greek it's in the masculine gender, *petros*. “Upon this rock,” as used by our Lord, contradicts the claims of the Catholic Church. *Rock*, as used here, is in the feminine gender, *petra*. It refers to the foundation upon which Christ built his church. *Petros*, which means a stone, is one thing, and *petra*, which means a ledge of rock, is another thing. Jesus did not say—neither did he

mean to say—that his church would be built upon “a stone,” but upon a solid “ledge of rock.”

What was this *petra* upon which the church was to be built? The Catholics claim that it was Peter, but the context shows this claim is untrue. It's clear from the context that Jesus, by using the term *petra*, referred to the truth that Peter had just confessed, which was the deity of Jesus. The truth that Jesus is the Son of God is the most fundamental and basic of all truths pertaining to man's redemption.

### **Peter Is Not The Head Of The Church**

Peter was not the head of the church that Christ built. Catholics claim that Peter was the first pope and, therefore, the head of the church. They claim that the pope of Rome is the head of the church that Christ built. Peter was not a pope at all, therefore he could not be the first pope.

Peter was a married man. “And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother lying sick of a fever” (Matt. 8:14). This passage also tells us that Jesus healed Peter's wife's mother. To the church at Corinth, Paul said, “Have we not a right to lead about a wife that is a believer, even as the rest of the apostles, and the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?” (1 Cor. 9:5).

Catholics deny the right of the pope to marry. Neither will they permit a cardinal, bishop or priest to marry. The pope is the head of the Roman Catholic Church, but he is **not** the head of God's church. The New Testament clearly, frequently, and emphatically teaches that Christ is the head of the church (Eph. 5:23; 1:22; Col. 1:18). These and other scriptures teach that Christ is the head of the church and that he is over all things to the church. That leaves no room for Peter to be the head of the church, and it certainly doesn't leave any room for the pope of Rome to be the head of the church Christ built.

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## **The Holy Spirit Has Left Israel**

**Doug Post**

The rabbis of old taught that “*Since the death of the last prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, the Holy Spirit has left Israel*” (Rodkinson, 12).

At the close of the Old Testament and the penning of the last Old Testament book, all prophecy ceased. The revelation of the Old Testament was complete. No further prophetic messages were forthcoming, because inspiration ended. The Revelatory process, whereby the Holy Spirit supernaturally revealed God's message to the prophets, inspiring them with the exact words to speak in revealing the Will of God to His people, had ceased.

With the end of prophecy came the abrupt end of Scripture. Since the Holy Spirit stopped revealing God's Will to the prophets, the prophets had nothing more to speak and nothing more to write. Scripture ceased because the Holy Spirit stopped working through men, guiding them to write down God's Will. Communication between God and man ceased. The Holy Spirit, indeed, left Israel, as prophetic silence would last for some four hundred years. John the Baptizer came preparing the way of the Lord (Isa. 40:2-3; Matt. 3:3). The Holy Spirit, indeed, left Israel.

However, at the dawn of the New Covenant, John the Baptizer came preparing the way of the Lord (Isa. 40:2-3; Matt. 3:3). His assignment was to prepare the people of God for the coming Messiah. Therefore, the Spirit of God once again began working in revealing God's Will to the people. John was God's new prophet. As the first century progressed, other inspired men, including the apostles, would proclaim God's Will as the prophets of old once did. The Holy Spirit, working through these men, delivered the gospel to the world. Just as the prophets of old, these inspired men were

supernaturally guided by the Holy Spirit, in writing down Scripture, ensuring that the Truth of the New Testament would be preserved for mankind.

With the penning of the last inspired book of the New Covenant, revelation and inspiration came to end. The gospel of Jesus Christ was complete. The work of the apostles, prophets, and other inspired men had ceased. The Old Covenant message pointed the Jews to Christ (Gal. 3:19-24), living under the Old Covenant law, while the New Covenant grants access for **both** Jew and Gentile (the world) to Christ (Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:44-49), while living under the New Covenant law.

With the completion of the New Covenant, or Gospel, communication between God and man once again ceased as it did at the completion of the Old Covenant. No further revelation or messages are forthcoming from God. God's plan for human redemption has been fulfilled and recorded in Scripture. The design of Scripture is to lead and direct man to Christ and salvation. The resulting product of the supernatural and prophetic era, during the development of the New Covenant, are the New Covenant Scriptures themselves. While God is silent, in that He is no longer directly communicating with man through chosen, inspired men, He does continue communicating with mankind, so to speak, only through the Scriptures. God's New Covenant message has been once for all delivered to His people (Jude 3), and within it, we have all things pertaining to life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3). There are no further messages because there is no more revelation and inspiration. There is no more revelation and inspiration because there are no longer apostles, prophets, and other inspired men:

The Holy Spirit, Himself, tells us the Scriptures make us complete and thoroughly equipped. They are all sufficient, "**for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness**" (2 Tim. 3:16-17), that is absolutely comprehensive in scope. The Bible meets our every need. The word of His grace strengthens us (Acts 20:32) and the Scriptures comfort us (Rom. 15:4). In a good and honest heart, the word of God (i.e., the—seed, the Gospel—Luke 8:11; Rom.1:16) produces fruit (i.e., fruit of the Spirit—Luke 8:15). Through Scripture, the Holy Spirit reveals Christ to mankind. Along with other providential actions operating in the world, it is specifically Scripture that makes us complete in procuring and maintaining salvation. It is not the Bible and something directly affecting our personal will, either in motivation or in action. It is not Scripture plus a direct supernatural infusion from the Holy Spirit (illuminations, revelations, messages, promptings, prodding, and signs from God). This false, denominational concept circumvents the Scripture—**the very source which the Holy Spirit says makes us complete.**

Psalm 19 is a miniature of Psalm 119. In the first six verses God reveals Himself in nature (i.e., General Revelation), but in verses seven through fourteen God reveals Himself through Scripture (i.e., Special Revelation), and it is in this particular passage where the all-sufficiency of Scripture is underscored. The God-breathed Word is called several names and is synonymous with, **the law of the Lord, the testimony of the Lord, the statutes of the Lord, the commandment of the Lord, the fear of the Lord, and the judgments, or ordinances of the Lord.** From this passage, there are at least ten things the Word of God can do for the individual:

1. It is complete in converting the soul (v. 7).
2. It makes the simple, wise (v. 7).
3. It causes the heart to rejoice (v. 8).
4. It enlightens the eyes (v. 8).
5. It causes one to fear and respect (v. 9).
6. It offers completeness (v. 9).
7. It warns or protects (v. 11).
8. It offers great reward (v. 11).
9. It purifies the heart (v. 12).
10. It restrains one from sin and apostasy (v. 13).

The Bible is the place where we can go to find joy, relief, and happiness. Jeremiah, in the midst of tremendous stress and rejection, gave great testimony to the joy that comes through the Word of God saying, "**Thy words were found and I did eat them and Thy word was in me the joy and rejoicing of my heart**" (Jer.15:16). John writes, "**These things are written that your joy might be full**" (1 John 1:4). God gives testimony to the fact that His Word is the source and definition of joy.

However, making such a bold statement in saying the "**Spirit has left,**" might cause some to feel uncomfortable or angry. Some might exclaim, "How can you say such a thing? Did not God promise to be with us, after all doesn't the name of Jesus mean "God with us? And what about the Holy Spirit? Doesn't the Bible tell us that He lives inside us?" Many other such things might be asked.

First, the Spirit stopped providing messages to men. God never Directly and supernaturally, revealed His Will to all people, except through Divinely chosen or selected men. They, in turn, being supernaturally empowered by the Spirit, provided God's Word to the rest of the people. Moreover, such direct supernatural revelation would cease (1 Cor. 13:8-13; Eph. 4:11-15). Since there is no longer inspiration and revelation, there are no longer inspired men (prophets, apostles, etc.), and since there are no longer supernaturally guided men, there are no longer on-going inspired writings, or Scripture.

Second, did Deity (Holy Spirit) really abandon God's people simply because supernatural activity, including inspiration and revelation ceased? For instance, does the phrase "the Holy Spirit left Israel" imply that God abandoned His people? No. Simply because one aspect ended does not mean all aspects ended. While God was no longer guiding them through inspired prophets (those who supernaturally spoke for God by foretelling and forthtelling, preaching) they still had His message, His Will, in the form of Scripture. Folks, that is a Divine gift of God's grace.

The end of inspiration and revelation meant the end of the Old Covenant, which meant the end of its Divine purpose, which was to point the Jews (not mankind) to Christ (Gal. 3:19-24). The idea of pointing them to Christ was not just about pointing them to the Person of Christ, but to the New Covenant He would usher in with His blood (Matt. 26:28). Christ's blood was shed for more than sins, it was shed for the establishment of the New Covenant, a covenant with far better promises (Heb. 8:6, 10:9-10, 19-20; cf. 9:15-22).

The fact that the people still had Scripture to consult showed, quite clearly, God was still with them, for Scripture contained His Will, His concern, and His love for His people. Why some today doubt that is beyond me. Therefore, the Spirit had not abandoned them simply because inspiration and revelation had ceased. Moreover, when the rabbis stated that "the Holy Spirit has left Israel," they used that metonymically. To say the Spirit left is simply to say that the source of inspiration and revelation ended. To say inspiration and revelation ended is to say the Spirit metaphorically left. I believe it is just here that the inability for some to discern figurative and metaphorical language is that which causes misconceptions, and knee-jerk reactions, leading folks to unnecessary anger toward such statements.

The same scenario applies to God's people living under the New Covenant. The supernatural process involving the Holy Spirit ended; the Spirit no longer empowers selected men to speak on His behalf; the Holy Spirit is no longer guiding selected men in writing down that which was spoken by inspired men, creating Scripture (sacred writings); there is no Scripture being written because God's message to mankind is complete. Since there are no modern day sacred writings being created today, there is no modern day supernatural guidance of the Holy Spirit in leading men to write; since there is no modern day supernatural guidance of the Holy Spirit, there is no modern day inspiration and revelation; since there is no modern day inspiration and revelation, there are no modern day inspired men, including prophets and apostles; since there are no such modern day people, then there is no modern day working of the Holy Spirit in inspiration and revelation.

The Will of God for mankind has been revealed and captured in sacred writing.

Scripture is complete, therefore, the Will of God for mankind is complete. The only form of the revealed Will of God we have today is found in Scripture, only! His complete Will for us today is the New Covenant, the gospel of Jesus Christ. Having access to God's revealed Will is identical to having access to the mind of Christ, which we have today through Christ's Word, the Scriptures (1 Cor. 2:16).

Abiding in His Word means we are walking in the light (John 8:31; 1 John 1:7), which is the same as continuing in the apostle's doctrine (Acts 2:42); which is equal to walking in the Spirit (Rom. 8:14; Gal. 5:18), which is the same thing as walking in and according to the law of the Spirit (Rom. 8:1-2). The Spirit does **not directly** lead anyone, which is the common misnomer. Many remove the metonymical nature of the phrase "**led by the Spirit**", running ahead of God, assuming that a **direct** supernatural leading is meant. It is, therefore, supposed that to be "**led by the Spirit**" means a direct, supernatural manipulation of the mind, in which the Spirit does something to the individual, moving him mentally, emotionally, and spiritually (perhaps even physically) to a degree or level he could not otherwise reach or attain through his own cognitive processes.

This, of course, is the appeal to a miraculous or supernatural working of the Spirit upon the mind of the Christian, something the Bible nowhere teaches. A miracle is the setting aside of nature or the natural. In this case, it would be setting aside the **natural cognitive processes**—the overriding and manipulation of the natural human faculties of the mind: cognition, recognition, reasoning, thinking, and comprehending.

This doctrine places the work and the responsibility upon the Holy Spirit. He is now responsible for setting aside the natural process, affecting the human being with supernatural enhancement. That the Spirit is said to supernaturally infuse energy—directly expanding and enhancing the mind with wisdom, thoughts, words, so that the Christian can arrive at the right conclusion, think the right things, and say and do the right things. For some, this also means that the Spirit is responsible for creating within them certain physical or emotional sensations that otherwise would not occur through the natural human processes. This is mind control. It is nothing more than the supernatural manipulation of the human mind and human free will. It is supernatural interference. It is not allowing the free course of human functioning, eliminating the **free will** of the Christian.

Attributing such a work to Deity, where the Bible does not, is based upon the premise that Romans 8:14 is a "direct" leading, separate and apart from the Word of God. That is a gross misapprehension of the passage through eisegesis. Note that this is a promise—an automatic blessing—because one cannot be a child of God without being "directly" led by the Spirit. If that is what is meant, the Spirit **must** lead an individual every moment, every time, no matter the circumstance or situation, in order to remain a "son of God." There are no limitations intimated here. However, since each individual sometimes thinks the wrong things; says the wrong things; makes the wrong choices; does the wrong things, not understanding, is unsure and in doubt, then the text cannot be speaking about a "**direct**"—Holy Spirit upon human spirit—leading of the Spirit. Rather, the text is still speaking about the law of the Spirit of life (Rom. 8:2), and it is through this law or gospel (Rom. 1:16-17; 2 Cor. 3) that the Spirit **indirectly** leads. This coincides with man's Free Will in following the Spirit. To follow or walk in the Spirit is simply to abiding in the Christ's Word (John 8:31). It is simply walking in the light (1 John 1:7). It is submitting to the law of the Spirit or gospel (Rom. 8:2; cf Rom. 1:16-17). When one, through his own thinking, reasoning, and will (whosoever will), sets his or her own mind on spiritual things (Rom. 8:5-6; Col. 3:1-2), or is simply minding the things of the Spirit's law, then one is being led by the Spirit. I would also add that he is being led by the God the Father, God the Son, the apostles, and other inspired writers of the New Testament.

So, the promise of the leading of the Spirit in Romans 8:14 is contingent upon the individual Christian's thinking process and the willingness to submit. This is true since God requires and demands "faith" to be exhibited by the individual, not by the Holy Spirit! A little later, Paul says, "but be transformed by the renewing of **your mind**"

(Rom. 12:2). The “renewing” is the “setting of one’s mind” on things above (things of the Spirit). This is a command for the individual Christian to carry out, not the Holy Spirit.

The Bereans searched the Scriptures. (Acts 17:11). They literally “sifted, scrutinized, examined, judged, determined, distinguished, appraised, and assessed” with their own mind, their own thinking. The Holy Spirit did not come along and enhance their minds so they could discern truth and error, right and wrong. This was something they did, according to the thinking and reasoning abilities God gave them. There is not a hint or intimation that the Holy Spirit was interfering or tampering with their minds.

David said: “When I consider your law,” he was saying what he does. When David says that he meditates on His Word, he is saying (actually the Spirit is saying this **through** David) that those are David’s own thoughts, his own contemplations, his own mind working. Passages such as 1 John 2:27, 1 Cor. 2:13-16, and John 14:26 are also shown to be taken out of context, proven **not** to be proof-texts for some direct operation of the Spirit. Is it possible that some have fought so hard against the phrase, “the Holy Spirit left Israel,” that they are guilty of leaving the Holy Spirit? I believe that is the case.

Miraculous means something that is undeniable; that which is absolutely identifiable, it is that which is separate and distinct from the natural, it's visible and knowable. A body of water does not divide itself and fly up in the air. Fire does not come from the sky. The dead are not raised. Body parts are not restored, and should these things occur it would not only be unnatural it would be supernatural - above and beyond the natural occurrences of life and nature. Miraculous interferes with the natural, setting aside its laws, making it supernatural. God still works today, but the age of the miraculous is over. He works through providence: something which is not distinguishable, discernable, could be denied or could not be denied at the same time. With a miracle, no one could say “perhaps” or “maybe.” It either was a miracle or it was not. With providence, God is working behind the scenes working with nature, working with natural order, working with the natural processes, not disturbing them, not interfering with them, not manipulating them. And this would be true with the human body and mind. If God is working directly, it would be a miracle, the setting aside of laws of nature.

As for our being “sealed” with the “Spirit” that, is a misnomer—an “old wives’ tale.” One was sealed with the Spirit with power from the Spirit. Acts 19:1-6 took place in Ephesus and serves as Divine commentary for Eph. 1:13-14 regarding “sealing.” They were sealed when Paul laid his hands upon them and they received power from the Spirit. The church in Ephesus had miraculous power in people (Eph. 4:8-11). They, too, were sealed with power. A “seal” is something visible, something distinguishable, it authenticates a thing. An invisible seal does not fit the meaning of the word. To say you are “sealed” because “the Bible tells me so” is the height of a child’s hermeneutic, which avoids defending the claim. Brethren, those who were truly sealed with the Spirit had **power** and people saw it, recognized it, knowing they and their message were of God. They were “**sealed.**”

It needs to be understood that when some affirm the Spirit works directly upon them in leading and guiding them, they are in effect declaring that the Scriptures are not all sufficient as the Holy Spirit declares them to be (2 Tim. 3:16-17). If there were a direct supernatural working, in order to affect the natural processes of man, ultimately enhancing the human mind, then such an occurrence would make void human free will. If the natural cognitive processes of the human being must somehow be enhanced by the Holy Spirit in order to understand Scripture, then that would be setting aside the natural faculties of man. If accountable human beings cannot understand the Holy Spirit’s revelation in Scripture, then it cannot be said to be a revelation. If an accountable human being cannot understand the Holy Spirit’s revelation in Scripture, then what makes a person think he will be able to understand an additional revelation from the Holy Spirit? Will the individual need another direct revelation (illumination) to understand the additional revelation, which was allegedly necessary to understand the original revelation? Brethren, the Holy Spirit has left Israel.

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### Coming Soon! A New Book by Jerry C. Brewer

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## Coming to God With an Idol in Your Heart

**J. D. Tant**

Idol: “An image worshiped by man; something man regards with more reverence than he does the word of God”—Webster.

In the days of the prophets, the children of God frequently became tired of God's control and sought to have their own way. It has always been God's ruling that when men became dissatisfied with divine control that He permitted them to have their own way, yet condemnation came to them when they would forsake God and follow the teaching of men. Not only is this taught in the Old Bible, but in the new dispensation God threatens to send strong delusions to men who have no pleasure in truth, that they might believe a lie and be damned (2 Thess. 2:11-12)

Jesus tells us to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness with the promise that all needed blessings will be added unto us. In Rom. 12:1, we are commanded to offer our bodies a living sacrifice, which he claims as our reasonable service. In Eph. 4:1, we are taught to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we have been called. In 2 Cor. 5:7, we are told to walk by faith. In Rom. 8:1-2, we are told there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ and who walk after the Spirit, and not after the flesh. So we must conclude that all men are safe who will follow the spiritual law and walk to please God instead of to please man.

A few examples of men setting up their idols and following them may be of help to us in this lesson.

### **Balaam**

In Numbers 22 we read about Balaam, who was an Old Testament character and worshipped God under the Patriarchal Age. Balak was king of Moab, and had noticed the influence and power of Balaam. God's people had to pass through the country of Moab from Egypt to Canaan. Balak had noticed that as long as they were faithful to God and did His will God fought their battles, but when they would forsake God He left them alone to fight their own battles. Balak knew that Balaam was a prophet, and he believed if he could get Balaam to curse the children of Israel that God would help him to overcome them. So he sent messengers to Balaam to hire him to go and curse the children of God.

The messengers came to Balaam and told their mission. Balaam treated them kindly, invited them to come in and stay all night and he would see if God would let him go. During the night, God appeared to Balaam, and asked him who the men were and their mission. Balaam told God, and God said, “You can not go with them, neither can you curse Israel for they are blessed.” This language was as plain as that part of the Bible which says, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). But Balaam, like many denominational preachers who have set up their idols in preference to the word of God, did not like God's charge to him.

Next morning Balaam reported to the messengers that God would not let him go with them, nor let him curse Israel, which should have been an end of all controversy, but

not doubt these messengers saw in his conduct it was not his desire to follow the Lord, and that he was disappointed in not being permitted to go, so they reported their work to the king, and he at once selected men of greater influence, and able to give larger rewards, and sent them to Balaam and told him to let nothing keep him from coming. Balaam told them if Balak should give him his house full of silver and gold, he could not go beyond the word of God to do more or less. But he invited them in to stay all night and see what God would say more. God, seeing that Balaam had set up his own desire and will to go, and had refused to accept God at His word, told him that night to go. Here is a man deliberately setting up his way against the plain statement of God, to go and curse the children of God.

Along the road, God sent His angel to make the way rough. The angel stood in a narrow pass, with a great wall on either side holding his drawn sword. The ass upon which Balaam was riding saw the angel and refused to go. Balaam smote the ass, and the ass spoke with man's voice and rebuked the prophet. Still the prophet refused to yield to God's command and went on and burnt sacrifices, and when he opened his mouth to curse the children of God, blessings came out of his mouth instead of cursing. This was done each time until Balak became angry and condemned him for blessing instead of cursing God's children. He drove him away. Later we find this man Balaam killed on the battlefield fighting against God, because he had set up his idol in his heart and turned from God to serve Balak for reward.

### **Saul Rejected (1 Sam. 15:22-27)**

We read in the Old Bible that God through Samuel demanded Saul to go and destroy the Amalekites—men, women and children, as well as all stock. Saul went forth to battle, destroyed all but the king himself, and the best of the stock to offer a great sacrifice to God. He set up his idol and lost his throne for God rejected him from being king over Israel. Saul turned from God, consulted the witch of Endor and finally committed suicide, and lost all—even heaven, for following his idol instead of the word of God.

### **Relatives**

Jesus teaches that if we would be His disciples, we are not worthy of Him unless we are willing to forsake father or mother, brother or sister for Him. I often find men and women who claim I am teaching the Bible, yet their mother did not belong to the church of Christ, or their wife belongs to some human church, and they cannot afford to turn from them, so they set up their idol, and God says, “I'll answer them accordingly and let them believe a lie and be damned because they have no pleasure in the truth.”

### **Riches**

Others come like the rich young man, and are wedded to riches, or set them up as an idol, and forsake the house of God to multiply riches, and declare they have no time to serve the Lord as it takes all their time to run their business. This kind of a man has set up his riches as an idol in his heart and Jesus says it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for him to go to heaven.

### **Justification by Faith Only**

Then here comes the whole system of protestant churches setting up their idol of justification by faith only in their heart. They will read, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved,” and “Repent and be baptized for the remission of sins.” They read where Ananias told Paul to arise and be baptized and wash away his sins calling on the name of the Lord (Act\_22:16). Then they will hear James say, “Faith without works is dead, being alone” (Jas. 2:17). To all these Scriptures they will turn a deaf ear, and set up the idol of Martin Luther and John Wesley, “Wherefore, that we are justified by faith only is a most wholesome doctrine and full of comfort.”

### **Morality**

Others will claim, “I do not know which church is right, therefore I'll set up my idol of goodness and morality.” Notwithstanding, the Bible says, “Blessed are they that do his commandments that they may have right to the tree of life,” they will claim that they know as much about it as God does, and they know they will be saved on their goodness or works of righteousness which they have done, by which Paul plainly says we

are **not** saved (Titus 3:5). Jesus says, “I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh to the Father but by me” (John 14:6).

### **Many Religions**

In order to justify the many human churches, still some will set up their idol of “many ways of salvation” and “it makes no difference which way you go, nor which church you join, just so your heart is right in the sight of God.”

### **Infant Baptism.**

Others will set up their idol Of infant baptism, declaring their parents had them baptized when children, and to break off from their early training and obey the commandments of God would be a reflection on their dead parents, and they must honor and reverence the commands of man more than those of God.

### **Sprinkling and Pouring**

Others will claim that immersion is baptism. They know that people went down into the water, that they were buried in baptism, they came up out of the water, they were born of water, yet they prefer sprinkling and pouring, as their kinfolks all had it that way they are satisfied to fight it out along that line.

### **Poverty**

I find good people whose clothes are good enough to wear to town each day in the week, to visit all neighbors they desire, to attend every show that comes to town, yet said clothes are not good enough to wear to church. They raise poor clothes far above God, and bring them up as excuses why they do not serve Him.

### **Human Societies**

Others claim Masons do more good than the church. “Our church will go dead without our societies.” They forget that any society organized in the church to do the work of the church holds the same relationship to the church that a mob does to the government when it takes the enforcement of law from the hands of the government and puts it under mob control. All Christian work should be done by the church, and not by some human organization.

### **Instrumental Music**

Many of my brethren who once loved the word of the Lord and stood firm for it, have today raised instrumental music in the church far above the word of the Lord and will push it into churches over the godly protest of ninety percent of the old members. They often wreck the church and drive out the best members who cannot tolerate innovations in the church. They will rejoice over the division and downfall of the church of God in any community where they can make an idol of instrumental music and they will hear its sound rather than hear the word of God read. Let each examine his own heart, and see what idol he is holding to that will cause him to go down to eternal ruin.

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## **A Message From Hades**

### **Fred E. Dennis**

In Luke 16:19-31 Christ gives us an account of two men. One was rich, the other poor. One was righteous, the other wicked. One was saved, the other lost. The one who was saved was not saved because he was poor, but because he obeyed God. The one who was rich was not lost because he was rich, but because he refused to obey God. “The rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.”

The Bible meets all false doctrines which have ever been taught, are now being taught, or which will ever be taught. Christians should be able to refute false doctrines on every hand. This one passage of God's Holy Word is enough to put to rout many present-day false teachers. Consider these:

### **Universal Salvation**

According to this false doctrine, all men will be saved. Of course, not one could possibly be lost without showing this doctrine to be false. If only one person were lost, salvation would not be universal. Jesus Christ was not a Universalist. He said this rich

man died, and “in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments.” He has this rich man in torments saying, “Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.”

If this man were not lost, what condition would one have to be in to be lost? My friends, the doctrine of universal salvation is false to the core. The inspired men who wrote the Bible were not Universalists. Had they been, there are many passages which would not have been written.

### **Russellism**

One of the outstanding tenets of this doctrine is that of a “second chance.” Jesus did not believe or teach this doctrine. He told of a man who died and lifted up his eyes “in torments.” That man begged for mercy, but none was extended to him after he died. How this lost soul would have welcomed the “second chance” doctrine!

Now is the day of salvation. “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Cor. 6:2). “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world” (Titus 2:11-12). When is this living “soberly, righteously and godly” to be done? Hear it: “In this **present** world.” No, the inspired writers were not Russellites. Had they been, many choice passages would not have been written.

### **Materialism**

Materialism says, “man is all matter. He is not a living soul. Death ends all. There is no future existence or recognition.” But Jesus Christ was not a materialist. The rich man and Lazarus did not cease to exist when they died. They were as much alive and conscious as ever. The spirit of man can live out of the body as well as in it. Paul said, “I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven” (2 Cor. 12:2). When the spirit leaves the body, the body is dead, but the spirit does not cease to exist. “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also” (Jas. 2:26). The inspired writers of the Bible were not Materialists.

### **Spiritualism**

One of the chief tenets of this belief is that departed spirits hold intercourse with mortals, especially through a “medium.” Jesus Christ was not a believer in this kind of spiritualism. This man in hades wanted to get a message back to earth to the boys at home. No doubt he knew they were headed for the same place. What a wonderful opportunity for him to have conveyed this message to them from the spirit world! Why did he not do this? What does Jesus say about this? Listen: “They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.”

Lazarus was saved by hearing the word of God and obeying it. Those brothers of this rich man had the same thing by which they could save their souls. The rich man evidently had no time for the word of God while he was alive on earth, and even when he was in hades he didn't think it was sufficient to save his brothers! He was a good bit like some modern preachers!

But Jesus taught, “If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.” How true! Since Jesus thus taught, He died, was buried, raised from the dead, and ascended, and before His ascension He gave the plan of salvation. But most people today are still not persuaded by Him!

### **Direct Holy Spirit Influence**

Here was a wonderful opportunity for the Holy Spirit to directly save someone, apart from his hearing and obeying the word of God! The Holy Spirit operates on the heart of the sinner in conversion, but He only does so through the word of God—not by direct influence. No Christians are made without being taught the truth of the Gospel. “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?” (Rom. 10:13-14).

“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). The inspired writers did not believe in the direct influence of the Holy Spirit in salvation.

### **John Calvin's Doctrines**

John Calvin said—and some denominations teach—that some people have been eternally elected to salvation, and others are of the non-elect, and there is nothing they can do about it. Did Jesus say that two of these boys had been “elected” from all eternity to eternal life and the others were “non-elect?” You know He did not thus teach. All of them could have been saved by obeying God. Who are the elect? The ones who **choose** to hear and obey God. “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16). No, Jesus was not a Calvinist. **Whosoever will** may be saved (Rev. 22:17).

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## **The Greatness of the New Testament Church**

### **Kent Bailey**

The church of Christ is the greatest institution that the world has ever known. The case being that it is a divine institution, we should never think of it in concepts that are ordinary. One cannot belong to God in a New Covenant relationship unless one has been added by the Lord to the church that belongs to Christ.

One cannot be loyal to Christ without also being loyal to his church. Let us note some of the characteristics of greatness regarding the Lord's one true New Testament church (Matthew 16:13-20).

### **The Church is Great Because of its Founder**

When one considers any type of organization thought must be given to its founder. The founder sets forth the code or standard of its nature and operation. His wealth serves as the basis for such an institution.

The case being that the New Testament church is of divine origin we thus identify Christ as the founder of the church (Matt. 16:18; 1 Cor. 11:1-3; Phlp. 2:5-8; Acts 20:28).

No religious denomination or human religious organization can claim Christ as its founder. Only the church that was purchased by the blood of Christ claim Christ as its head (Col. 1:18).

### **The Church is Great Because of its Purchase Price**

Most worldly concerns were founded to enrich the founder. Such is not the case with regards to the church of the Lord (Acts 20:28).

Christ purchased his church in the sense that he satisfied the attributes of God to save sinners in the confines of one aggregate (Eph. 1:21-23; 4:4; 5:23; Acts 2:47).

### **The Church is Great Because of its Relationship With Christ**

The church of Christ is essential to the salvation of humanity not because the church saves individuals. The church of Christ is essential to the salvation of humanity due to the fact of the relationship it sustains to He who purchased it—Christ.

The New Testament church is essential to the salvation of humanity because it is the spiritual body of Christ. There is no salvation outside that body (Eph. 1:22-23; 5:23).

If one could be saved as an accountable individual outside of the church of the Lord, then one could be saved outside of Christ. The case being that the church is his spiritual body there is no salvation outside of such.

The New Testament church is essential to the salvation of humanity because the church is the bride of Christ (Eph. 5:22-23). One cannot be saved without being joined to Christ in a spiritual union, which is found in the church.

The New Testament church is essential to the salvation of humanity because it constitutes the kingdom of God (Matt. 16:18-19; Col. 1:13-14; John 3:1-5). There is no new birth; neither is their submission to Christ outside of his kingdom.

The New Testament church is the army of Christ (Heb. 2:10; 2 Tim. 2:3-4). There is no spiritual service unto God found outside the church.

The New Testament church is the family of God (1 Tim. 3:15; Matt. 12:47-50). One cannot be a covenant child of God outside the church.

### **The Church is Great Because of its Collective Work**

The church of Christ has a collective responsibility assigned to it in accomplishing specifics that are essential to the salvation of humanity (Mark 16:15-16; Col. 1:23; Eph. 4:11-15; 2 Pet. 1:10-11; Gal. 6:10).

We are under obligation to respect the authority of the New Testament of Christ (Col. 3:17). To fail in this obligation would result in sin (2 John 9). Therefore we note that the collective work of the local church is limited to that of evangelism of the lost, edification of those who are saved, restoration of fallen children of God, and benevolence to qualified needy. To go beyond the authority of Christ would involve the church in unauthorized activity.

### **The Church is Great Because of its Blessings**

Indeed all blessings come from God, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (Jas. 1:17). The New Testament church is the collective recipient of all spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:3-7; 5:23).

### **The Church is Great Because of Those Who Comprise it**

The conditions of salvation are equal to terms of church membership. Therefore when one is saved from past alien sins one is added to the church (Acts 2:47; John 17:14; Rom. 12:1-2).

### **The Church is Collectively Great Because of its Ultimate Goal**

As members we have the responsibility of walking in the light of truth to be kept pure by the blood of Christ (1 John 1:6-10). Upon the condition of faithfulness Heaven will be our eternal home (1 Cor. 15:24; Heb. 12:22-23; Rev. 21:1-4).

The New Testament church is great because Christ is its Savior, Christ is its Lord, and Christ is its King!

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## **Someday I'll be Sunday Morning**

**David Ray**

A couple of decades ago there was a song by the rock group Bon Jovi called "Someday I'll be Saturday night." It speaks of someone having a difficult life but looking forward to things getting better. One line in the song sums it up: "I'm feeling like a Monday but someday I'll be Saturday night." In other words, this person is confident that his life will improve from the worst case (Monday) to the best (Saturday night, obviously).

It's no surprise that the song makes no mention of Sunday morning. Surely nobody would ever define the best time of their week as Sunday morning, unless they really love sleeping in! But what about **you**? If you were writing this song, would Sunday morning get its proper respect? Is it the best time of **your** week? If you're a faithful child of God, it should be. But if not, maybe it's because you've forgotten, or have never known, what worship is really about. John 4:24 says "God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." Let's look at what this statement teaches us about what the purpose of our worship should be.

**What does it mean to worship in truth?** John 17:17 helps answer this for us: "thy word is truth." God's word provides all truth for us, and this certainly includes the topic of worship. The Word tells us what God wants in worship. Anything else, every man-made invention, is either explicitly forbidden, implicitly forbidden, or missing entirely from the Word (i.e., God is silent on it). And 2 Tim 3:16-17 makes it abundantly clear that the Bible's silence on an action forbids that action: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God...that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished **unto all good works.**" The Bible will thoroughly equip the Christian on how to worship. So, if there is an action we can perform in worship on which the Bible is silent, that action is, by definition, unauthorized; the Scripture doesn't "furnish us

unto it” and it cannot be considered a good work. Let’s look at this logically, then emotionally.

**A logical approach** says I want to worship God with the piano because I know how to play it and I want to express my love to God in this manner. There’s nothing wrong with this attitude; but what about the **action** that will result? Logically I understand that the Bible’s silence on an action forbids that action (again, 2 Tim. 3:16-17). So, I search the Scriptures and find nothing (silence) on the Lord’s church worshipping God with mechanical instruments of music. There’s no command, no example; nothing expressed, nothing implied; just silence. Therefore, I correctly conclude that this action is not authorized; it is forbidden.

Now let’s look at it from **an emotional perspective**. So often, people who don't respect the authority of the Scriptures will accuse this logical brother of having no emotion, or that there's no “spirit” in his worship (a baseless attack because they have no idea what “spirit” means, particularly in regard to worship). On the contrary, this brother **logically** and correctly concluded that the piano in worship is unauthorized. Then, with his heart/mind (yes, his emotion) he concluded that he doesn't want to sin by adding to God’s Word (Gal. 1:8-9; Rev. 22:18-19). He simply wants to worship God in truth **and** in spirit, with all the attitude and emotion of someone who knows that his spiritual condition (i.e., saved) is because of the grace of God in sending His only Son to be the atoning sacrifice for his sins! He therefore concludes that it doesn't matter what **he** (the worshipper) wants; it only matters what **He** (the Father, the Savior) wants!

**His conclusion:** The logical **and** emotional approaches to worshipping in truth lead him to worship God **only** the way **He** wants/commands. This causes the worshipper to worship God **only** in the ways God has commanded: song, prayer, preaching, giving, and the Lord's Supper. **This** is worshipping in truth.

**What does it mean to worship in spirit?** This is about one’s **attitude** in worship. While one can worship correctly in attitude but be wrong in action, it is also true that we can worship with the right action but not have the right attitude.

Jesus' initial point regarding the “spirit” in John 4:24 had to do with location (v. 20—the mountain or Jerusalem?). **God** isn't limited to a physical location and neither is our worship. Worship can be done anywhere, as long as it's in accordance with truth **and** in one's spirit.

This is about one's attitude when worshipping, and it includes his attitude **prior to** worship (i.e., what he thinks about worship, how he prepares for worship, etc.). Is he excited about it or is it just something he's required to do? This may be why many brethren can't say that Sunday morning is the best time of their week—because they don't have the right attitude(s) about worship.

What are some attitudes that are required in order for worship to be genuine and acceptable to God?

- **Humility.** In general, it's putting others above yourself (**lowering** yourself without **devaluing** yourself). We must have humility toward the brethren. This is important at all times, but certainly during worship. It was necessary in the first century in dealing with miraculous abilities (e.g., 1 Cor. 14:30—“if anything be revealed to another, let the first hold his peace”) and it's necessary for us today. You can't worship God in spirit when there are problems between brethren (Matt. 5:24)! Humility toward God is also an obvious necessity. We must put **God** above ourselves. It's sad that we even have to discuss this. But lack of humility toward God is why we have the rampant additions to and subtractions from His instructions for how **He** wants to be worshipped! Folks need to recognize that, even with all the numerous items of worship, God only commanded five. Presuming to worship God the way **you** want is the height of arrogance and pride; it is **not** humility. It's this attitude that causes the religious world around us to call it a “worship experience.” Who is supposed to be “experiencing” the worship, you or God? (Consider the obvious difference between a worship **experience** and a worship **service**.)

- **Gratitude.** This is about being grateful for what someone has done for you. If someone saved your life, surely you'd be thankful! Do you think it would be possible for you to thank him enough? You'd unabashedly over-thank him until the poor guy was embarrassed! And this is for someone who saved your **physical** life, not your spiritual life.

God saved you **spiritually**. He sent His only begotten son to be a blood sacrifice for your sins (1 John 4:9-10), “that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have **everlasting** life” (John 3:16). How much gratitude do we have when we show up to worship Him? Gratitude is what leads to the next attitude.

- **Praise.** This is about honoring, glorifying, giving acknowledgment to and appreciating someone who deserves it. Again, if someone saved your life, surely you wouldn't have a problem responding to that person with these attitudes. At bare minimum you'd acknowledge him for saving you; and in reality you'd probably announce it loudly and with excitement to your family, friends, coworkers, etc., posting it on Facebook, etc. You'd want to give this person all the respect, honor, and even payback that he would accept (cf. Ahasuerus with Mordecai; he even asked Haman what he should do to honor someone who was worthy of honor, Esther 6). Would you force him to accept some sort of gift that he didn't even want (e.g., tickets to a football game when he hates sports)? No! You'd do your best to find out what **he** likes and that's what you'd do for him!

Why do people ignore what **God** wants and instead offer to Him what **they** want, especially given His documented response to such attitudes (e.g., Nadab and Abihu in Lev. 10)? The answer is a lack of humility, gratitude, and praise that God requires of His people who want to thank and worship Him for what He has done for them.

What is **your** favorite time of the week? Is it Sunday morning? If not, why not? Are you too enamored with the world and all that it offers that you've lost your perspective regarding our purpose here. Have you forgotten the fact that God freely offered His Son on the cruel cross in order to forgive your sins and save you (2 Pet 1:9)? Have the pleasures of this world blinded you to the fact that the best day here pales in comparison to eternity in Heaven (Psa. 84:10)? We need to have the right actions **and** attitudes in our worship if we are going to be pleasing and acceptable to God. We **must** worship in spirit and in truth.

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## Authority in Religion

**Dub McClish**

Only two sources of authority exist in religion. Authority is “from heaven [Divine] or from men [human]” (Matt. 21:25). Human authorities consist of such things as the rulings of one man or a council/convention of men, creed books, the majority vote of members, and personal conscience. Such sources constitute no “standard” at all, for they are all subjective, arising from the thoughts, desires, philosophies, and whims of men.

Human “authorities” in religion produce doctrinal division, confusion, unauthorized practices, and endorsement of such things as sexual immorality and perversion, drinking, and gambling. Jeremiah stated the fallacy of reliance upon human religious authority: “O Jehovah, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps” (Jer. 10:23).

Right religion demands an objective standard, one that originates apart from human thinking, desires, and opinions. Apart from an objective standard, men wander hopelessly in relativism where there is no such thing as truth and error, good and evil. The Bible is verily that objective standard. While approximately forty men were employed in its writing, they did not write their own philosophies and thoughts. They spoke “not in words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth” (1 Cor. 2:13). The Bible came from men who “spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet. 1:21).

The Bible is our Creator's revelation of Himself and His will to His rational creation. We could not know the will or the plan of God for us without the revelation of this mystery through the Holy Spirit-inspired men (1 Cor. 2:7–10). No one knows one thing about how to worship God so as to please Him apart from the New Testament. Apparently, many think that God is somehow obligated to accept whatever they choose to offer, but not so. We **must** worship Him "in spirit and truth" (John 4:23–24), and only the Bible tells us the way to do so. Jesus said that men who reject God's revelation for their own precepts worship in vain (Matt. 15:9).

Likewise, the New Testament is the only source of information on the way God wants us to behave in our daily lives. The world is drowning in its own lawlessness and immoral filth because so many people have rejected God and His will in favor of their own subjective, selfish lusts (Rom 1:21–32).

Without the Bible we would not know that we are sinners in need of salvation. Moreover, we would never have known of God's gracious plan to save us had He not revealed it to us in His Word, the only source of this information.

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## True Religion Isn't "Mysterious"

E.R. Harper

There is an idea in the world that religion is a mysterious affair and therefore cannot be understood. Because of this belief, there has arisen an erroneous principle in religious teaching with respect to man's salvation.

It is thought that since it is a mysterious affair, man cannot understand God's plan for saving men and hence he has to wait and pray for the direct operation of the Holy Spirit to come into his heart and remove this mystery and destroy the "Adamic sin" that has blighted his life, and the proof of all this is **his feelings** in the matter. In other words, he will know when he is saved and when the mystery has been revealed by the way he "feels."

This is either true or it is not and it should interest all of us to know just what the mystery was that was connected with the salvation of the world. That the above idea is wrong, I am certain, and that we may be able to arrive at the proper understanding of what this mystery is, I am confident.

In Paul's letter to the Ephesians, he gives an explanation concerning the mystery of religion that becomes the hope of the world and especially of the Gentiles. In his explanation lies the entire principle of man's salvation and the **how** it is to be brought about. Hear the letter as Paul gave it:

For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, if ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: 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), which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellowheirs and of the same body and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: whereof I was made a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ, to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be made known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him (Eph. 3:1-12).

From this reading it is clear that there was a time when all this **was** a mystery to men

but **now it has been revealed**. To whom was this a mystery? To us or to those before Paul's day of preaching? Paul says, "which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men." Not in our age, but in other ages this was a mystery.

This question then arises: "Why is it not a mystery to us today?" Hear the answer given by Paul: "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." It is plain to see that the reason for its not being mysterious now is that Paul had this mystery revealed to him from heaven and he in turn wrote it down that if we will read we may also know what that mystery was in other ages.

Just what is a mystery, anyway? It is anything we do not understand, but when it is explained the "mystery" part of it is gone. With this plain statement by Paul that he received this mystery and then wrote it that as we read we may understand what it is, how do we become so confused in matters of religion as to think it is all yet draped with mysterious utterances so that no man can understand, much less be able to teach others? Because of the above theory we are told we have to wait for the Holy Spirit, in some supernatural way, to operate upon us and reveal to us, in this mysterious manner, the truth of the Lord. Friends, read the revelation of the apostles, and you can understand what it is, for Paul said in so many words, "you may understand when you read." He knows. Try his suggestion. It works.

Let us now examine this mystery to see if we can find out just what it was that God would not reveal unto the sons of men in other ages. It must have been very important to have remained in the mind of God for so long a time before revealing it. Here is the mystery: "That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel." Not one thing is said here about a "mysterious operation of the Spirit upon the hearts of men to convert them," but that **by the gospel** the Gentiles were to become one body with the Jews. This was to be accomplished not by the Law of Moses with Moses as lawgiver, nor by the Gentiles' Patriarchal worship, but by the "gospel" of which Paul said he was given authority to preach to the Gentiles.

Ladies and gentlemen, permit me to digress here long enough to say this: If you and I would stop telling our Jewish friends that they are still God's chosen people and the Lord is yet to come to this earth and gather them out of the nations of the earth and with them rule the world, but would tell them what Paul, a Jew, has told both them and us, that we **both** must enjoy the promises of this mystery by being in one body and that we get into this one body by obeying the gospel alike, we would be doing them a great favor.

Paul has been given this mystery and the mystery, correctly understood, is the hope of the world, both Jew and Gentile. That was the purpose of this revelation of the mystery, to show that both Jew and Gentile shall receive the promises in one body, the church, and that by the gospel.

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## **Editor's Travels and Writings**

Our "preaching circuit" in November took us to Yukon, Okla. for evening worship Nov. 3 and 17; Eastside in Lexington, Okla. for morning worship Nov. 10; Willow, Okla. for morning worship Nov. 17; and Chillicothe, Texas for morning worship Nov. 24. We are grateful for every opportunity to go "everywhere preaching the word." We have almost completed the first draft of our new book, *The Thing That Hath Been*. It describes the cycle of apostasy that has always cursed God's people, paralleling that of the 19th century with apostasy today. Its contents will surprise most people, be rejected as "radical" or "mean" by many, and infuriate a lot of others. It will be mailed **FREE OF**

**CHARGE** to individuals and churches requesting it. All we ask is that they pay the postage.

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## **“What Saith The Scriptures?”**

**Harrell Davidson**

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“A friend of mine has been reading a book written by C.R. Nichol entitled, *God's Woman*, of which he sent excerpts to me. C.R. Nichol, in the book, advocated the office of the deaconess and said 1 Timothy 3:11 were qualifications of deaconesses in the first century. He wrote,

At verse eleven, before he had concluded the discussion of the qualifications of deacons, he says, ‘Women in like manner must be grave, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things.’ Having made this statement found in verse eleven, he immediately returns to the discussion of the character of those who serve as deacons. Has this question occurred to you: ‘Why did Paul turn from the discussion of the deacon, make the observation found in the verse about women, and then return to the discussion of the deacons?’ It has been thought by some that Paul had reference to the ‘wives’ of the deacons in the passage we now study ...If you hold that view, you are confronted with the question: ‘Why is it that Paul makes reference to the wives of the deacons, making certain qualifications necessary for one to be a deacon, when in the same connection he had been discussing the bishops, but make no reference to the qualifications of the wife of a man who could be a bishop?’

We appreciate the statement and question above that was sent to Jerry Brewer, owner, publisher and editor of *The Gospel Preceptor*.

In 1965, when our family moved to work with a congregation in Pope County Arkansas, one of the elders in the congregation, had been a moderator for C.R Nichol all across south Texas and spoke of them riding trains together to various debates in which Nichol was a participant. He related to me some of the many challenges that the duo had together. The elder was by no means the moderator for all the Nichol debates. He opined:

We had heard of brother Nichol but that was more of an introduction to the man and the preacher than I had had the privilege to know and understand and we came to appreciate his work even more and the many spiritual battles he had presenting God’s Divine Inspired Word. Men such as Nichol made it so much easier for those of us today that follow the road after them. They had very meager finances often working with their own hands that would enable them to preach the Gospel.

We did not know that Nichol wrote the book alluded to above. We are sure it is/was an interesting profitable volume though we have not, of course, perused its pages.

Since the question is found in 1 Tim. 3 and involves the leadership of the church and deacons in particular, let us read the context. Having given the qualifications of the elders (overseers) of the church Paul continued:

Likewise must the deacons be grave, not double tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus (Verses 8-13).

The question is not about the qualifications of either elders or deacons but of “wives”

and who is under consideration. Elders are overseers of the flock—the Lord’s church (cf. Acts 20:28). They have certain qualifications to attain to in order to be qualified to serve.

On the other hand, deacons have certain qualifications to meet before they can scripturally serve the church where they worship. As we read those qualifications, we observe that there are more strict qualifications for elders than deacons. Deacons are not the overseers. Since that is the case, it seems strange to me that deacons’ wives must have qualifications and the elder’s wives do not have according to the text of verse 11.

We know that an injudicious wife may mar the work of her husband as he attempts to serve the Lord either as an elder or deacon. It is also interesting that the Revised version uses the phrase “Women must be.” Since that is the case why would that not be both the wives of elders and deacons? Adam Clarke says “Whatever is spoken here becomes women in general.”

If brother Nichol held the position stated at the beginning of this question then I must disagree with him on this point. I believe that this is talking about women in general and the wives of elders and deacon in particular.

**Brother Davidson answers readers' questions in this column each month. If you have Bible questions, you may email them to him at [harrelld@charter.net](mailto:harrelld@charter.net)**

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## Seeking and Finding

Lloyd E. Ellis

“Ask and it shall be given unto you; see, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you; for everyone that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened” (Matt. 7:7-8).

It is good for men to be seekers. The arm and brain used will become strong, but when they are unused they atrophy. These truths are evident to all who desire to observe.

No one should be stagnant, and in reality there can be no such state. One is either going forward or he is receding. There must be growth or there will be decay.

Perhaps few will question that men ought to seek the right things, but they differ widely on just what is the right thing to seek.

### Men Seek Many Things

In the first place, men are particularly seeking for worldly things. Most of the time of most men is taken up with the acquisition of the necessities of life such as food, shelter, and clothing, and other things which they consider to be necessities. As one goes through life, these certainly must not be forgotten. Not only are Christians to be employed usefully in order that they may have enough to provide for the needs of themselves, but they are also required to assist others in these things.

Then again, many are employed in a mad pursuit of pleasure. Their sole aim in life seems to be to go from one “thrill” to another. They become surfeited with one thing and then go to any length in order to find that elusive thing—pleasure. A certain amount of recreation is necessary and desirable in order that one may be able to do his best, but a life filled with “one round of pleasure” is not a commendable life.

Others seek physical satisfaction, sometimes sensual and evil and sometimes sensual pleasure of various other sorts. God gave the physical for us to use and enjoy, but not to misuse as the reason for our existence.

Contrasted with this sort of seeking, we find those who are seeking a peace of mind

that is not reached simply in worldly pursuits. Wholesome recreation, congenial work, and physical peace assist one in living a stable life, but that is still not enough. Men are seeking a solution to life. When men turn from the furrow and the shop, from the office and the daily task, they are asking, "Why?" "Why and what is man, and why is he here, and where is he going?"

A mind that is active, questioning and seeking will not be satisfied by stopping at the conclusion of the present needs. His peace of mind will not come until he has looked in the matter and found something that will let him rest in sweet assurance of a divine hope.

Men of righteous mind desire peace of mind within themselves, peace with their fellows and—above all—peace with God.

### **Men Should Seek God Above All Other Things**

When men have sought and learned that God is the Creator of all things, that He is the Everlasting and Transcendent One, All-Wise, and All Good, then they will have learned also that He is the giver of all good. Both the evil and the righteous enjoy the blessings of earthly life, and He has not forgotten them.

God desires men to seek Him that He may cleanse them from all that may be amiss in their lives. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9).

Even though it is the desire of the Lord that all will turn to Him, not all do so, for their minds are centered on other things. Still Jesus says that if they will only seek Him they may find Him. And He is not far away, as the apostle told the philosophers on Mars Hill: "That they should seek God, if haply they might feel after Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us" (Acts 17:27). The Lord knows where we are at all times, but many times we do not know where He is. Nor do we know where we stand in His sight, for we neglect to study and learn His will and the things we ought to do. We do not find because we do not seek.

### **Those Who Seek Find**

The text we quoted at the beginning assures reward upon seeking. This is not only true of the one who rightly seeks God, but it is true in every walk of life. If we look for faults and failures, we shall surely see many around us. If we look for good in others, we shall not fail to find something commendable.

The story is told of a man who once found a few pieces of money on the ground, and ever afterward kept his eyes on the ground looking for money. He found a few dimes and pennies and thousands of pins and buttons, but he missed the sunshine and the beauties of the sky and hills through the years.

Truly we find when we seek, but we may be seeking the wrong thing, or the right thing in the wrong way. Those who seek God should seek for Him in the right place and in the right way. They must look for Him where He has revealed Himself. John clearly shows that Jesus has revealed the Father (John 1:18). It then follows that to find God, we must look into the revelation that was made through Christ. That revelation is the Bible. This then is the reason we admonish men to study that Book—to read it, meditate upon it, and make it a part of their own being.

Friend, if you are not seeking God, you are missing one of the greatest quests of which one is capable, and you are missing the satisfaction and peace of mind which comes from the assuring hope found in His word. If you have not been seeking Him in the right way, turn now and leave all other doctrines and learn what He has said to us in His word.

To be truly happy, you must look for God where He is revealed—in His word—and there you will find the right way to come to Him.

Sin has separated us all from God, but He has provided a way back to Him through the blood of Christ. That blood cleanses us when we obey the gospel, and that is a simple thing to do. Understand that we have all sinned and stand condemned before God, but that Christ died on Calvary to pay the price for our sins which we could not pay. God

gave His Son, Christ gave His life and the Holy Spirit gave the revelation of the New Testament to teach us what to do to seek God in the right way.

In order to find peace with God, we must believe that Christ is His Son and our Saviour (John 8:24), repent of our sins and determine to walk in them no more (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38), confess our faith in Christ as God's Son (Acts 8:37), and be baptized into Christ for the remission of all our sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16).

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## Why Study The Church?

**Ron Cosby**

Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven. 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 (Mat. 16:16-18).

This promise to build His church occurred about six months before He was crucified. Whatever His view of the church is ought to be our view as well. Sadly, when some folks discuss the church among themselves, they disparage it. They have a low regard for it and want nothing to do with what Jesus built. Their faulty concepts need proper information. Such motivates our study. We seek to develop the proper concepts concerning the church that Jesus built. Why does God consider the Church of great value?

Ephesians 1:22-23 inform us of important principles. They reveal God's view of the church. 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." God did not appoint Jesus as CEO over a mud puddle, though that seems to be the attitude of too many folks. When Paul speaks of the fullness of him that filleth all in all," he is speaking of the church's benefit to the people. We gain understanding of this fullness from verse three of this same chapter. **Every spiritual blessing** is in Christ. Remember, the church is the body. So, if one is in the body he is, by the same token, in the sphere of blessing, meaning he enjoys the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.

By reading Ephesians 3:10-11, we gain even greater insight into the value of the church. Paul says, "To the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly *places* might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." Suppose I approach my boss with an idea. I can tell how interested the boss is in my idea by how long the boss thinks about it. God has thought about the church for ages. It does indeed show His manifold wisdom.

Ephesians chapter 5 brings to the forefront a number of principles that demonstrate the value of the church of the New Testament. Verses 22 and 23 record that the Lord is the head of the wife and that He is the Savior of the body. How important is your wife to you? The church holds a greater importance to Christ. Verses 20, 25 and 28 show the value of the church. In a variety of ways, Paul has expressed the sacrifice for His bride. He Himself is the "savior of the body"; He is a husband who gave Himself up for her; He is a husband who loved His wife as His own body.

A number of years ago there was a headline in the paper that narrated an event concerning a husband and his wife. John Smith [not his real name] and his wife were walking along the railroad tracks, enjoying a nice evening stroll. Suddenly the wife slipped and trapped her foot in the railroad tracks. John worked feverishly to release her foot. To no avail. A train came into view, but he could not free her from the destruction bearing down on her. John got up and started to walk off of the track to save his life. Then he turned and picked up his wife, put his arms around her, and held her tight. As the train bore down upon the both of them, John's giving of himself for the benefit of his wife demonstrated what readers ought to understand Paul is saying concerning the love of Christ for His wife. John's care and concern for his wife can be multiplied many times concerning Christ's love for His bride, the church.

In Ephesians 5:26, Paul presents the church as “a glorious church not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing but that it should be holy and without blemish.” God considers it a glorious spiritual realm because He has taken away sins through His sacrifice.

This removal of sins is “by the washing of water with the word.” “By the washing of water” reiterates water as the element in the act of baptism as the time of the washing. The phrase “with the word” reiterates that the water is of no value without the accompanying word of God. When we include 1 Cor. 12:13, we gain a fuller understanding of this cleansing. Paul teaches that in—or by—one Spirit are “we all baptized into one body.” Take note of these three vital ingredients of salvation: (1) By the agency of the Holy Spirit and (2) by the instrument of the word of God which was given by the agency of the Holy Spirit and (3) by being baptized into Christ, the sinner is cleansed of his sins.

However, Paul is not finished demonstrating the value of the church. When he says in Ephesians 5:31-32, “For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh,” he is stating a vitally important concept concerning the bride of Christ. In the Old Testament, God repeatedly predicted a number of things concerning Christ, concerning the kingdom, concerning the New Covenant, and concerning the coming of the Holy Spirit. His quote of Gen. 2 is a detailed prediction of the church. Someone says, “Wait a minute. “Where did you get that Genesis 2 is a prediction of the church?” In the next verse. Paul tells us “This mystery is great but I speak in regard of Christ and of the church” (Eph. 5:32). Therefore, at the time that God made Eve from Adam’s rib, He had in mind Jesus Christ and His bride, the church.

Since God is thinking about the church, and since He is protecting the church, and since He gave Himself for His bride, and since He labeled Christ’s marriage to His bride as “a great” mystery, we gain a better understanding of God’s view of His spiritual realm, the church. It is detrimental to men who entertain a faulty view of the Lord’s church.

With this proper concept concerning the Lord’s church, we ought to want to be a part of it. If you love Jesus, if you love the church, if you love the body of our Lord, how can you put it to the side and think so little of it? How can you fail to desire to learn more about the church, its nature and design and make up? You cannot! You must not!

Now we turn our attention to a second reason. We ought to study because of man’s efforts to change the New Testament church into that which the Bible condemns (Gal. 5:19-20).

Men believe the church is made up of all the different so-called “Christian” denominations. Because of vastly different authorities, and different names, and teaching contradictory doctrines, men have gone astray from Biblical teaching. Yet, each claims the same supernatural influence that guides them into their family-dividing conflicts. Such is not from God.

Can you imagine in the first century if the apostle Peter stood before men and said baptism doth **now** also save you. Then, in the same assembly, Paul proclaimed that baptism doth **not** save you. Contradiction? Yes. One of these statements must be incorrect. But wait. Both Paul and Peter were guided by the Holy Spirit. Do you see the problem? I know you do. Such contradictory doctrines not practiced by inspired men when the Lord established His church. They ought not to be practiced today. Upon reading the New Testament, we learn that Paul agrees with Peter’s proclamation that baptism doth **now save** (1 Peter 3:19-20; Col. 2:11-12).

Religious leaders today teach competing, contradictory doctrines that divide men into separate sects. Such confusion leads to skepticism and agnosticism. Men need to heed God’s warning:

Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son. If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into *your* house, and give him no greeting: for he that giveth him greet-

ing partaketh in his evil works (2 John 1:9-11).

Clearly, we must not go beyond that which is written (1 Cor. 4:6, ASV).

We ask, “What denomination does the Bible claim that Peter belonged to?” It **does not** because **he did not**. Accordingly, whenever one joins himself to a denomination, then he has gone beyond that which is written—beyond the teaching of Christ. We need to abide by the Scriptures and not by what men have introduced since the first century.

Why study the church? So that we can see the distinction between what God has said and what denominations **want** said. Denominationalism is too broad.

Furthermore, we need to study the church because men present a **sectarian** view of it. They have concluded that the Lord's church is made up of a particular group of churches all wearing one official name, with each member listed in different church directories.

Consider the important principle that there is no single, official name for the Lord's Church. Students read in Acts 20:28 of the “church of the Lord.” In Matt. 16, the same entity is referred to as “the church.” Then, in 1 Cor. 1:2, Paul identifies it as the “church of God.” These terms help us to identify the ones called out of the world who belong to the Lord—who belong to God. Or, as Paul says in Rom. 16:16, “the churches of Christ salute you”—the called out ones who belong to Christ. These are not man-made terms of identity for the church Jesus built. They are God-given. Each is found in Scripture. They identify the spiritual realm which is the *called out* that belongs to Christ.

Furthermore, the Lord's church is a spiritual body made up of individual members, not individual congregations. It is possible to be a member of the Lord's church but not be associated with any congregation. The Eunuch from Ethiopia had been to Jerusalem to worship God. At this time, he was riding in his chariot, headed home. He was reading of the coming Messiah from the book of Isaiah. God told Philip to go near the chariot. Philip asked the Eunuch if he understood what he was reading. The eunuch said, “How can I, except some one shall guide me?” (Acts 8:31). So the man of God began to preach unto him Jesus. On the way, they came unto a body of water where Philip baptized him. After coming out of the water, the Eunuch went on his way rejoicing (Acts 8:39). His new spiritual condition before God caused him to rejoice.

Take note of this important principle: Though he was a member of the body of Christ, he belonged to no congregation. He was, however, added to the church of our Lord by our Lord (Acts 2:47). He was a member of the church because of the authority of Jesus Christ and the act of God in forgiving him of his sins. He was a member of that glorious spiritual realm. No doubt when he arrived back home, he was a congregation of one. Being a Christian, he knew he needed to assemble with others of like precious faith (Heb. 10:25). Scripture teaches that the early church assembled one with another. The Eunuch's situation helps us to see the church universal and the church local. In the near future, we will further clarify this distinction.

A sectarian view of Christianity is too narrow. It binds where God is not bound. We must include all that God includes and exclude all that God has excluded. Do Bible things in Bible ways and call Bible things by Bible names. By doing this we will be a part of that church that God holds in high regard, though men may have no regard for it at all.

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## Saved by Accident?

**Landry Brewer**

Most people leave out a key requirement for initial salvation—baptism. Passages in the New Testament plainly teach the necessity of baptism for salvation, yet confusion remains. “I don't think you have to be baptized to be saved, but I've been baptized so I'm safe either way,” is the sentiment of some, revealing this confusion.

According to this reasoning, one can be saved without understanding how, making salvation possible by accident. This contradicts what Jesus and the apostles taught.

In Romans chapter six, Paul emphasizes to the Christians at Rome the importance of avoiding their former sinful lifestyles. He reminds them in verses three through five that they began new lives when they came up out of the water of baptism, and this meant avoiding sin.

Later in the chapter, Paul tells the Romans that whereas they had been slaves to sin, they are now righteous. When did they become righteous? When they obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered to them (v. 17), and they were made free from sin (v. 18). Paul said they obeyed doctrine. *Doctrine* is another word for teaching. Baptism was a part of their obedience (Rom 6:3-5). As a result, they were saved.

The writer of the book of Hebrews also recognizes the necessity of obedience to obtain salvation. Of Jesus he writes “And being made perfect, He became the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him” (Heb. 5:9). And Jesus said salvation results from belief and baptism (Mark 16:16).

Does that mean every person who is baptized— regardless of the reason why—is saved? This brings us back to the person who thinks he is safe either way.

Obedience demands understanding. Can a child obey a parent without knowing what that parent expects of him? Or can an employee obey his boss without knowing what the boss expects? No. The same is true of salvation.

The Romans obeyed from the heart what they were taught—meaning they understood what they were taught. Understanding prompted baptism to obtain forgiveness of their sins. Unless you've been baptized for this reason, you haven't obeyed what the Romans did. And if you think you're safe either way, you're trying to make salvation possible by accident, which is impossible.

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## Baptist Error and a Reply

**Editor's note:** Below is the text of a tract that was distributed a few years ago in Elk City, Oklahoma by the Bible Baptist Church. After the tract was distributed, the author of this article wrote two letters of reply to the church's “Pastor,” David Worsham, but never received an answer. One who won't defend what he preaches ought not to preach at all. The author's letter follows the tract.

**Nathan Brewer**

The Baptist Tract

OUR MESSAGE

IF YOU DIED RIGHT NOW DO YOU KNOW FOR SURE

THAT YOU WOULD GO TO HEAVEN?

All you have to know is 4 things:

1. God says, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;” Romans 3:23. If you are honest you know that you have lied. That's a sin. I'm a sinner. You're a sinner. All mankind are sinners. How did you become a sinner? What is the price for your sin?
2. God says, “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and, death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:” Romans 5:12. This is the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. God told them they could eat of any tree but the tree of knowledge of good and evil. They disobeyed God and ate from that tree. A sin was committed. That sin passed down to you and me. The price for sin, eternal death in Hell, also passed down to you and me.
3. God says, “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Romans 5:8. God loves you very much. He doesn't

want you to go to hell. In fact, he loves you so much that he sent his Son Jesus to die on the cross. When he died on the cross and shed his blood, it was to pay for your sin debt, death. They buried Jesus, but he arose from the dead. He conquered death, and he conquered sin. He offers you life “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” Romans 6:23. Eternal life is a gift. You can't get baptized into Heaven; pay money to get into Heaven; in fact, you can't do anything to get into heaven, except to be sorry for your sins and trust Jesus dying for you as your only way into heaven.

4. God says, “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Romans 10:13.

#### HERE IS HOW YOU CALL UPON THE LORD:

Do you admit that you are a sinner? Do you believe Jesus is the Son of God? If you are truly sorry for your sins and will trust Jesus to take you to heaven when you die, just ask Him.

“Dear Jesus, please forgive me of my sins and come into my heart. (sic) trust you today, JESUS, to take me to HEAVEN when I die. Thank you for saving me. AMEN.”

#### A Scriptural Reply to the Above Error

Dear Mr. Worsham:

A little over a year ago, my parents received a tract you wrote, and on July 23rd of the same year I wrote you a letter discussing some of the things the tract mentioned. But I never got a response from you.

Last night, my wife and I returned home to find a copy of the very same tract—*Bible Baptist Church Welcomes You*—in our screen door. Since either you or a member of the Bible Baptist Church left the tract at our house, I'd like the opportunity to once again respond.

As I mentioned in the opening of my letter over a year ago, I do appreciate your evangelistic zeal. It's refreshing in a time of moral and religious indifference.

However, your explanation of what to do to be saved is at odds with New Testament teaching. The crux of your tract, and thus the heart of the problem, is your treatment of Romans 10:13—calling on the name of the Lord. This verse is the last of four things you say we need to know to ensure our eternal destiny: “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

The problem begins with your next statement. You write, “HERE IS HOW TO CALL UPON THE LORD.” You then ask the reader several questions regarding his soul and his belief in Jesus. Next, you give an example prayer to pray, asking Jesus for forgiveness. Finally, you explain that when one prays to Jesus for forgiveness, he has been 'born into the kingdom of God.’’

Your explanation of Romans 10:13 and how to call upon the name of the Lord is incorrect.

First, you follow the quotation of Romans 10:13 by instructing the reader to “...CALL UPON THE LORD.” Yet, Romans 10:13 instructs sinners to call on the **name** of the Lord for salvation. This is far different from simply praying to Jesus. Calling on the Lord's name refers to his authority—appealing to his authority (compare with Acts 4:7-12). According to Colossians 3:17, everything we do in religion is to be done by Christ's authority. Receiving salvation is no different. We must submit to the Lord's authority to be saved. this is what Romans 10:13 is teaching. But we must go elsewhere in the New Testament to learn **how** to call upon the name of the Lord.

Second, you instruct the reader to pray for salvation. this is not how God's word teaches sinners to obtain salvation. Nowhere in the New Testament is a sinner told explicitly to pray for salvation, and there is no New Testament example of a sinner receiving pardon through prayer. It's significant that prior to your model prayer for salvation, you quote scriptures to make various points, yet for the prayer itself there is no scriptural reference. This is the case because there is no scriptural support for telling people to be saved through prayer.

So, how does the New Testament teach that a sinner calls on the name of the Lord for salvation? Two examples from the book of Acts—the book of conversions—will explain how.

Romans 10:13 is a quote from Joel 2:32. Peter, in Acts chapter 2, also quotes Joel in explaining the miraculous events transpiring (vv. 16-21). He then preaches that the Jews crucified Christ, the Son of God. Some penitent Jews ask what they need to do in response to their murderous act (v. 37). Peter tells them to “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins” (v. 38). After telling them in verse 21 that whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved, Peter instructs these Jews to call on the Lord’s name by repenting and being baptized—**not** by praying for salvation.

Paul’s conversion also illustrates how to call on the Lord’s name. After being stricken blind and talking to Jesus, Paul goes to Damascus to await instructions (Acts 9:6-8). Jesus sends Ananias to Paul, and Ananias finds Paul praying (Acts 9:10-11). If prayer could save it surely would’ve saved Paul. But when Ananias comes to Paul and finds him praying, he instructs Paul to “arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). Paul believed in Jesus and prayed, yet his prayer did not save him. Instead, he was told to call on the name of the Lord and have his sins washed away by baptism.

I wrote to you a year ago, and have written to you again, because this is a serious matter. Although you’re undoubtedly sincere in your belief, nevertheless what you teach concerning how to call on the name of the Lord and receive forgiveness is wrong. Neither salvation nor entrance into the kingdom is accomplished through prayer, as you assert in your tract. Since you are teaching this doctrine publicly, you are under an even greater burden to examine it.

This letter is not written out of anger. Rather, it is written out of concern for the souls of those you teach both orally and through your tracts. I sincerely hope you will consider your teaching in light of what the New Testament says about calling on the name of the Lord.

Cordially,  
Nathan Brewer

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## Sincerity is Not Enough

T. Holman

False doctrines among Christians have always been common. In one sense they are a good sign. When bad money is printed by forgers, it's a sign that good money is valuable. When false doctrines are put into circulation, that's a sign that the devil hates true doctrine, knows its value, and wants to prevent it from doing good.

It's a widespread delusion that we ought to be satisfied with the state of any man's soul, if he is only **sincere**, no matter what he thinks is Truth. This is a common heresy and one against which we all need to be armed. There are thousands today who say, “We have nothing to do with the opinions of others. If they are sincere, we believe they will be saved as well as we.” All of this sounds loving, liberal and charitable, they way people like to fancy their own views.

But the Bible does not say anyone was saved by sincerity, or was pleasing to God if he was only **earnest** in maintaining his own views. When the apostle Paul was a Pharisee, he was sincere while he made havoc of the church. But when his eyes were opened, he mourned over this as a special wickedness.

Beware of allowing that **sincerity** is everything, and that we have no right to think ill of a man's spiritual state because of the opinions he holds, if he is only earnest in holding them. That will not stand, nor will it bear the test of scripture. If you once allow such a notion to be true, you may as well throw your Bible aside altogether. Sincerity is not Christ, and therefore sincerity cannot put away sin.

A religion without Christ—a religion that takes away from Christ—a religion that adds

anything to Christ—or a religion that puts **sincerity** in the place of Christ—are all alike dangerous. All are to be avoided and all are alike contrary to the doctrine of Scripture. That doctrine is salvation in Christ to the very uttermost, but out of Christ no salvation at all, however zealous and sincere a man may be.

The spirit of our day is not atheistic so much as pantheistic. It is not the spirit which says **nothing** is true, so much as the spirit which says **everything** is true. It is not the spirit which says there is **no** Saviour, so much as the spirit which says there are **many** Saviours, and many ways to the Father. This, of course, violates John 14:6. That kind of spirit is so **liberal** that it dares not say anything is false. It is so charitable that it will allow **everything** to be true. It is this spirit that is ready to honor other religions as well as that of our Lord Jesus Christ—to class them all together and hope well of all those who profess them. It is so liberal that it calls a man a bigot if he dares to say, “I know the Bible is right.”

What is this but bowing down to a great idol, speciously called liberality? What is it but a sacrifice of Truth upon the altar of a caricature of charity? Beware of it, reader—beware that the rushing stream of public opinion does not carry you away. Beware of it if you believe the Bible. Has the Lord God spoken to us in the Bible or has He not? Gird up the loins of your mind and look these questions squarely in the face, and give them an honest answer.

Tell us that there is some other inspired book besides the Bible, then we shall know what you mean. Tell us that the whole Bible is not inspired, then we shall know where to meet you. But grant for a moment that the Bible—the whole Bible—is God's Truth and you cannot escape the conclusion that **sincerity alone** will **not** save your soul. From the postmodernism which says “everybody is right”—from the charity which forbids you to say anybody is wrong—from the peace which is bought at the expense of Truth, may the good Lord deliver you!

Let it be called illiberal and uncharitable, but on this subject God's voice is heard nowhere except in the Bible, and there is no salvation for sinners in the Bible except through Jesus Christ (John 14:6). In Him there is an abundance. Out of Him there is no hope.

If sincerity alone will not save, and there is no salvation except in Christ, make sure you have an interest in that salvation yourself. Do not be content with hearing, and approving, and assenting to the Truth, and going no further. Seek to have a personal interest in this salvation. Lay hold on it by faith for the sake of your own soul. Rest not until you know you have actual possession of that peace with God which Jesus Christ offers and that Christ is yours and you are Christ's. If there were two or three or more ways of getting to heaven, there would be no necessity for pressing this matter upon you. But if there is only **one** way, you will hardly wonder that I say, “Make sure that you are in it.”

If sincerity alone will not save, and there is no salvation except in Christ, then you should want to know how to get into Christ. You cannot pray into Christ, believe into Christ or repent into Christ. The Bible speaks of none of those things as an entry into Christ. You may already believe He is God's Son. If so, you are not far from the kingdom. You need only to repent of your sins (Luke 13:3), confess that faith (Acts 8:37), and be **baptized** into Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16). Baptism is the only thing that puts you into Christ (Gal. 3:26-27), and He is the **only** way to heaven (John 14:6).

No one questions your sincerity in your religion, but sincerity is not the test of whether one is a child of God, a member of Christ's church and a heaven-bound soul. Only by obedience to the Gospel can you be saved (Matt. 7:21; 2 Thess. 1:8). Study on these things and obey Christ today.

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**The 17-Lesson series, “A Study of The Holy Spirit,” taught by Ron Cosby, is now posted on our You Tube Channel at [www.youtube.com/channel/UCWMJ7eHqllzMlvj2rtk-0jg](http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCWMJ7eHqllzMlvj2rtk-0jg)**

# Where and When One is Saved

J.O. Jones

To know **where** one is saved and **when** one is saved is to know **how** one is saved. One cannot, therefore, know how to be saved unless it is known **where and when** he is saved.

## Salvation is in Christ

God is our Saviour (Titus 3:4) as all will agree. But **where** does He save. Paul says, "...that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 2:10). **In Christ** is **where** God saves. It logically follows, then, that all who are outside of Christ are lost.

Now, since we have determined from God's word **where** men are saved, it must also follow that one cannot be saved until he enters that place—Christ—where God saves. Now, to know **how** to enter into Christ is to know how to be saved. Men often say one is saved before he believes, and cannot believe until he is saved. If that were true, man would enter Christ before he believes since salvation is in Christ.

But God's word says, "For with the heart man **believeth unto** (not because of) righteousness" (Rom. 10:10), and the "righteousness of God in him (Christ)" (2 Cor. 5:21). Therefore, man must believe with his heart **unto**, or in order to enter Christ and be saved.

Others say salvation comes by "faith only"—that the moment a man believes, he is saved. Now, since salvation is in Christ, that would mean a man enters Christ the moment he believes. That is also false. If it were true, the **devils** would be in Christ, for they "believe and tremble" (Jas. 2:19). The doctrine of salvation by "faith alone" never has and never will put one into Christ. The only time "faith only" is mentioned in the New Testament is when James declares that salvation is "**not** by faith only" (Jas. 2:24). James also says that, "faith without works is dead" (Jas. 2:20).

One must, by faith, repent or perish (Luke 13:3). Acts 11:18 tells us that repentance is "unto life," and John writes that, "this life is **in** His (God's) Son" (1 John 5:11). Repentance, then, is **unto**—in the direction of, toward—not "because of."

To be saved requires the believing man to confess that Jesus is God's Son, and Paul wrote that, "With the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. 10:10). What is that confession? It's the same one the Ethiopian eunuch made in Acts 8:37: "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." Notice, the eunuch did **not** say, "I feel that God for Christ's sake has pardoned my sins." The Ethiopian's confession was **unto**—not because of—salvation.

Then, when one repents **unto** and confesses **unto** salvation, he can then be baptized into Christ **where** salvation is found. Neither belief nor confession puts one **into** Christ. Baptism does that. "For as many of you as have been baptized **into** Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27)

When one enters Christ is **when** one is saved. Since Galatians 3:27 says one enters Christ by being baptized, and if one is saved when he enters Christ, it follows that men are saved **when** they are baptized.

## Salvation in the Blood

"And without shedding of blood is no remission" (Heb. 9:22). "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace" (Eph. 1:7). This tells us that redemption—the forgiveness of sins, salvation—is **in Christ** and is through His blood. When we are baptized into His death, we receive the benefits of His blood, and there is no benefit of that blood outside of Christ.

## Salvation in His Body

Christ is the "Saviour of the body" (Eph. 5:23). Therefore, to be saved, one must be in that body. But what is "the body" spoken of in Ephesians 5:23? Paul answers that question five chapters earlier. "...and gave him (Christ) to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1:22-23).

The body is Christ's church and it is that church which He will save. One is saved **when** he is baptized into—**where**—Christ.

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## **New Book Coming Soon!**

### ***“The Thing That Hath Been...”***

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

### **19th Century Apostasy Repeated in Our Time**

**By Jerry C. Brewer**

#### **From the Introduction:**

I am far past my allotted three score years upon the earth and, doubtless, have little time left to “cry aloud and spare not.” The late, beloved Leroy Brownlow well expressed my sentiments in a sermon in 1991: “I cannot be true to the church, I cannot be true to myself, I cannot be true to the God of Heaven unless I call attention to some of the winds of doctrine blowing against us today” (“The Preservation of the Faith”). I detest and abominate what the bride of Christ has become in the hands of elders and preachers who have stripped her God-given bridal attire and clothed her in the trappings of a mainstream harlot. I have neither fear nor shame in marking them. I refuse to go to Judgment with blood on my hands because I stood on the sidelines and refused to speak truth while the Lord’s beautiful bride was being mauled in the hands of spiritual rapists.

#### **From Chapter One – An Emerging Denomination:**

A new denomination is emerging from mainstream churches of Christ. Like the Amorites, their “iniquity is not yet full” (Gen. 15:16) but it is rapidly filling.

Mainstream churches have forsaken the pattern for the church revealed in the New Testament. They are denominations among denominations, liberal in their views and handling of Scripture, and have more affinity with Rome, Calvin, Luther, and Knox than they do the Lord Jesus Christ. Their flirtation with liberalism has led them into apostasy. They are in full fellowship with each other and have become a “progressive” faction that will eventually result in a new denomination.

History is cyclical. It not only recounts the past but mirrors the present. The philosopher, George Santayna, said “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” That men have forgotten the past is obvious. The church in our century is in the midst of the same apostasy that occurred a century and a half ago.

In the mid 1800s, churches of Christ traveled the same downward course that resulted in a new denomination emerging from them in 1906—The Disciples of Christ. A half-century earlier, Moses E. Lard recognized the liberal straws then carried on winds of change that ultimately resulted in that denomination:

He is a poor observer of men and things who does not see slowly growing up among us a class of men who can no longer be satisfied with the ancient gospel and the ancient order of things. These men must have changes; and silently they are preparing the mind of the brotherhood to receive changes (West, 131).

In a near prophetic description of the church’s present condition, L. F. Bittle wrote to Benjamin Franklin ten years later:

For the last few years your people have had a great deal of unpleasant controversy, and some harsh wrangling, over matters entirely unknown to the past generation of

Disciples. They, too, had their troubles, no doubt, and some of them may have said bitter words in consequence of personal disagreements. But they never had anything like the alienation that now exists in certain places in regard to matters which should not be so much as named among a people who claim to stand before the world as the representative champions of the Bible, and the Bible alone, as the rule of faith and practice (Ibid., 132).

The same trends exist today and “he is a poor observer of men and things who does not see slowly growing up among us a class of men who can no longer be satisfied with the ancient gospel and the ancient order of things.” For more than five decades, change agents have been “silently preparing the mind of the brotherhood to receive changes.”

As far as I can see, the time has come when brethren generally need to speak up and make themselves known as to just where they stand on the basic issues involved among us. As far as I can tell, we are in the anomalous position of having what should exist as two separate brotherhoods trying to stay together as one. I am for peace and unity, of course, as is every sincere brother and sister in the Lord—but not at any price! And when the price of staying together is fellowship with error and those who espouse it, far better that we separate. How well I remember those vicious, miserable heart-rending years of trying to fellowship those who would not fellowship us, leading up to the eventual open break with those espousing anti-cooperation among churches. It was not until our brethren began marking those who were causing the divisions and offenses, withdrawing from them and avoiding them that a measure of peace ever could be restored among the churches. And so I am persuaded it also will be in this present time [All emph. IYR, Jr.] (*Axe On The Root*, Vol. II, Ira Y. Rice, Jr., Dallas, Texas, 1967, p. 7).

The two separate brotherhoods referenced by brother Rice still exist, only in a larger measure. One is the **mainstream churches of Christ** who have loosed where God has bound. The other is composed of **sound churches** who still demand a “thus saith the Lord” in faith and practice. These two brotherhoods have nothing in common.

This new denomination of mainstream churches has been a half-century in coming, paralleling the emergence of the Christian Church in the 1800s. Two brotherhoods in churches of Christ are far more apparent now than when Ira Y. Rice, Jr. described them 50 years ago.

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**“The Thing That Hath Been...” will be be about 200 pages and mailed FREE OF CHARGE to individuals and churches requesting it and paying postage.**

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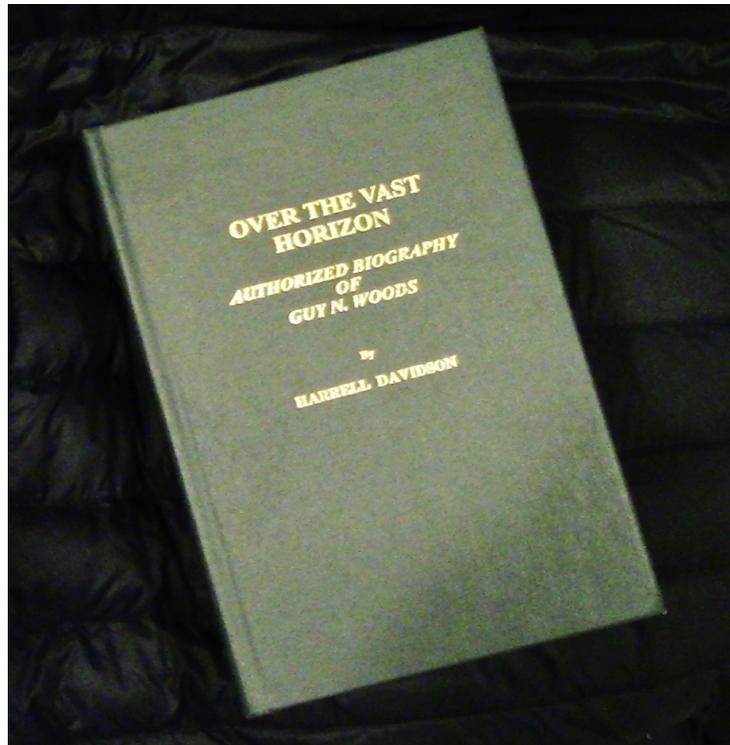
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