

# The Gospel Preceptor

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

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## Why I Left The Roman Catholic Church

**Gary Henson**

While I was growing up, my mother always took my sister and me to mass. On one occasion my mother was ill and my father, who was a Baptist, dropped us off. I remember clearly, as we arrived, he said kindly, yet with sobering concern, “I cannot see how one man can tell everybody else what to do.” I was no more than 11 years old when I heard those words, but they would resurface when I was 17.

“Yes, just why is it that a mere man is telling everyone else—is telling me—what to do in religion? Isn't that only for God to do? And doesn't He do that through the Bible?” Although the Catholic Church began very early and is quite large, something is not right.

I was then open to other possibilities and began looking around. I thank God that I came in contact with the church of Christ. Through Bible classes and sermons, I learned the truth about the plan of salvation, the oneness of the church—in contrast to the great falling away and denominationalism—and other truths. What a priceless blessing was now mine because a speck of doubt was placed in my mind concerning the head of the Roman Catholic Church. Since then, a continuing study of the Scriptures, church history, debates which others had with Catholics, and visits with former members of Catholicism have confirmed many times my decision concerning the pope and Catholicism.

### **The Two Alternatives**

Further study revealed that the Bible predicted there would be a falling away (1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Thess. 2:1-12). Thus, one of three things must have occurred: (1) The larger portion of the church remained faithful, and a small portion fell away. (2) The larger portion fell away, while a small portion remained faithful (and was hidden in insignificance, or (3) all of the church fell away but was restored in place to place, and from time to time, as various individuals read and built according to the instructions of the Bible.

When considering history, these three choices present the following alternatives: The Roman Catholic Church is the true church and a small portion fell away, or the Roman Catholic Church—although it was by far the larger portion—is that which fell away. One of these alternatives must be true. Not both, nor neither.

The ramification of the correct answer is truly extensive. If the Roman Catholic Church is the true church, then all non-Catholics are in error and ought to repent and join the Catholic Church. But if the Roman Catholic Church is that which fell away, the all Catholicism—as well as those who have merely tried to reform it—are in error and must repent and return to the way the church was before it fell away. The correct answer is very weighty.

So how do we determine which alternative is correct? Paul's statement in Second Thessalonians 2:3-4 identifies a characteristic of that portion which fell away, and verse 7 says the factors which would lead to the falling away were already at work in Paul's time.

Verse 6 indicates that the “man of sin” would come from within the apostate group, and verse 8 clearly says he would continue until the second coming of Christ. Since the

apostasy was beginning in Paul's time, and the "man of sin" would be alive at Christ's second coming, that means a succession of individuals would occupy the position designated by Paul as "the man of sin." Thus the rise of a man, or succession of men, who is exalted above all others in "Christianity"—even to the extent of holding the place of God on earth—is a clear identifying mark of the group which fell away.

Does the Roman Catholic Church have such a mark? Ask any Catholic, "Who is the head of your church on earth?", and the answer will be, "The pope." That will always be the answer, because that is what Catholicism teaches (Gibbons, p. 129). Catholicism further maintains that the pope is the vicar (acting in place) of Christ (Gibbons, p. 118). It is even claimed that the pope has the ability on occasion to speak with infallibility (*Catholic Dictionary*, p. 667). Without question, the Roman Catholic Church has a succession of men (popes) who are exalted above all others, claiming to hold the place of God on earth, and that is the mark of identity of the group that fell away. The Roman Catholic church itself is the result of apostasy. The truth is simply unmistakable.

### **The Pope**

The Roman Catholic Church stands or falls upon the claim that the pope is the head of the church as a successor to Peter. If the pope is the successor to Peter—whom they claim was the first pope—then the Roman Catholic Church is the true church. But if the doctrine regarding the pope is false, then the Roman Catholic Church is an apostate organization.

Catholicism attempts to establish the papacy by claiming Matthew 16:18 teaches that Peter was the first pope. The verse reads the same way in the *King James Version* and in the *Douay-Confraternity Version*, an authorized Catholic version: "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church." This verse does not support the catholic claim.

First, in order for Peter and the rock to be the same thing, they must be the same gender—masculine, feminine, or neuter. A man would not be described with words such as "she," "herr," or "it." But "Peter" is *petros*, which is masculine, and "rock" is *petra*, which is feminine (Moulton, p. 23).

Second, there is a difference in the words' definitions. *Petra* denotes a mass of rock, as distinct from *petros*, a detached stone or boulder, a stone that might be easily thrown or moved" (Vine, III, 302). Liddell and Scott add, "*petros*, a stone distinguished from *petra*," which they define as, "shelf of rock" (p. 636). Bullinger adds, "*petra*, a rock, a projecting rock, a cliff, geographically, a rock in situ, as distinguished from *petros* a stone, that might be thrown by the hand, etc" (p. 650). Thus the two are distinct, *not* the same. One is but a stone—"...thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone" (John 12:42); the other is a secure foundation (Matt. 7:24-25). Thus, when Jesus uses the words *petros* and *petra*, He makes it clear that they are *not* the same thing. Not only does Matthew 16:18 fail to verify the beginning and validity of the office of pope, but it refutes it! Consider these other verses which reveal this doctrine to be false:

1. If the pope cannot be married, than anyone who is married cannot be pope. Peter was married (Matt. 8:14). Therefore, Peter was not a pope. Paul wrote First Corinthians more than 20 years after the church was established. In that letter, he referred to Peter's living wife (1 Cor. 9:5).
2. If Peter were the sole head of the church on earth, he would have had no equal among men. But Paul said he was not behind the very chiefest apostles (2 Cor. 11:5). Since Peter was an apostle, and Paul was not behind him, Paul would either have been peter's equal or superior. Neither alternative fits Catholic claims.
3. If it is Biblical to bow down before the pope because he is "the vicar of Christ," then it would have been Biblical to bow before Peter. But Peter prohibited a man from bowing to him (Acts 10:25-26).
4. Peter was an apostle. Matthew 20:20-28 teaches that no apostle was to have dominion over the others. Therefore, Peter did *not* have dominion over the other apostles and was not a pope.
5. Peter was forbidden to teach something different from what inspired men had taught (Gal. 1:6-9). Popes teach things contrary to what inspired men taught

(purgatory, adoration of images, burning incense, etc). Therefore, the authority from which they speak is from men, not God (Matt. 21:24-25; 15:9).

These verses make it abundantly clear that the crucial doctrine upon which Catholicism stands is false. It is not God's teaching, but that which men in the great apostasy have produced. The doctrine of the pope did not even exist until it finally evolved some 430 years later, with Boniface III being named the first pope (Boettner, pp. 7-9). While the Catholic Church claims to have a historical record of the succession of popes from Peter, it is acknowledged by one of their own authorities that no such records exist for the first 300 years.

The sources from which the historian must reconstruct the story of the primitive church are, from the point of view of his task, far from ideal. There are no diaries, memoirs, or correspondence of the chief actors, no dossiers of official papers, no systematically filed records, certificates, and statistics. There are the summary lives of Our Lord we call the Gospels. (sic) There are letters from various apostles to different communities of believers, and, in the next two centuries, a none too voluminous collection of polemical, apologetical, and expository writings. But nowhere save, in The Acts of The Apostles, is there, for nearly 300 years, anything that can be called a contemporary historical record. The precious facts, very often, are no more than the carefully gleaned obiter dicta of the theologian and the controversialist, of the unbelievers and the heretics too, no less than of the Catholic writer (Hughes, pp. 2-3).

Furthermore, when records are submitted to establish a record, they are subject to being a forgery.

Substituting of false documents and tampering with genuine ones was quite a trade in the Middle Ages (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, VI, 136).

Writers of the 4<sup>th</sup> century were prone to describe many practices (i.e. The Lenten Fast of Forty Days) as apostolic institutions which certainly had no claims to be so regarded (Ibid., III, 484).

Six centuries passed before it was discovered that the Pseudo-Isidorean or False decretals as they are now called, were to a great extent a forgery (*Catholic Dictionary*, p. 105).

Thus, there are no records to trace a succession of popes back to Peter and the Bible refutes the Catholics' preposterous claim. Dad was right. One man cannot tell everybody else in the church what to do.

### **Ex Cathedra And "The Infallible Source"**

"Ex cathedra" is the belief that the pope, on occasions, is able to speak with infallibility or is inspired of God. "The Infallible Source" is the contention that the Holy Spirit guides the Roman Catholic Church into a perfect interpretation of the word of God through (at least) the pope. These two beliefs constitute a powerful grip upon the mind of the Catholic who is strongly indoctrinated with them. He is convinced that the Roman Catholic Church is the original church and that God has made the pope the head of the church and interpreter of the Bible for all men.. Therefore, whatever the pope says is right, regardless of what the Bible may say. This doctrine effectively prohibits the catholic from thinking for himself.

But if the age of miraculous gifts ceased upon the completion of the writing of the New Testament, then miraculous prophesying—including *ex cathedra*—and miraculous interpretations, knowledge, and discerning of spirits—including *The Infallible Source*—have ceased. That such miraculous gifts did cease, the Bible teaches (1 Cor. 13:8-13). The false doctrines of "ex cathedra" and "The Infallible Source" are devices which were conjured up to entrap multitudes of people.

### **The True New Testament Church?**

The true church in any age of the world must be identical to the church in the New Testament. That is the contention of Catholicism: "...if it be not identical in belief, in government, etc., with the primitive church, then it is not the Church of Christ" (*Catholic Facts*, p. 27).

Therefore, in order to be the true church of Christ, the Roman Catholic Church must

be identical to the primitive church. Is it, or have there been changes? Catholics themselves admit that the following are later additions:

1. The priesthood (*Catholic Die.*, p. 692).
2. Clergy (*Catholic Die.*, p. 189).
3. Use of the title, “Father” (*Catholic Die.*, p. 342).
4. Papal infallibility (*Catholic Die.*, p. 674).
5. Church government (*Externals of The Catholic Church*, p. 19).
6. A hierarchy (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, VII, p. 334).
7. Candles and incense (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, III, p. 246).
8. Holy water (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, III, p. 76).
9. Purgatory (*Externals of The Catholic Church*, p. 351)
10. Lent (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, III, p. 484).
11. Fasting (*Catholic Die.*, p. 340).
12. The word “mass” (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, X, p. 6).
13. Multi-observance of mass (*Legislation on The Sacraments in the New Code of Canon Law*, p. 87).
14. Sprinkling holy water on the people (*Catholic Die*, p. 484).

With all these changes, it is obvious that the Roman Catholic Church is *not identical* to the primitive church, and if it is not identical to the primitive church, then it *is not* the church of Christ.

### Conclusion

Catholics are taught to accept what the pope and the church teach, though that teaching is contrary to Christ's doctrine in the New Testament.

However, by identifying Roman Catholicism as the apostasy, proving that Peter was never a pope, that miraculous guidance from God no longer occurs, and that the Roman Catholic Church practices and teaches things not practiced or taught by the primitive church of Christ, some precious soul just may wonder, “How can a mere man tell everybody else what to do in religion?”

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Gary Henson and I have known each other for a number of years. He is the faithful gospel preacher for the London & Macomb church of Christ in El Reno, Okla. His new book, *The Ivory Domino*, should be in everyone's library. I have read it and, without reservation, recommend it to our readers. It is the true story of his personal struggle to leave the shackles of Catholicism and is a valuable resource to reach any honest Catholic who is seeking the truth. It is filled with far more information than can be given in this short article he wrote. Check the advertisement in this issue for details on how to order it.)

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## Salvation By “Faith Only” Is Not By Faith

Lee Moses

Most people have heard such religious slogans as “faith plus nothing else saves,” “just believe and you will be saved,” and the self-contradictory but oft-repeated “salvation is by grace alone through faith alone.” The intended meaning of such sayings is crystal clear—one cannot do anything beyond realizing in his mind that Jesus Christ is the Son of God before that person is numbered among the saved. This is the popular doctrine of “salvation by ‘faith only.’” But is this teaching actually *by faith*? God declares, “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). If any teaching does not come from the Bible, God’s all-sufficient revelation to man, it is not by faith. Thus whether or not the doctrine of “faith alone” is actually *by faith* hinges on whether or not the Bible teaches such.

### What Is Faith?

The Bible uses the term “faith” (or “believe,” its verb form) in different senses. Faith can refer to the act of believing something to be true, as in Matthew 9:28: “the blind men came to him: and Jesus saith unto them, *Believe* ye that I am able to do this?” Faith can refer to the confidence of a clear conscience, as in Romans 14:23: “And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of *faith*: for whatsoever is not

of *faith* is sin.” Faith can refer to one’s fidelity or trustworthiness, as in First Corinthians 10:13: “God is *faithful*, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able.” Faith can refer to the New Testament, as in Galatians 3:23: “But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the *faith* which should afterwards be revealed.” Lastly, faith can refer to a trusting belief that has manifested itself in works of obedience, as in Romans 1:8: “First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your *faith* is spoken of throughout the whole world” (all emphases added).

There is a great deal of misunderstanding regarding the nature of faith. Some advocate the doctrine of “faith only” because they believe that salvation by faith excludes any kind of effort on the part of the individual receiving salvation. The New Testament does make clear that neither works of personal merit nor works of the Law of Moses lead to salvation (Rom. 3:28; Eph. 2:8-9). But faith and works are not mutually exclusive: “For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love” (Gal. 5:6). Biblical faith *works*. “Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent” (John 6:29). Our Lord called faith itself a work, which indeed it is. Why are there so many admonitions to believe, and have faith, if believing is not something that one does?

### **Does Faith Not Save?**

It is undeniable that one must have faith to be saved. It is impossible to please God without faith (Heb. 11:6). If one does not believe in the Deity of Jesus Christ, that person will die in his sins (John 8:24). Faith is mentioned many times as a prerequisite to salvation (Mark 16:16; John 3:16; Acts 13:39; 16:31; Rom. 10:9-10; et al.). However, other prerequisites are also mentioned for salvation: repentance (Acts 2:38), confession of Jesus Christ (Rom. 10:9-10), and baptism (1 Pet. 3:21). To conclude that one is saved by faith only requires blinding oneself to numerous passages that say more is necessary.

A number of different Biblical uses for “faith” have already been examined, from the mental assent of a thing to be true to the faith that has manifested itself in obedience. When the doctrine of “faith only” is taught it is generally not using this last definition, but the first. However, one would be hard pressed to find a Biblical account of anyone being Divinely commended, much less saved, at the point of believing something to be true. Faith is expressed in words and/or action before it is commended. James asks, “What doth it profit my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?” (Jas. 2:14). Faith can save a person, but a faith without works cannot. James also said, “Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble” (v. 19). Here is a commendation of faith which has not expressed itself in action—“thou doest well”—however, it is a tongue-in-cheek commendation; as James also compares such faith to that of the demons and proclaims it *dead* (vv. 17, 20, 26). This context is the only passage in the Bible where the term “faith only” is found; and it reads, “Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and **not** by faith only” (v. 24, emphasis added). The illustration has been used of two oars: if a man only rows his boat with one oar, he will go in circles; but if he will row with both oars, he is then able to move forward. Likewise, it is only when faith is accompanied by its works that the soul is able to move forward to salvation. If not, a soul is merely going in circles, never moving beyond the stagnant sea of sin. It was *by faith* that Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and all the heroes of faith mentioned in Hebrews 11 *acted*, and thus were blessed. Jesus said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16). Yes, faith is essential for salvation, but it is not all that is essential for salvation. It is grammatically impossible from this verse that salvation can precede baptism, and it is grammatically impossible that baptism is not just as much a requirement for salvation as is faith. Faith saves, but not faith only.

### **What About Unbaptized Believers?**

When confronted with Mark 16:16, some will respond by directing attention to the second half of the verse: “but he that believeth not shall be damned.” They then claim that the failure to mention baptism in the second half of the verse means that those who believe only shall be saved. The problem with this is that a third class of people has been imagined in this verse where Christ only mentioned two: (1) those who



believe and are baptized, and (2) those who do not believe. There is no mention of the third, those who believe and are not baptized.

To refer to an unbaptized “believer” is really a misnomer—one who is Biblically “believing” is one who has been baptized. Paul and Silas baptized a Philippian jailer, *following* which he is described as “believing in God” (Acts 16:33-34). Paul on a later occasion met a group of about twelve disciples in Ephesus whom he knew to be believers (19:2). But when he became aware that they did not have a true understanding, he asked, “Unto what then were ye baptized?” (v. 3). When Paul knew this group to be believers, he also knew them to have been baptized.

The question “what about unbaptized believers?” could be rephrased, “what about *disobedient* believers?” When the multitude assembled at Pentecost asked Peter and the other apostles what they should do about their sinful state, Peter told them, “Repent and be baptized . . . Then they that gladly received his word were baptized” (Acts 2:37-38, 41). What if they would have instead responded, “We are content with merely believing the things which you have taught us, and have no intention of repenting of our sins nor of being baptized”? This could scarcely be called “gladly receiving the word.” Jesus asked, “And why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46). He also declared assuredly, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 7:21). Unbaptized believers are among those whose faith is compared to that of demons (Jas. 2:19). Certain “chief rulers” who believed in Jesus but refused to confess Him are said to have “loved the praise of men more than the praise of God” (John 12:42-43). This implies that their failure to do more than merely believe left them in a position where they would not receive the praise of God. Mark 16:16 may not specifically address the third class of “unbaptized believers,” but it is abundantly clear from the verse itself and other passages that this class is not included among the “shall be saved.”

### Conclusion

The doctrine of salvation by “faith only” dominates the denominational world. Through it many sincere people are being led astray, being given false assurance of salvation, and being robbed of incentive to do the will of God. No doctrine not taught by the Scriptures can said to be “by faith,” according to Romans 10:17. The doctrine of “faith only” is nowhere taught in Scripture; and thus, as much as its advocates attempt to emphasize “faith,” is not even *by faith*. May good and honest hearts wholly reject this doctrine and obey from the heart that form of doctrine that will save them from sin (Rom. 6:17).

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## Playing A Piano Won't Send You To Hell

**Jerry C. Brewer**

I would fight vigorously if instrumental music were attempted to be introduced into my home congregation. I am firmly within the a cappella tradition. But I have a tolerance for those who make other choices, and I don't see that it needs to constitute a complete severing of fellowship. I just don't see the need for that (Abilene Christian University President Royce Money, “A Conversation With Royce Money,” *Christian Chronicle*, April, 2006, p. 20).

Royce Money is convinced that playing a piano in worship won't cause one to be lost. He's right—after a fashion. Neither will one be lost for using pork chops and hot yeast buns for the elements of the Lord's Supper. You see, there is nothing inherently sinful in playing a piano or eating yeast buns and pork chops. But what will send one to hell is sin, and the use of those things is sinful in worship to God because they are *not authorized* in the New Testament.

Like his predecessors in previous centuries—and a host of his contemporaries—Money either fails to understand, or blatantly disregards the principle of God's authority that has been expressed in all ages of the world.

When Noah was instructed to build the ark of gopher wood, he understood God's authority and, “According to all that God commanded him, so did he” (Gen. 6:22).

Noah refused to “make other choices,” but simply did that which God authorized in commanding him to build the ark. There was nothing inherently sinful in oak, pine, ash, or balsa wood. But Noah built the ark of gopher wood because that’s what God authorized, and he respected God’s word. An ark built of a combination of pine, gopher and oak would not have caused Noah to be lost, but had he so built it he would have been lost because he failed to respect God’s authority.

It wasn’t a rod that kept Moses out of the promised land when he struck the rock with it instead of speaking to it as God had commanded him (Num. 20:7-12). Moses’ rod was not inherently sinful. In fact, that was precisely the manner in which he brought forth water from the rock in Rephidim on a previous occasion (Ex. 17:1-7). So, what was the difference between those two occasions? At Rephidim, Moses obeyed God Who instructed him to “smite the rock” (Exodus 17:6). But in the second, Moses *disobeyed* God’s word by smiting the rock instead of speaking to it as he had been commanded (Num. 20:8, 11). In his disobedience, Moses made “other choices” and rejected *God’s* authority. It wasn’t the rod that displeased God. It was Moses’ “other choice” after knowing what God had commanded.

The fire that devoured Aaron’s sons, Nadab and Abihu, was sent from God because they used “strange fire” in their censers when they burned incense (Lev. 10:1-3). Was the fire they used inherently sinful? Of course not. Why, then, were they punished for using it? Because it was fire which God “commanded them not” (Lev. 10:1). They were punished for violating God’s silence. That is apparently a principle which Money either doesn’t understand or which he deems as unimportant. Mechanical instruments in New Testament worship is something which God “commanded not.” Money could not find a mechanical instrument of music commanded in New Testament worship if his life depended on it.

You see, the entire “crux of the matter” in our time—as it has been in every age of the world—is that God demands respect for His authority expressed in His word. God spoke in ages past by His prophets, but now speaks to us through His Son (Heb. 1:1-2), and in every age He has demanded that His authority be respected and obeyed.

There’s one noticeably presumptuous statement in Money’s remarks. He says he’s “firmly within the a cappella tradition,” but is “tolerant of those who make other choices.” Does this man make himself God? Does he now presume to offer absolution to those who “make other choices” instead of choosing what God approves and requires in worship?

In the same article, Money said he ardently believes in the plea for restoration of New Testament Christianity. “I believe,” he said, “the plea is as valid today, if not more so, than it ever was.” Jesus said, “By their fruits ye shall know them” (Matt. 7:16 ASV) and it doesn’t take an expert fruit inspector to see that Money doesn’t accept the restoration statement that, “Where the Bible is silent, we are silent.” To Money, and his ilk in the religious world, Bible silence is permissive. He would, doubtless, have had no problem with Christ serving in the Levitical priesthood while He was on earth, even though, “it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood” (Heb. 7:14). Did you get that? Read it again. Why could Christ not have been a priest under the Levitical system? Because God said, “Thou shalt not?” No. It was because God authorized members of the tribe of Levi to be priests and was *silent*—“spake nothing”—concerning the tribe of Judah as priests.

No, men won’t go to hell for playing a piano in worship, using oak to make an ark, striking a rock with a rod, or using fire from the “source of your choice.” But one *will* go to hell for not respecting what God authorizes and the prohibitive nature of His silence. Respect God’s silence and leave the “other choices” to Money and his postmodern crowd.

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# Indications Of Bible Inspiration: Its Fulfilled Prophecy

**Jess Whitlock**

Let us not think of a man predicting the outcome of a political election to be on a par with God's prophets of old. Imagine that America should somehow continue for another 150 years. Can you find a "prophet" today who would predict whether a Republican or Democrat would win the presidency? Would he give us the name of the man or woman, and tell just a few things to take place during that one's administration? Yet, that is an exact parallel to the prophecy of Isaiah in chapters 44 and 45 of his writing.

"...that saith of Cyrus, He is My shepherd, and shall perform all My pleasure, even saying of Jerusalem, She shall be built; and of the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid...I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will make straight all his ways: he shall build My city, and he shall let My exiles go free, not for price nor reward, saith Jehovah of hosts" (Isa. 44:28; 45:13).

Notice: Isaiah called King Cyrus by name 150 years before he came to the throne and told that he would allow the Israelites to return to their homeland to rebuild their city and the temple. Does anyone really think that Isaiah within and of himself could possibly know these things?

Consider another prophecy. Twenty five hundred years ago a prophet by the name of Ezekiel prophesied the coming demise of the city of Tyre. Tyre was located more than 500 miles away from God's prophet. "Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Behold, I am against thee, O Tyre, and will cause many nations to come up against thee, as the sea causeth its waves to come up" (Eze. 26:3). As a rule, only one nation would come against another and that would end the conflict. Sure enough, King Nebuchadnezzar invaded Tyre in a 13-year siege. How did Ezekiel know that 256 years after that invasion, Alexander the Great and nine other nations would attack the same ancient city?

"And they shall destroy the walls of Tyre, and break down her towers: I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her a bare rock" (Eze. 26:4). Most cities attacked would have buildings destroyed, but Ezekiel declared that Tyre would be like a "bare rock" or "top of a rock" (KJV). How could God's prophet know that more than two and a half centuries later, Alexander and his army would "scrape her dust (debris) from her"?

"She shall be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea; for I have spoken it, saith the Lord Jehovah...thou shalt be a place for the spreading of nets" (Eze. 26:5, 14). The late brother J.T. Marlin once told me how he had observed fishermen spreading their nets to dry in the late afternoon sun at the ancient site of old Tyre.

"And they shall lay thy stones and thy timber and thy dust in the midst of the waters" (Eze. 26:12). Historians say that Alexander ordered his soldiers to literally scrape the debris (dust) of that city into the sea, in order to build a causeway out to the tiny island where the inhabitants of Tyre had fled for safety.

Jeremiah prophesied of another city, Babylon.

Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: the broad walls of Babylon shall be utterly overthrown, and her high gates shall be burned with fire; and the people shall labor for vanity, and the nations for the fire; and they shall be weary (Jer. 51:58).

At the time these predictions were made Babylon was at the height of its glory. The wall around that city was 350 feet high, 75 feet thick, and covered 15 square miles! Today the rich valley lies waste and "it is surprising that such extensive masses of brickwork should have disappeared without leaving at least a few recognizable traces..." (*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. 1, p. 350).

Time and space forbid an examination of other cities of prophecy; Sidon, Nineveh, Samaria, Jerusalem, Gaza, Ashkelon, Moab, Petra, Thebes, Memphis, Rome, et al. How can one explain the minute details and accuracy of hundreds and hundreds of such prophecies concerning men, nations, and facts? Only one explanation is plausible.



That holy men of God “spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet. 1:21).

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## The Second Coming

E. P. Watson

In the New Testament, a book that can be read in ten or twelve hours, there are no less than fifty direct calls to “watch” for the coming of the Lord—a call to every 25 minutes of reading. These exhortations scattered through its pages with that commanding word “watch” are so many taps on the shoulder by the finger of God bidding us look up for the appearing of Jesus. The time of his coming we do not and cannot know. But among the unknown things concerning his coming there are some that we can and do know, some of which are here set forth.

### The Manner Of His Coming

**1. He will come as he went away.** “Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11). He ascended in the clouds. “And a cloud received him out of their sight” (Acts 1:9). And so he will come. “Behold he cometh with the clouds and every eye shall see him” (Rev. 1:15).

**2. He shall come quickly.** “As the lightning cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west; so shall the coming of the Son of Man be” (Matt. 24:27). What a wonderful sight to contemplate; to see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven; coming with power and great glory; coming as quick as lightning, yet every eye shall see him!

**3. He shall come in glory.** “When the Son of Man shall come in his glory and all the holy angels with him” (Matt. 25:31). What unspeakable glory! Jude says “Behold he cometh with ten thousand of his saints” (Jude 14). That will be the greatest and grandest and most wonderful sight ever beheld in all the world.

### The Events Of His Coming

It is contended by some that Christ will come to Jerusalem and reign one thousand years on David’s literal throne. If that is taught in the Word of God, I confess my inability to find it. That a thousand year period is mentioned in the visions of John no one will deny, but being set forth in symbols it does not form a part of the plain teaching of the New Testament. It is best to study plain passages that deal with the events of the Lord’s coming that no violence may be done to the Word of God.

**1. When He comes, His kingdom will be delivered to God.** Paul said that He (Christ) “must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet” (1 Cor. 15:25). Verse 24 says, “Then cometh the end, when he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.” Verse 26 says, “The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.” Death shall be destroyed when the dead are called from their graves. “Then shall come to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O, death where is thy sting? O, grave where is thy victory?” (1 Cor. 15:55).

**2. When He comes, there will be the resurrection of the dead.** “For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent (precede) them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first.” (1 Thess. 4: 14-15). It should be observed that in First Corinthians 15 Paul said “the dead” should be raised “at the last trump”. He called it the resurrection of the dead—all the dead. But in First Thessalonians 4 he says “the dead in Christ shall rise first.” Yes, but first in relation to *what*? Here is a point where brethren who teach the thousand years reign on earth wrest the scripture. They argue that the dead in Christ shall rise first—that is, before the rest of the dead, then a thousand year reign on earth, and after that the resurrection of the rest of the dead. Now the passage does *not even hint* at such a thing. What it does say is that “we that are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent (precede, or go before) them which are asleep” but “we which

are alive and remain” shall with the dead in Christ “be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and so shall ever be with the Lord.” In this passage Paul is not discussing the resurrection of the wicked nor the order in which it shall occur, but rather the order of the ascension of the living and the dead in Christ when they are caught up to meet him in the air. The dead in Christ shall rise first, that is, before the living in Christ are “caught up” and they together shall ascend to meet the Lord and “so shall ever be with the Lord.”

But in First Corinthians 15 Paul discusses the resurrection of all the dead which, he says, will take place at the last trump. It is the same trump mentioned in First Thessalonians 4:16. In one the living are “translated” and in the other they are “caught up.” It is the same occasion of John 5:29 when “all that are in their tombs shall hear his voice and come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.” Language cannot be plainer. How can any one believe that there will be a thousand years between the resurrection of the righteous and the resurrection of the wicked ?

**3. When He comes, there will be the judgment of all the nations.** “When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats” (Matt. 25:31-32). Describing the same judgment scene, John said: “And I saw the dead, small and great stand before God; and the books were opened and they were judged every man according to their works” (Rev. 20:12-14). John saw the dead and the judgment mentioned included every man.

**4. When He comes, it will be the end of the world.** “The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up...Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Pet. 3:7-14). A further description of the new heavens and the new earth—the Christian’s eternal home—may be found in the closing chapters of the New Testament. May God help us in the study of his word and to meet the Lord in peace when he comes.

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## A Gross Misapplication

Dub McClish

“If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved” (Rom. 10:9). The foregoing words from the apostle Paul may be among the most frequently abused and misused in Scripture. The abuse occurs when one uses this passage as if it were the only New Testament statement on the subject of salvation. Indeed, other passages state other/additional conditions of salvation.

Those who advocate the *faith only* doctrine relating to salvation (i.e., that God forgives and saves one the moment he believes in Jesus as God’s Son) often quote Paul’s statement above as their “proof text.” However, this very passage refutes their error. Note that it requires not only the heart-action of belief, but also the mouth-action of confession of that faith (thus not “faith alone”). The New Testament contains not a single statement to the effect that salvation occurs the moment one merely believes in the Christ. The one passage in which faith only appears (i.e., Jas. 2:24) declares that one *cannot* be justified/saved thereby. Rather, the New Testament makes many statements to the contrary.

Many verses of Scripture (e.g., John 3:16; Acts 16:31; Rom. 5:1; et al.) state that one is saved by faith, but not one of them has the word *only* or *alone* in connection with faith.

Those who promote Romans 10:9 (or any other single verse) as the totality of teaching on the terms of pardon create contradictions between the inspired men, the Lord included. A principal rule of Biblical hermeneutics (i.e., interpretation) is that an interpretation of a passage that contradicts other passages cannot be correct. To state it another way, the Scriptures must be so interpreted so as to harmonize throughout.

One has a very low opinion of the Bible if he is not concerned that his view of passage **A** directly contradicts passage **B**. If Paul taught *faith only* salvation in Romans 10:9, he contradicted:

- Ananias, who baptized him (Acts 22:12–16)
- Himself (Acts 17:30; Rom. 6:3–4, 17–19; Gal. 3:27)
- Peter (Acts 2:38; 1 Pet. 3:21)
- The Son of God (Mat. 10:32; Luke 13:3; Mark 16:16)

A synopsis of these passages (plus the detailed accounts of conversions in Acts) reveals that faith, repentance, confession of faith, and baptism are all conditions of Divine pardon. The Scriptures no more teach *repentance only* or *baptism only* salvation than they do *faith only* salvation.

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## The One And Only Reason To Fear Death

**Charles Pogue**

Man is a finite being. All of us shall pass away from this life. As Peter wrote, “For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away:” (1 Pet. 1:24). It is appointed to every man to die, and then the judgment will come (Heb. 9:27).

It was recently reported that some doctors in Israel believe they have found a cure for cancer. The search for such a cure has been going on for many years. Other researches are busy looking for cures for other diseases. Why is that the case? Because men seek to extend this physical life as long as possible. There is nothing wrong in wanting to live a long and healthy life in this body. It is tragic, however, when a man seeks to extend his life because he fears death. Granted, some should fear death, and there is one justifiable reason to fear the putting off the physical body. Sin!

Sin is the means by which physical death came into the world (Gen. 2:16,17; 1 Cor. 15:21-22). All of us have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). The consequence of sin being death, if there were no remission of sins, all men would have one and only one reason to fear death. One who dies in sin will suffer eternally for dying in that condition (Matt. 9:44-48; 25:45; 2 Thess. 1:7-9).

God loved, and loves, all men. He does not wish any to be lost but for all to come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9). Because He loves man and does not want him to perish, God has provided a Saviour through whom all may have forgiveness and have the one and only reason to fear death removed. As was stated by the wise man Solomon, the way to remove the fear of death is to fear the Lord. “The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death” (Prov. 14:27).

The Saviour provided is none other Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God. In Hebrews 2:14,15 the writer penned these words concerning him:

Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

When Martha said to Jesus if He had been there her brother Lazarus would not have died, Jesus' response in part was, “I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:” (John 11:25). All will be raised from the dead, some to everlasting life, some to eternal destruction (John 5:28,29). Thus, those who die without having their sins removed are still encumbered by the one and only reason to fear death.

How are one's sins removed? By obedience to the Gospel, which began to be proclaimed on Pentecost after Christ's resurrection. Peter instructed those who asked what they must do to repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins (Acts 2:38). However, for the fear of death to not return one must remain faithful to the Lord all the days of his life. The letter to the church in Smyrna, Revelation 2:8-11 states that there is an *if* involved for those who have obeyed the first principles of the doctrine of Christ.

And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first

and the last, which was dead, and is alive; I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and *I know* the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but *are* the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast *some* of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

There are two groups of people who live with the one and only reason to fear death. It is true whether they realize it or not. Those two groups are those who have never obeyed the Gospel, and those who have obeyed the Gospel at some point in their lives but who have not been faithful to the one who died for them. Only one group of persons has no reason to fear death, those who obey the truth and live faithfully to it all the days of their lives. Paul states it so beautifully in the great resurrection chapter:, 1 Corinthians 15:55-58.

O death, where *is* thy sting? O grave, where *is* thy victory? The sting of death *is* sin; and the strength of sin *is* the law. But thanks *be* to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord (1 Cor. 15:55-58).

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## “Do I Even Need To Be Here?”

David Ray

A social group once made the following announcement: “Next Saturday we'll be honoring a special member. She's a great wife, mother, friend, member of our group, etc. In honor of her, we'll be having pizza for lunch followed by ice cream for dessert. Then we're going to watch the big football game that everyone's been looking forward to. And after that we're going bowling! We hope everybody will have a good time.”

Everybody seemed very excited about it...except the woman being honored. Her reaction to the announcement was: “I don't like pizza, I'm lactose intolerant, I hate football, and bowling is boring! I appreciate that you *say* you want to honor me, but did anyone even think to ask *me* what *I* want to do? Are you sure these activities are really for me? Do I even need to be there for them?”

It doesn't exactly seem fair, does it? This is the woman supposedly being honored; but does anyone actually care about *her*? How can it be said that they are really honoring her if they refuse to do the things *she* wants?

Obviously this scenario is contrived in order to make a point: do you think God might feel this way about what most people call "worship"? After all, unlike this woman, He told us what He wants (i.e., how to worship Him: the required actions and attitudes). And yet most people seemingly couldn't care less! They add all sorts of things about which He was silent (i.e., things He obviously did NOT want) and subtract anything *they* don't like! Can we not imagine God asking, "Do I even need to be here for this?"

Based on the following passages, we don't need to imagine what He is saying:

Isaiah 1:13 – "Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting."

Colossians 2:23 – In reference to the "ordinances" which were "after the commandments and doctrines of men," Paul said, "Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship...."

In Matthew 15:9 Jesus quotes Isaiah: "But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."

Let's study His word in order to find what He wants. Then let's worship Him accordingly, in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). He is certainly worth it!

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# Where Magic Failed

Cled E. Wallace

Simon the sorcerer amazed the people of Samaria by his magic (Acts 8). They thought he was, "that power of God which is called Great." When these same people saw Philip, a man of God, perform real miracles, sorcery was revealed to be a cheap, deceptive thing. In its very nature, magic is deceptive. It deceives the eye and confuses the senses. The skilled magician who removes rabbits from hats, saws live bodies in twain, and makes elephants disappear may amuse and startle an intelligent audience by playing tricks on the senses.

It is a more serious form of magic when a skilled sophist in the field of religion plays tricks on the understanding of seekers after the truth, and so manipulates the texts of Scripture as to conceal their real meaning or make them support doctrines never intended by their author. These tricks of Satan are employed to get and keep the Truth of God out of the hearts of the people. But there is one "white elephant" in religion the doctors of this sort of magic have failed to make disappear. In spite of all their skill, he stands stubbornly in the text and trumpets defiance at them. I refer to the plain texts that clearly make baptism a condition of remission of sins. No amount of magic can alter their obvious meaning.

Dr. W. Bassett tries his hand at making the elephant disappear in a recent issue of the *Alabama Baptist*. He approaches the problem with magic smoothness by suggesting that baptism is important and should be properly emphasized, and that Paul did not depreciate baptism when he said that Christ sent him not to baptize, but put "the emphasis where it belongs." It will then be in order to note where the Baptist doctor puts the emphasis and where Paul says "it belongs." Here are some of the doctor's "several points of emphasis concerning a New Testament baptism":

1. Every believer was expected to be baptized, only believers are expected to be baptized, sometimes they even went the same hour of the day to attend to baptism.
2. Baptism was not overlooked in the New Testament. It had a certain emphasis. Some would give it a minor place or do away with it altogether. Others would place too much emphasis on it and claim that it is necessary to salvation. The New Testament does not claim that baptism has any saving efficacy.
3. Baptism in the New Testament is a symbol. Externalists would confuse symbols with the things they symbolize. Baptism, which is an outward picture of an inward change, declares the believer to be a child of God, but it does not make him a child of God.

This is a smooth statement of a false position. It is Baptist doctrine dressed up in its best. Touched up as it is with the doctor's magic, it is calculated to deceive. No one but a believer can be scripturally baptized. New Testament baptism implies a faith and repentance which have profoundly affected the heart and life of the sinner. Without this change, a dipping of the body in water would be purely external and could have no more real meaning than the sprinkling of a few drops of water on an infant.

Not only does baptism imply faith and repentance, but they imply baptism so directly that it is hard to conceive that one can be a believing penitent and refuse to be baptized. To refuse baptism is to reject the counsel of God, to assume a state of rebellion which cannot be harmonized with faith and repentance. "...they that gladly received his word were baptized..." (Acts 2:41). The unbaptized were the ones who rejected the Word of God. There are no cases of deferred baptism in the New Testament. The "emphasis" that inspired preachers "placed" on baptism led believers to be baptized not only "the same hour of the day," but "immediately," which sometimes made it the same hour of the *night*.

These facts lead some of us to believe that Baptists are guilty of placing less emphasis on baptism than did the preachers in the early church, which was never called the Baptist Church. Both the Baptist Church and Baptist doctrines are developments far this side of the New Testament.



We are told that baptism "had a certain emphasis in the New Testament." We agree that it should have exactly the same emphasis today in the preaching and practice of Christians—*no more and no less*. Certainly those "who would give it a minor place or do away with it altogether" are in grave error. As we view the situation, Baptists are wide open for criticism here. They give it a minor place, compared with the place it occupies in the New Testament teaching, and wink at those who "do away with it altogether" by admitting and even insisting that many people are saved believers in Christ who have *done that very thing*. Although Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," (Mk. 16:16), Baptists affirm that, "He that believeth" is saved even if he does away with baptism "altogether." They evidently think that Jesus "would place too much emphasis on it and claim that it is necessary to salvation." We stand with Jesus and place the exact emphasis on it that He did. Baptists are wrong, because they differ from Jesus. They say, "He that believeth and is saved is expected to be baptized." Anybody can see that Jesus did not say that at all. No amount of magic can harmonize the two statements.

As smooth as our theological magician is, he comes closer than close to misrepresenting some of us who "claim that it is necessary to salvation." In his eye we are "externalists" who attribute "saving efficacy" to "an outward picture of an inward change." Or possibly he has the Catholics in mind, who make baptism a "sacrament" and ascribe efficacy to the mere act. Both the Baptists and Catholics are wrong — extremists in opposite directions. We propose to take neither extreme, but place the "certain emphasis" on baptism it receives in New Testament teaching.

There is no "saving efficacy" in any act of man, whether it be faith, repentance, or baptism. We associate "saving efficacy" with God and not man. The term brings to mind the grace of God, the blood of Jesus, and the power of the gospel. What man does by the appointment of God as a condition of pardon belongs to faith, which is man's means of access into God's grace. Pardoning power belongs to God. He can justly exercise it in view of the redemption purchased by the blood of Jesus, and has the right to name the conditions. He has named baptism as one of them. "It is necessary to salvation" solely because God has made it so. The man who does not have enough faith to be baptized does not have enough to be saved. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" (Rom. 6:3). We wonder if Baptist doctors think a man can be saved out of Christ and apart from His death? They do not seem to give baptism that "certain emphasis" that Paul did.

We accept the fact that there are inward changes which take place in man accomplished by the power of God exercised through the gospel. Such changes are necessary to scriptural baptism and result in it. Pardon is an act of God in the sinner's behalf, and does not take place in man at all. Baptism is a command of God, an act of faith on the part of man, partakes of the nature of faith, and is meaningless without faith. It is obedience of faith. To refer to it as an external with or without saving efficacy is to miss the point of New Testament teaching. Baptists are true "externalists" on the question of baptism. Their teaching is external in relation to what the New Testament teaches about its significance. They even have to invent strange and unscriptural language to express their point of view.

The elephant refuses to disappear. He is immune to magic. When the magicians have done their utmost, it still remains true that Simon Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, directed inquiring multitudes on Pentecost to repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins. When men believe and do what God says, He pardons them. It is as simple as that. Pardon makes the believer a child of God. God declares that the believer is pardoned when he is baptized. The saved believer is the baptized believer. So the New Testament teaches.

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## “Accepting Christ”

G. K. Wallace

Words are signs of ideas. It is important then that we ask, "What is the idea conveyed by the words that are being used?" We constantly hear such expressions as "accepting Christ," "total commitment," "a full surrender," and "receiving Christ as your personal

Saviour." What do men mean by these terms?

I have been listening to denominational preachers for 40 or 50 years and I think I know what they are saying. There was a time when sectarian preachers were constantly making fun of what Jesus said in Mark 16:16 and what Peter said in Acts 2:38. They would refer to my brethren as "water ducks" and "mossbacks." They would laugh at John 3:5 and say, "only three things are born of water. They are mosquitoes, tadpoles and Campbellites." Of course, Jesus did not say be born of water. He said be born of "water and the Spirit." I am neither a mosquito, tadpole, nor a Campbellite, and I was not born of water. I was born of "water and the Spirit."

In generations past and present, denominational preachers have used special terms to deny that a person is to be born of water and the Spirit and that baptism is for the remission of sins. Their approach to this is by saying you must "*accept Christ*." By this, they mean you are to skip baptism because they say baptism "is not part of the grace of God..."

When they talk about "preaching Christ," they mean you are to disregard "the words of Christ." When they talk about a "total commitment," they skip the commandments of Jesus Christ and "let your conscience be your guide." When sectarian preachers talk about "surrendering to Christ," they mean "avoid" obedience to the gospel of Christ. When sectarian preachers talk about receiving a "personal Saviour," they mean, "Christ comes into the life of the alien sinner separate and apart from obeying the gospel of Christ."

When the evangelist Philip preached Christ, the eunuch asked to be baptized (Acts 8:35-36). How can one preach Christ and not tell a man to be baptized? How can one accept Christ and, at the same time, refuse to be baptized? Accepting Christ has always meant accepting what Christ taught. When Peter concluded his great sermon on Pentecost, the record says, "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized" (Acts 2:41). The people on Pentecost received Christ by receiving His word. All who rejected Peter's words rejected Christ.

Only those who accepted the teachings of Christ while he was here in person accepted Christ. Likewise, all who come to Christ today must do so by the teachings and instructions by Him given. Christ draws all men through teaching (John 6:44-45). When the apostles went out to preach the great commission they were thereby preaching Christ. This was the burden of all their discourses. The prophet said, "They shall all be taught of God" (Isa. 54:13). Therefore all who have been properly taught through the living oracles concerning Jesus of Nazareth, and have obeyed those words have come to Him.

Christianity has never changed. Its laws and ordinances are still the same as they were in the first century. It is ridiculous, absurd, and sectarian to talk to people about coming to Christ, and leave the impression that they can do so without doing what Jesus taught. To deny that baptism is a part of the grace of God is to deny the Bible. If baptism does not belong to the grace of God, it belongs to the grace of the devil. If you have been baptized, your baptism is either of the grace of God or the grace of the devil.

Suppose you are sick and nigh unto death. Your beloved doctor calls to see you, diagnoses your case, and tells you that he is positive he can be of assistance and effect a cure. You rejoice at hearing his words and then he picks up his pen and begins to write. You turn to him and ask, "What is that you're doing, doctor?" The physician replies, "I'm writing a prescription suited to your case which you should carefully take according to my instructions."

Then suppose you say, "Doctor, I can have nothing to do with your pills and powders. I believe in you! I want you personally, but your pills and powders can have no place in my life and cannot be a part nor a means of healing. My confidence is in you. The physician would likely reply, "He that rejects my remedy, rejects me, and he that has no confidence in what I prescribe as a means of healing, has no confidence in me." (cf. John 12:48).

The book of Acts was written to illustrate the laws of the kingdom of God and particularly those that relate to primary obedience. Such examples as the conversion of Saul and of the eunuch (Acts 22:16; 8:35-37) make the way of obedience so plain that no one but the most prejudiced can fail to understand what to do to be saved.

It should be our custom today to preach with the same vigour and force that was characteristic of pioneer preachers of previous generations. Human nature has not changed and it will ever remain the same. The needs of man are the same and the answer to those needs were revealed in the word of God 2,000 years ago.

As it did for the eunuch and Paul, the blood of Christ still cleanses men today who believe in Christ, (John 8:24), repent of their sins, (Lk. 13:3), confess that faith, (Matt. 10:32; Rom. 10:10), and are baptized into Christ for the remission of sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38).

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## The “Narrow Way” Is Jesus’ Way

**Dub Mowery**

One criticism often leveled at the church of Christ is that, “the church of Christ is too narrow minded.” Of course, those who so criticize are using the term “narrow minded” in a derogatory way. The opposite of being “narrow minded” is being “broad minded.” By using the term “broad minded,” the world really means toleration of all views without condemning any.

Tolerance is the name of the game in today’s society. If tolerance is being politically correct, then our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ was not politically correct. He exhorted, “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matt. 7:13-14).

The word “strait” means a narrow, restricted passage. God has always required man to strictly abide by His commandments. But a permissive society has a tendency to resist any restrictions. At the time that Joshua succeeded Moses as Israel’s leader, the Lord said unto him,

Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. This book of law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then shalt thou have good success (Josh. 1:7-8).

Likewise, the Lord requires of us who live in the Christian dispensation to adhere strictly to the New Testament (Gal. 1:6-9; Rev. 22:18-19). The apostle Paul declared, “Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Eph. 4:3-6).

Within those verses, the word *one* appears seven times. The word *one* is an adjective used to describe the number of each of the seven spiritual entities which it modifies. Is it being “narrow minded” to uphold the truth that there is only *one God*? Is it being “narrow minded” to uphold the Biblical truth that there is only *one Lord*? Is it being “narrow minded” to uphold the Biblical truth that there is only *one Spirit*? Is it being “narrow minded” to uphold the Biblical truth that there is only *one hope* of our calling? Is it being narrow minded to uphold the Biblical truth that there is only *one faith*? And is it being “narrow minded” to uphold the Biblical truth that there is only *one body*?

The scripture plainly teaches that there is *only one* of each of these seven spiritual entities. If that is what being “narrow minded” means, then I acknowledge that I am, indeed, “narrow minded.” Those who use the term “narrow minded” in a derogatory way are being judgmental and do not appreciate our efforts to abide by a “thus saith the Lord.”

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# The Conversion Of A Good Man

**Ron Cosby**

From the description of Luke and those who knew Cornelius, he was a good man. When a "good person" dies, we hear people say, "if anyone goes to heaven, he will, for he was such a good man." How do good people who do not have Jesus, stand before God? To answer this very difficult question, we need to turn to the Scriptures. Since Cornelius is obviously a good man, we ought to find our answer in his conversion.

Now there was a certain man in Caesarea, Cornelius by name, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, who gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always. He saw in a vision openly, as it were about the ninth hour of the day, an angel of God coming in unto him, and saying to him... fetch one Simon, who is surnamed Peter... who shall speak unto thee words, whereby thou shalt be saved, thou and all thy house (Act 10:1-5; 11:14).

## **Cornelius Was Lost**

Since Cornelius needed to hear words whereby he could be saved (Acts 11: 14), he was lost. We need to establish when salvation is obtained and what is essential and what is non-essential in obtaining salvation, making the proper distinction between essentials and peripheral matters.

## **When Was Cornelius Saved?**

We are expressly told that Cornelius was devout (Acts 10:2). Vine says that "devout" is derived from the Greek word that indicates "reverence exhibited especially in actions." Most of the world would certainly think that such a condition and characteristic as "devoutness" would constitute salvation. However, Cornelius—though devout—needed to hear words of salvation because he was lost.

Cornelius believed in God yet, at the time, he was unredeemed and in danger of eternal doom (Acts 10:2; 11:14). Therefore, the teaching of salvation by faith only is not biblically sound.

Cornelius "feared God." The Holy Spirit, through Luke, states it clearly: Cornelius "*feared* God" (Acts 10:2). From Acts 10:34-35, Peter correctly concludes that "God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him." This being so, Cornelius must have been saved. Wrong. He "feared God," but, at that time in his life he did not know what to do to work righteousness. He had to *hear* what to do.

Cornelius "gave much alms to the people." He was very generous and apparently had the kind of compassionate heart that God sought (Acts 10:2).

Not only did Cornelius pray, we are told that he "prayed always" (Acts 10:2). Now, since he was lost, though he was a praying man, it is obvious that we are not saved by prayer.

Among some of the miraculous happenings associated with Cornelius was the vision that he received (Acts 10:3). Many think that if a person has a vision, this is a sure sign of personal salvation. However, seeing and hearing the angelic being did not save this good man.

Cornelius wanted to *hear preaching*. He even invited others to hear the gospel. It is highly commendable when one wants to hear the preaching of the gospel, as did Cornelius. (Acts 10:8, 24). In fact, Cornelius is described as "waiting" to hear. He was enthusiastic and *eager* to learn how to be saved.

Cornelius had a respectful attitude and was just—had a good report of the Jews (Acts 10:22). It was unheard of for a Gentile to be so highly regarded and respected by the Jews in the first century. Surely such a one is saved, isn't he? Not according to Holy Writ (Acts 11:14).

Cornelius spoke in tongues, having received the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:45-46). But even speaking in tongues did not save Cornelius, nor was it a sign that he was already saved (Acts 11:14). This may sound strange in view of those who teach that the baptism of the Holy Spirit was for the salvation of the recipient.

### **What Are the Words Cornelius Had to Hear?**

All men must fear God and work righteousness (Acts 10:35; Rom. 1:16-17)—possess a godly attitude that is coupled with obedience to God—prescribed actions. Salvation is not all of grace or all of works. The salvation of Christ is of grace but it is also of obedient works.

He had to hear, believe and acknowledge certain facts pertaining to Jesus: Jesus did good; God was with him (Acts 10:38); Jesus was crucified (Acts 10:39); He arose from the grave (Acts 10:40, 41); these words also stressed future judgment (Acts 10:42); the wonderful news Peter preached to Cornelius was that he could have, "... remission of sins" through the name of Jesus (Acts 10:43). When Cornelius received the gift of the Holy Spirit, he had not believed in, or heard of, this Jesus because Peter had only "began to speak" (Acts 11:15). After receiving the Spirit, after hearing the gospel, after being baptized into Christ, he was saved.

Cornelius was obedient to all of heaven's message (Acts 10:47-48). It was at this point that Cornelius and his household were saved. Regardless of a person's goodness, it takes the blood of Jesus to wash away sins (Matt. 26:28; Jas. 1:18-21). Sinners contact the blood in water baptism (Rom. 6:3-4). Since remission of sins is tantamount to salvation, we see why Cornelius had to hear words whereby he could be saved (Acts 11:14). The remission of sins was obtained when Cornelius submitted to water baptism (Acts 2:38; 10:47, 48).

### **Conclusion**

People have trouble keeping their theology consistent. They argue that one cannot be saved by what he does, contending that salvation is by faith alone. However, the same people are the very ones to say at the death of a good neighbor, "He was such a good man. If he doesn't make it to heaven, no one will." Which stance correctly represents his theology? Faith only, or being good? Cornelius has taught us that neither position is biblical.

"[I]n none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved" (Acts 4:12 ASV). All men are lost without Christ, even those we might classify as "good men."

Every snowflake has a tiny piece of dust at its core. In the spiritual realm, that speck of dust—sin—no matter how small, needs to be removed. The blood of Christ is applied to the heart of an unbeliever, cleansing him from all sin. Not a speck of defilement remains, for God removes every stain and washes him even whiter than snow (Psa. 51:7).

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## **"Christ Sent Me Not To Baptize"**

**F. B. Srygley**

The above title is only part of a sentence taken from First Corinthians 1:17. The verse from which it was taken reads, "For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect."

In order to get this verse in its proper connection, the context should also be considered. Beginning with verse 12, the writer says,

Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name. And I baptized also the house of Stephanus: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other. For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel.

It should be noted that not one word was said about the design of baptism, or the position it occupies in the scheme of redemption. Many assume that since Christ sent Paul not to baptize, but to preach the gospel, baptism has no part in the salvation of man. Paul usually had a traveling companion with him. Timothy, who was with him much of the time, could have done the baptizing.

It took an inspired man then to preach the gospel. There was no New Testament



written then, and the people were dependent upon inspired men to preach the gospel. But anyone with the physical ability, and sense enough to lead one into the water and bury him, could do the baptizing. I know one debater who has a chart with this quotation: "Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel." He seems to think that as baptism is not mentioned in that text as a condition of salvation, it is, therefore, not essential to salvation. He does not look to any other place to find anything on the subject of salvation. According to his thinking, it is not mentioned there and, therefore, is no part of salvation. Strange reasoning, it appears to me.

Jesus, the Lord, spoke to Paul on the road to Damascus and said, "But rise and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom I now send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me" (Acts 26:16-18).

The Lord did call Paul to preach the gospel, but in preaching the gospel, which is the good news of salvation, he preached what man should do to be saved, for this salvation was conditional. Peter also—on the first Pentecost after the ascension of Christ—preached the gospel, and when the people were convicted of sin the record says,

Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, 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. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call (Acts 2:37-39).

The Gentile world was embraced in this call, but only those who accept the conditions are embraced in the promise. But some may say that Peter did not mention faith. No, but he did mention that which is equivalent to faith. In verse 36, he said, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." They could have known this only by faith, by believing it with all their hearts. Peter, therefore, preached faith, repentance, and baptism for the remission of sins. These are what an alien sinner should do in order to be saved from past sins.

In Romans 6, beginning with verse 3, the apostle said, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" Of course, this means into the benefits of His death. Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins (Heb. 9:22). It is only through the blood of Christ that sins can be forgiven. The death of Christ is, therefore, the procuring cause of salvation.

But when and how can sinners reach the benefits of His blood? The apostle continues, "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."

Notice that the new life begins at the resurrection from the grave of a burial in baptism. Christ died *for* our sins. Man should die *to* sin. Christ was raised from the grave. We too are raised from the grave of baptism. Why will men attempt to destroy the picture of salvation from sin to save a thing that is *not* taught in the New Testament?

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## Religious Authority

**Jerry C. Brewer**

When the pharmacist fills your prescription, you expect him to follow the exact standard of your doctor's orders. Would you accept a medicine that contains more or less than the doctor ordered? If the pharmacist says he "*feels* aspirin will do as well as the antibiotic prescribed for your pneumonia," would you accept that? Of course not! But a lot of people are like that pharmacist when it comes to religion. Asked how one knows

his life is acceptable to God, the answer is often, “Oh, I just *feel* I am saved.” But God says “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Prov. 14:12). Man’s feelings and opinions mean nothing when it comes to our relationship with God. We’ll not be judged by what *we think* or *feel*, but by the word of God (John 12:48).

Most people reject God’s standard of authority, choosing to live by their “feelings” instead. But the Bible says what we do in religion must be *authorized* by the Christ. “Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ” (Col. 3:17). To do a thing “in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ” means He has *authorized* us to do that thing. We can’t simply pick out a religion that suits us and say, “this is in the name of Christ.” Unless Christ has *authorized* in the Bible what we preach and practice, we are not acting in his name. Jesus has all authority, (Matt. 28:18), and for our religion to be right with God, our preaching and practice must be ordered by *His* authority. To do otherwise brings God’s wrath upon us. “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). To please God is to act as He has commanded, not as we *think*.

Neither does God’s *silence* grant us religious authority. Many people believe God accepts anything we do in religion, so long as, “He didn’t say *not* to do it.” The doctor may not have said *not* to substitute aspirin for antibiotics, but that *doesn’t authorize* the pharmacist to make that substitution. That could be deadly!

Two men in the Old Testament lost their lives because they did something which God *hadn’t* specifically forbidden.

Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which *he commanded them not*. And there went out a fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord (Lev. 10:1-2).

They were authorized to offer incense in the tabernacle but their offering had to be according to God’s command—*not* according to His silence. They offered *strange* fire which “God *commanded them not*.” God had authorized fire to be taken from the altar of incense which stood before the veil in the tabernacle. He didn’t say not to use fire from another source, so they may have reasoned that the source was unimportant. The fire they used burned as well as fire from the altar, but they failed to obey God’s expressed command. They died because they acted by what God *didn’t* say instead of what He *had* said. So it is with us. Whatever we do in religion must be as Christ has authorized in the New Testament, or our service to him will be rejected.

Jesus said, “All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth” (Matthew 28:18). The religion of Jesus Christ is based upon His authority as the Son of God and His will for all men is clearly revealed in the New Testament. Christianity is the religion of Biblical authority. The Bible is the only way we can know of God’s love for man, Christ’s sacrificial death on the cross, the one true church He established, and what God would have us to do in order to become Christians and live the Christian life. The New Testament is the expression of God’s will through Christ and those who reject the Bible’s teaching reject the authority of Christ (Luke 10:16).

All of us will one day face the word of God in judgment. Jesus said, “He that rejecteth me and receiveth not my word hath one that judgeth him. The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day” (John 12:48). The word of God is not only our guide for living here, but it will be the standard by which Christ will judge us. Thus it behooves all men to not only *know* the scriptures, but to *live* by them as well. When we stand before Christ at the last day it won’t make any difference what we *thought* or *felt* was right. But it will make a difference how we considered and handled the Bible—God’s inspired word.

When Paul wrote that “all scripture is given by the inspiration of God” in Second Timothy 3:16, he used a Greek word for “inspiration” that means “God-breathed.” The very words of the Bible came from God—they were breathed out from Him. They were written down by men, but they were given to those men from God. That’s what Paul meant when he said, “Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth” (1 Cor. 2:13). The words of the Bible did not

originate with men, but with God. The Bible is absolute truth and teaches what it teaches regardless of what you or I *think* it teaches. God meant what He said in the Bible a thousand years ago and He still means the same thing. His word is unchanged and unchangeable. What you or I *think* it teaches doesn't change its meaning in the least.

Our obligation is to know the truth in order to be free from sin and have the hope of eternal life. Jesus said, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32). Since being His disciple depends upon our abiding in His word, Jesus implies here that we are able to learn, and know, His word revealed in the Bible. Those who want to be saved from sin are instructed by that word to hear and believe it (Rom. 10:17), repent of their sins (Luke 13:3), confess their faith in Christ (Acts 8:37), and be baptized into Christ for the remission of sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38).

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## “Baptized For The Dead”

**R. L. Whiteside**

Dear Brother Whiteside: Please explain 1 Pet. 4:5-6; also 1 Cor. 15:29. I have a neighbor who is a Mormon. I am enclosing her literature which will explain why I want to you explain the above references... They believe in faith, repentance, and baptism, just as we do; but they also teach baptism for the dead. She sent money to their headquarters in Utah, and had her deceased mother baptized!

From the literature sent, I copy the following:

Here the seeker after truth may properly inquire, 'If it is necessary for all men and women to be baptized, what will become of the good people who have died without that privilege?' To this the reply of the Scriptures is that the dead who died without hearing the gospel will have it preached to them (1 Pet. 4:5-6). They who obey it will be saved, but they who reject it will be condemned, as though they were in the flesh.

'But the dead person cannot be baptized,' says one. Very true; but God is just. In His wisdom He has provided a way in which the dead can be baptized for, by those who are in the flesh, as shown by the apostle Paul in his question, 'Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead...' (1 Cor. 15:29). His question plainly shows that 'baptism for the dead' was both believed in and practiced by the early Christians.

According to the foregoing excerpt, the dead will have the gospel preached to them. "They who obey it will be saved, but they who reject it will be condemned." Evidently, then, if a dead person rejects the gospel, he will be lost, no matter what is done on earth among the living. Here, then, is a puzzle: How can the Mormon know whether the dead person, for whom he is being baptized, accepted or rejected the gospel? Surely baptism for a dead person who rejects the gospel would do such dead person no good, for they plainly say that the dead person who rejects the gospel will be condemned. In trying to solve this puzzle the Mormon will involve himself in some others. But, to the passages cited:

"Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the living and the dead. For unto this end was the gospel preached even to the dead, that they might be judged indeed according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit." (1 Pet. 4:5-6 ASV). Macknight gives this translation of verse 6: "Besides, for this purpose the gospel hath been preached even to the dead, that although they might be condemned indeed by men in the flesh, yet they might live eternally by God in the spirit."

It is repeatedly said, as in verse 5, that God will judge the living and the dead; but it is plainly taught that the dead will be raised before they are judged. Peter says the gospel was preached to the dead. Notice the difference between Peter's was preached and the

Mormon's "*will be* preached." What Peter was talking about had already been done. But even if it were said that the gospel will be preached to the dead, it would not necessarily mean that the gospel would be preached to them while they are dead. The dead will be judged, but not till they are raised from the dead.

But the doctrine of preaching to the dead is absurd. Preach to the dead? Who but a crazy person would stand over the graves of dead people and preach to them? "Oh, but the gospel will be preached to the spirits of these dead bodies." I know what is claimed, but I also know that the spirits of these dead bodies are not dead—the body is dead. Preaching to living spirits is not preaching to dead folks! Peter was talking about dead folks to whom the gospel had been preached while they were living. The story of the rich man and Lazarus (Lk. 16:19-31) shows that the fate of a person is settled when he dies. There can be no crossing over from the state of torment to the state of bliss.

First Corinthians 15:29 has already been quoted. Paul was proving that there is to be a resurrection of the dead. In this verse he raises the question, "If the dead are not raised up, what shall they do who are baptized for the dead?" To make it fit the Mormon practice, it should read like this: "If the dead are not raised, what shall the dead do for whom someone has been baptized?" But the question does not concern the dead, but those who have been baptized for the dead—what shall they do? Well, even if the dead are not raised, the Mormon could keep on collecting money for being baptized for them! It appears that that is one thing those who are baptized for the dead do.

The Mormons make a mess of the passage, and go contrary to all the rest of the teaching of the Bible concerning baptism. Some of the trouble is cleared away if we notice the fact that the term *the dead* is often used to signify the dead state—that is, death. "Resurrection from the dead" is a resurrection from death—from the dead state. For the Jews to accept Christ is as life from the dead—their state of spiritual death (Rom. 11:15). The reader will notice that there is a difference between the resurrection of the dead and the "resurrection from the dead."

People who are baptized are baptized for, or in respect to, the dead state. Now, if the dead are not raised, what do they do, or what do they accomplish, by being baptized for this dead state? This view of the matter harmonizes with all that the Bible says about baptism.

The following facts should have weight:

1. Christianity is an individual matter. No one can believe for another, nor repent for another, nor be baptized for another.
2. If the fact that baptism is necessary makes it necessary for a living person to be baptized for a dead person, then someone must believe and repent for a dead person, for they are as necessary as baptism.
3. We are commanded to baptize penitent believers, but nowhere are we commanded to be baptized for dead people.
4. There is no historic evidence for such a practice as the Mormons advocate existed at Corinth. If it had existed, and Paul used it as an *argumentum ad hominem*, that would not prove the practice correct. He used war, the equivalent for war, the races, and even boxing, as illustrations, but did not endorse such things.

It is hardly correct to say that the Mormons believe in faith, repentance, and baptism, just as we do. Their faith is not the same as my faith. They have fixed up a sort of material god, and they believe in Joe Smith as a prophet, and the *Book of Mormon* as an inspired book; and they believe that there are now inspired prophets, and that no part of the Bible is binding upon any generation, save as it may be taught or bound by some living inspired prophet.

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# Bible Truth Vs. False Doctrine: Mark 16:14-16

**Roelf L. Ruffner**

The New Testament of Jesus Christ is a marvelous document intended to instill faith and to save our souls.

And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name (John 20:30-31).

But God knew that Satan would hate the Bible and attempt to stop its influence. Satan does this, first of all, by emphasizing the commandments of men over the word of God (Matt. 15:9). Second, by causing the untaught and unstable to "wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction" (2 Pet. 3:16). Third, by producing an outright lie that men believe rather than the Bible (2 Thess. 2:11-12).

Satan's minions are false teachers who either ignorantly or with full knowledge pervert the word of God (cf. Matt. 7:15; Jude 4). Yet if a false doctrine were formulated this very hour the Bible would already have an answer for it (2 Tim. 3:16-17). What a blessed thought that is! "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil... And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph. 6: 11, 17).

Let us examine Mark 16:14-16 and see how it refutes many false doctrines with Bible truth.

## **Unbelief Is Mental Blindness (Verse 14)**

The Lord appeared to the eleven in late afternoon/early evening on the Sunday He was resurrected from the dead. He ensured earlier that day that there was ample evidence for His disciples to believe. Notice this evidence:

1. The testimony of the women who had seen the empty tomb in the Garden of Gethsemane (including Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of the apostle James (Mark 16:1).
2. The appearance of Jesus to Simon Peter (Luke 24:34; 1 Cor. 15: 5).
3. The appearance of Jesus to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24).
4. The empty tomb of Jesus witnessed by John and Peter (John 20).
5. The testimony of the bribed guards of Jesus tomb (Matt. 28).

In spite of the evidence the apostles did not believe. Jesus strongly rebuked (upbraided) them for their unbelief and hardness of heart (Mark 16:14). There is nothing wrong with sincere doubt and honest skepticism when it comes to religion. Jesus welcomes it. At this same meeting with the apostles Jesus proclaims, "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have" (Luke 24:39). The apostles and early evangelists encouraged evaluation of their message (Acts 17:11). Unbelief in Jesus or any other doctrine of the New Testament is not the result of a lack of evidence. Rather, unbelief is the result of mental blindness. For some it is their wish to maintain a sinful lifestyle. Others build a wall of pride and religious prejudice between themselves and God's truth. Yet I believe that, for many, intellectual laziness is the barrier. They do not want take the time and effort to find out the Truth. "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty (2 Pet. 1:16).

## **There Is Only One Gospel (Verse 15)**

Fifty days after the Lord arose He ascended to the Father. Before He ascended, He gave to His disciples what is called the Great Commission. The Gospel (good news) would no longer be limited to the Jews but would be for all creatures. It offers the greatest hope for mankind (Rom. 1:16). Yet other religious groups claim a counterfeit gospel which challenges the Gospel of Jesus and the apostles.

Islam claims Mohammed received the Koran revealed to him by an angel during the 7th Century A.D. The Latter Day Saints teach that an angel gave golden plates to a



teenager name Joseph Smith, Jr. of Palmyra, New York, who translated them into the Book of Mormon in 1823—their so-called "*another* testament of Jesus Christ." But we are in deep trouble with God if we try to dilute or even add to the Gospel.

"I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another gospel; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. 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. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed (Gal. 1:6-9).

As one drop of mud contaminates the whole glass of water so man-made doctrines and "revelations" pervert the Gospel of Christ (Gal. 5:9). We have the pure Gospel today found in the pages of the New Testament (Gal. 1:11).

### **In Salvation, Belief Does Not Preclude Obedience (Verse 16)**

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16). A grammatical diagram of this factual statement of Jesus Christ reveals that He is the simple subject modified by the limiting restrictive clause—"that believeth and is baptized." The simple, unmodified predicate, "shall be saved" refers to this same clause—"that believeth and is baptized."

Who is the *he* who will be saved? Not just anyone will be saved. According to this verse it is the person who believes and is baptized. Much of the religious world wants to delete the word "baptized" from Mark 16:16. For them, obedience to Christ's plan of salvation comes *after* salvation. They say one is baptized *after* the fact, as testimony of their salvation. That is adulterating the words of Jesus.

The apostles and evangelists of the New Testament taught that baptism is essential *for* salvation (Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; Rom. 6:3-6; Col. 2:12; 1 Pet. 3:21). Other folks opine that the lack of the word baptized in the second half of this verse annuls its effect in the first half. In the Day of Judgment the unbaptized believer will be just as damned as the unbaptized nonbeliever.

To be baptized is as linked to God's pardon as belief. For example, consider this illustration: He who eats and digests his food will live. He who does not eat his food will die. Does the failure to mention digestion of food in the second half of the statement mean that is not necessary to being alive? Of course not! False doctrine always falls before the truth of God's word.

Speaking of such unbelief the apostle Paul wrote, "...yea, let God be true, but every man a liar" (Rom. 3:4). Each of us will stand before Christ and be called to account for what we believe or disbelieve, what we obey or disobey. "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (Jn. 12:48).

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## **"Preach The Preaching That I Bid Thee"**

### **B. C. Goodpasture**

God does not commission men to preach without telling them what to say. He does not leave them free to select anything which a passing whim might suggest. Men, in light of their own limited wisdom, are incapable of formulating a system of dependable teaching. "Oh 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 ASV). Men, apart from the leadership of divine revelation, have ever gone farther and farther into the meshes of sin and paganism.

When the Lord sent Jonah, the son of Ammitai, to Nineveh, He commanded him to "preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee" (Jonah 3:2). The prophet was not left to his own will and resources to originate a message for the Ninevites. His instructions were specific. The Lord did not, in a general, indefinite way, tell him to "preach" to Nineveh. Rather, He said specifically, "preach... the preaching that I bid thee."

Jonah was limited to what God said. He could not add; he could not subtract; he could not devitalize his message by "toning it down." He must thunder into the ears of the

Ninevites the severe and startling message, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown" (Jonah 3:4). This very thing he did on reaching "that great city." His preaching produced results.

The messengers of God, whether human or divine, or both, have always been limited to the will of God. They have had, and have, freedom to speak only within the will of God. Of Jesus it was written, "Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me), to do thy will, O God" (Heb. 10:7).

Jesus said, "I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me" (John 5:30). Again, "My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent me" (John 7:16). "As my Father hath taught me, I speak these things" (John 8:28). "I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, He gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak" (John 12:49).

These Scriptures show conclusively that Jesus spoke and did only those things which the Father commanded. His freedom of action to do and teach was limited by God's will. The Spirit of the Lord was upon Him, because the Lord had anointed Him to preach. But He, even though He was the only begotten Son of God, could preach only the good tidings the Father authorized Him to proclaim. God was the Author of His message.

The Holy Spirit is limited in His teaching to the will of the Father. In giving the promise of the coming of the Spirit, Jesus said of Him,

The Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you... He shall guide you into all the truth; for he shall not speak from himself; but what things so ever he shall hear, these shall he speak: and he shall declare unto you the things that are to come (John 14:26; 16:13 ASV).

The Holy Spirit, as a teacher, is limited to the will of God, "what things so ever he shall hear," in His instruction. Apostles and angels, likewise, can proclaim only the message of God. "But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema" (Gal. 1:8 ASV). The curse of God rests upon the angel or man who dares to deviate from the teaching of the gospel.

If God will not permit apostle, or angel, or the Holy Spirit, or even His own Son, to depart from the message He has authorized, it certainly should not be difficult for us to understand that we are not allowed the freedom of setting aside or of perverting the gospel of Christ. God has commissioned us to preach the gospel, and we are not at liberty to preach anything else. We cannot mutilate the gospel, except at the peril of our own souls and of those who hear.

This gospel is the faith once for all delivered unto the saints (Jude 3). It is the sound doctrine (Titus 2:1). It is the only word that is able to build us up and give us an inheritance among all those who are sanctified (Acts 20:32) and it must be faithfully transmitted from one generation to another. "The things which thou hast heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2 ASV). It must be taught fearlessly and faithfully. "Speak thou the things which befit the sound doctrine" (Titus 2:1 ASV). "Hold the pattern of sound words which thou hast heard from me" (2 Tim. 1:13 ASV). And, finally

If any man teacheth a different doctrine, and consenteth not to sound words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is puffed up, knowing nothing, but doting about questionings and disputes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, wranglings of men corrupted in mind and bereft of the truth, supposing that godliness is a way of gain (1 Tim. 6:3-5 ASV).

All faithful and sound preachers proclaim the doctrine, or teaching, of Christ. They are, therefore, doctrinal preachers. Every preacher that God has authorized was a doctrinal preacher—he proclaimed the teaching of God. The time has come when many professed Christians do not relish "doctrinal preaching"—the very kind, and, in fact, the only kind that is divinely authorized. No one can be a faithful preacher who is not a

doctrinal preacher. The kind of preaching that is needed first, last, and all the time is doctrinal preaching—preaching that condemns sin in every form, preaching that sets forth the whole truth, preaching that distinguishes the New Testament church from the various denominational bodies. This kind of preaching will not please worldly-minded church members, but it will please God and save lost men and women. Regardless of circumstances or consequences, we must "preach... the preaching that I bid thee."

A man's usefulness as a gospel preacher is determined much more by his knowledge of God's word and his willingness to proclaim it boldly and faithfully than by his academic attainments and his ability to please men.

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## **"Preach The Word"**

**Fred E. Dennis**

"Preach the Word"—one of the most serious charges ever given to a mortal man—is found in Second Timothy 4:2. This charge was given by one of the greatest preachers of all time, the apostle Paul. It was given by inspiration. It was given to a young gospel preacher by the name of Timothy, and to all subsequent gospel preachers. It is a solemn charge. It was given before God and the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us hear the charge. Here it is: "Preach the word." The curse of high heaven rests upon the preacher who will not do this.

What does it mean to preach the word? In Act 8:4 we are told about the church in Jerusalem being scattered abroad. It is said that they went everywhere "preaching the word." In the next verse it says that one of these preachers was a man by the name of Philip. It says that he went to the city of Samaria and preached Christ unto them. They preached the word and they preached Christ. When we preach Christ, we are preaching the word. In Acts 8:35 we are told that Philip opened his mouth and preached Christ.

In this sermon we want to give some substantial reasons for preaching the word. There is never a birth without first a begetting. This is just as true in the spiritual realm as it is in the physical. How is this begetting done in the spiritual realm? In telling about how the brethren in Corinth were begotten, the inspired Paul says: "I have begotten you through the gospel." (1 Cor. 4:15.) We see how it was done in that case. Again, in James 1:18 we are told: "Of his own, will begat he us with the word of truth." And then once again, in First Peter 1:23 we have this: "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." Now we can see there would be no spiritual begetting unless the word of God is preached. This is what brings it about. We are not surprised that Paul would say: "For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" (1 Cor. 9:16.) He had to preach it. In the next verse he says: "For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me."

Another reason for preaching the word is because this is the way faith is produced. Faith is a fundamental. It is impossible to please God without it. (Heb. 11:6.) Many sincere souls have no intelligent comprehension of how faith is brought about. They need to be taught that faith comes by hearing the word of God. This is plainly stated in Romans 10:17. In the absence of the word of God there can be no faith. How important to know that every act we do and every step we take in matters religious are founded upon a "thus saith the Lord"! If we do something that God has not said one word about, we do it without faith. In Acts 15 we read about an important meeting of some inspired elders and apostles. They had come together to consider certain matters. Speeches were made. One of them was made by the apostle Peter. He told his listeners how that God had made choice among the apostles that the Gentiles by his mouth should hear the word of the gospel and believe. You see, their faith was to be founded upon hearing the word of the gospel. Acceptable faith comes in no other way. It does not come by hearing the doctrines and commandments of men. There is nothing mysterious about it. The mystery is all cleared up by the simple statements of God's word making it plain how faith is brought about. My friends, may I plead with you to take no step in religion until you are assured by the word of God that he commands you to take

it.

We cannot see God with impure hearts. Jesus says that the pure in heart shall see God. (Matt. 5:8.) This purity of heart is brought about by the word of God. Referring once again to Peter's speech in Jerusalem, we hear him saying in Acts 15:9 that the Lord had purified the hearts of the Gentiles by faith. And this same inspired apostle wrote in First Peter 1:22 that our souls are purified in obeying the truth. Purity of soul is brought about by obedience to the gospel of Christ. Our souls will never be made free from sin until we obey the word of God.

Christians are a sanctified people. Many have strange ideas about sanctification. These strange ideas do not originate in the Bible. They are the figments of the imaginations of men. In John 17:17 Jesus prays that we might be sanctified through the truth, and then hastens to say that the word of God is truth. In John 15:3 Jesus says that we are made clean through the word. Being made free from sin by virtue of our obedience to the word of God is what the Bible means by sanctification. This is sanctification.

We hear much talk about converting power. I wonder what this power is. Let us read Psalm 19:7: "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple." The word of God is God's converting power. It brings about our salvation. The great apostle Paul wrote: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." (Rom. 1:16.) If we want folks converted to Christ, we must teach them the gospel of Christ. Of course, if we want them converted to something else, it will be necessary to preach something else besides the word of God. To convert people to some peculiar theory or some human religious organization it becomes necessary to preach something besides the word of God. Then we shall have to leave the word of God and begin to preach human doctrines. But if our aim is to save souls by converting them to the Lord, all we need is the word of God. How full of it we should be, and how humbly we should preach it to dying men and women!

The word of God is our guide and light. It is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. (Psa. 119:105.) In the verse before this we are told we get understanding through the word; and when we have this understanding, it causes us to hate every false way. When you see "religious people" who can throw their arms around anything, you may rest assured that they do not know the word of God. It is ignorance of the word that causes people to indorse most anything that men teach. The word of God causes us to hate every false way. It does not cause us to hate people, but it causes us to hate falsehood. How could it be otherwise? The intelligent student of the Bible knows what falsehood will do for the souls of men. Well does he know it will bring those poor souls down to hell. Is it any wonder he would hate the false way and love those who are being deluded by false teachers? Sometimes their love and zeal are misunderstood by the very one whom they seek to help. This is one of Satan's devices to bring about their eternal condemnation in hell. My friends, the only thing in this wide, wide world that will save our souls is obedience to the gospel of Christ. May we preach it in season and out of season.

We must preach the word to our friends and loved ones while they live, and then after they are gone we can continue to preach the word to the ones who are left behind. If the loved ones died in the Lord, we can point the remaining loved ones to the great and exceeding promises found in the word. We can comfort the bereaved with the word of God. Of course, there is no comfort concerning them who die out of the Lord.

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words (1 Thess. 4:13-18).

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# **“What Saith The Scriptures?”**

**Harrell Davidson**

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From a reader of ***The Gospel Preceptor*** comes this question as written: “Do demons possess people now also? If not why not? Is world Hystory and Archeology attesting things happened in old and new testament books?”

Thanks for your concerns and the questions that you sent. All questions are appreciated and will be answered in the order in which they are received.

Your question on demon possession has been discussed over and over without much satisfaction to many. Some have taken the position that demons were disembodied spirits that took their leave from the deceased and entered into a living individual thus possessed them. For this view there is not one Scripture to support it. Regardless, as far as the writer knows, there no other scriptural answers reading the origin of the demons.

The earliest that we begin to read of such is in Matthew 4:24 where the Scripture records this of our Lord: “And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatick, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them.”

The word “demon” is the correct translation of the word “devils” in this verse. It means, and is, an evil spirit. Demon possession could, in some, give them extra ordinary strength as in Mark 5:4, “Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him.”

Again, demons could rob one of his own strength and give him strength beyond comprehension as in Matthew 8:28-32,

And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way. And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time? And there was a good way off from them an herd of many swine feeding. So the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine. And he said unto them, Go. And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters.

Among other things it is interesting to note that the devils (demons) knew “Jesus thou Son of God” which is more than many in society today know or admit.

In Matthew 12:22 we note, “Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw.” Here it is the case that the demon took away the ability to speak or hear. This robs one of their heart also. The Lord healed him. Mark writes, “And were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak” indicating the ability that Jesus had to cast out the demons and heal individuals who were ill.

In Acts 16 Paul was at Philippi (vs. 12) and went to the riverside when he met Lydia and her household. Lydia and her household were baptized into Christ (vs. 15). The record says, “And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying. The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation. And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour” (Acts 16:16-18). Back in the mid 1970’s there was much interest in demonism, witchcraft, tea



leaf reading, fortune tellers and more. The writer often spoke on lectureships where this was the theme. There were so many forms of the same kind of nonsense.

This damsel brought her masters much money with her services. Luke, the writer of the Book of Acts, does not say that she was literally doing those things only she was making her masters much money. They at least, and those that used her services, thought she could do those things. Paul, an apostle cast the demon out by the power of the Lord.

All such cases ceased at the conclusion of the apostolic age. They appear to accompany the time of the miraculous, and ceased when miracles ceased, as Paul said they would in First Corinthians 13: 8-10. Miracles accompanied this period to confirm the Word and their design was for the unbeliever. It is our position that we are not demon possessed as of old. If we were it would take a miracle to cast such out. Miracles have ceased as First Corinthians 13 points out.

This does not mean that the devil is not active today, but he can take over one's life if one will permit such. Peter wrote, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8). If we will cast our care on the Lord (1 Pet. 5:7) we can overcome anything the devil tempts us to do.

Regarding your second question history and archeology confirming various things mentioned in the Bible, may we say that we have never been discouraged by the truth of the various sciences among us. True science, for that matter, *any* absolute truth will only show the Bible to be the absolute truth in every field of endeavor. For those who believe God's Word it is the final Word on any given biblical subject.

**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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## Errors On The Afterlife

**Jerry C. Brewer**

"Happy Birthday in Heaven my sweet Daddy. I like to think that mama has made you a pineapple upside down cake, you and Dave are playing Dominoes, then finishing the night pickin' the guitar and playin' fiddle. I'm a little jealous. I love you and miss you, but thank you for a beautiful life, and I'll be celebrating yours today."

The above quote from a friend's Face Book page manifests some of the errors and Biblical ignorance that are often expressed when a loved one dies. Although they are well meaning, such sentiments are but wishful thinking, and have no basis in God's word. There is absolutely nothing any person on earth can know about the hereafter, except as it is revealed in the Bible. Consider these erroneous statements:

### **"Daddy (or Mama) Has Gone To Heaven"**

While we all want to think the best for our loved ones, this is false, according to the Bible. When one dies, he goes neither to eternal heaven nor eternal hell. That is the thrust of Jesus' account of the rich man and Lazarus, in which He pulled back the misty veil to give us a brief glimpse of man's existence after death.

There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: and there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table; moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, 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. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou

art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us that would come from thence. Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead (Luke 16:19-31).

When one dies, he goes to "hades" which is the unseen realm of disembodied spirits. The word "hell" in this passage is the Greek word *hades* and should have been translated as that. The place of eternal torment is referred to in the New Testament with the Greek word *gehenna*. The rich man and Lazarus were both in Hades, but the rich man was in "torments" and Lazarus was in "Abraham's bosom" and neither could cross to the other side. There is no second chance after death. "Abraham's bosom" is the term the Jews used for "paradise" and is where Jesus went upon His death (Luke 23:42-43). When Jesus was resurrected, his spirit returned from hades to His physical body and when He ascended to heaven His physical body was changed to a spiritual one, as ours shall be when we return from hades at the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:51-52 cf 1 John 3:2). The only person who ever ascended to heaven after death is Jesus Christ, and that was only after he rested in Abraham's bosom (paradise) and was raised from the dead, as all men shall be at the last day (John 5:28-29). Even if Mama or Daddy is in Abraham's bosom, they are not in heaven.

#### **"Grandpa Is Watching Over Us From Heaven"**

First, this statement is wishful thinking, at best, and downright error, at worst. "Grandpa" isn't in heaven. He's in hades awaiting the resurrection and final judgment, as noted above. In the second place, have you considered what you are saying when you make that statement? What does it take for a being from heaven to be aware of all occurrences on earth? It takes omniscience. To say "Grandpa is looking down on us" ascribes omniscience to "Grandpa". Only God is omniscient and "Grandpa" is not God.

The dead have no knowledge of what happens on earth. They are conscious, as were Lazarus and the rich man, but their knowledge of earthly things is gone. Solomon wrote, "For the living know that they shall die; but the dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is under the sun" (Eccl. 9:5-6).

Notice the phrase, "under the sun." What does "under the sun" mean? That phrase refers to the things of this life, those things done on the earth, and Solomon employs that phrase 27 times in the book of Ecclesiastes. His thesis in that book is the vanity, or emptiness, of all things of this life, and when he says, the dead have no "portion forever in anything that is under the sun," he means the dead, though still conscious in hades, have no knowledge of earthly matters, nor do they any longer possess things on earth. They are as unaware of earthly activities as you are unaware of what takes place in your house when you go shopping.

#### **"Daddy's Hunting Deer In Heaven"**

This is one of the more foolish statements that has no Bible basis. They who say such things obviously view heaven as some sort of glorified "resort." Jesus clearly taught that *all* earthly relationships and activities will cease after death. Matthew records a question the Sadducees—who did not believe in the resurrection or spirits—asked Jesus, and His answer to them. They posed their question in a hypothetical story which they thought would create a dilemma for the Lord. They said a woman married a man who died, and his brother took her for his wife, as the Law of Moses commanded. In their story,

...the man had six brothers and they all died, leaving her to the next, until they had all died. And last of all the woman died also. Therefore in the resurrection, whose wife shall she be of the seven? For they all had her. Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the

power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven” (Matt. 22:27-30).

Marital relationships, designed by God for earthly life, will end with earthly life. There will be no marriage in heaven, and all other earthly relationships will end as well. Heaven is not merely an extension of earthly life. “Daddy” could not hunt deer in heaven, because no animals will be in heaven. Animals are not living souls that were created in God’s image, as was man. God breathed into man the breath of life and man became a living soul (Gen. 1:26; 2:7). He did not create animals in His image. The spirit of man goes upward when his body returns to the ground and the live essence (the spirit) of animals goes downward. “Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?” (Eccl. 3:21).

Every earthly relationship on earth ceases at death, including all activities associated with those relationships. Neither Paradise nor Heaven will be a “Glorified Resort/Fishing-Hunting Lodge/Golf Course” or any other recreational activity in which we engage in this life “under the sun”.

Heaven is a place of glory that the mind of man cannot grasp. Even the description we have of it is figurative, using things known to man in this life, but those things are not literal—the street of pure gold (Rev. 21:21), the “pure river of the water of life” (Rev. 22:1-2). All of heaven's descriptions in the Bible are couched in terms the mind of man can grasp because, so long as we live in the flesh, we cannot fully understand the glories, the spiritual nature, and the eternal wonder of that home of the soul. We simply trust Him who cannot lie (Titus 1:2) to do what He has promised for the faithful.

When a loved one dies, let us not speculate about earthly things and say things that have no basis in the Bible. When ebon darkness washes over the soul at a loved one's death, let us simply humble ourselves before God, “casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you” (1 Pet. 5:7).

*“Does Jesus care when I’ve said goodbye  
To the dearest on earth to me?  
When my sad heart aches til it nearly breaks,  
Is it aught to Him, does He see?  
O, yes, He cares, I know He cares.  
His heart is touched with my grief.  
When the days are weary, the long nights dreary  
I know my Savior cares.”*

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## “Another Testament Of Christ?”

**Michael Hatcher**

The Mormon church has a slick advertising blitz to market its cult. In those advertisements they offer what they refer to as “another testament of Jesus Christ.” That supposed “other testament” is The Book of Mormon. Is the Book of Mormon “another testament of Jesus Christ,” or is it another fraud upon people in the name of religion?

The Mormons claim to believe the Bible as God's Word. With this in mind, let us see what the Bible teaches. Peter writes, “According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue” (2 Pet. 1:3). God, by His power, gave unto the apostles *all* things that pertain to life and godliness. The apostles wrote these things down (Eph. 3:3-5) so we can have the same understanding as they. Thus, in the Bible, we have all that we need. We do not need “another testament,” The Book Of Mormon.

Paul writes, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Paul makes two claims about the Bible which are important in this study. God, through Paul, states that through the proper use of the Bible an individual can be perfect. The word perfect is from the Greek word *artio* (*artios*) which means complete or fitted. Is The Book Of

Mormon or "another testament" needed if the Bible alone makes us perfect? The answer is *no*!

The other point is that the Bible furnishes us to all good works. If the Bible furnishes us to all good works, then what good works can The Book Of Mormon reveal to us that is in addition to what the Bible gives? The answer is, *nothing*! Again, we see that we do not need "another testament" of Jesus Christ—The Book Of Mormon—we have everything we need.

We must also consider the apostles and Christians during the first century. Did they have access to The Book Of Mormon? They did not! According to The Book Of Mormon, "the last of the Nephite historians, sealed the sacred record, and hid it up unto the Lord, to be brought forth in the latter days, as predicted by the voice of God through his ancient prophets. In A.D. 1827, this same Moroni, then a resurrected personage, delivered the engraved plates to Joseph Smith." Thus, before 1827 The Book Of Mormon was unknown to man. The question naturally arises: Were the apostles and early Christians saved? If they were saved then we do not need The Book Of Mormon to be saved today. Those in the New Testament period were saved—they did not have The Book Of Mormon. Therefore we do not need The Book Of Mormon. It is not a book that one needs today to be saved. It did not come from Christ.

Another important aspect in considering whether The Book Of Mormon is "another testament of Jesus Christ" is to look at the book itself. The Mormons, today, claim that the book is inspired of God. Yet, The Book Of Mormon claims that the writers wrote from their own knowledge, *not* God's knowledge. "Yea, I make a record in the language of my father, which consists of the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians. And I know that the record which I make is true; and I make it with mine own hand; and I make it according to my knowledge." (1 Nephi 1:2-3; see also 1 Nephi 19:6; Jacob 1:2; 7:26; Mormon 9:31-33). It is so filled with mistakes that it finally gives a blessing upon those who "shall not condemn it because of the imperfections which are in it" (Mormon 8:12). Surely, we cannot seriously consider this the work of God and God-inspired men.

Consider the difference between that and God's Word recorded in the Bible. "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord" (1 Cor. 14:37). "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Pet. 1:20-21). Quite a contrast!

There are also absurdities within the book—absurdities that would not come from an all-knowing, all-wise being as God. We find one such absurdity in Ether 2:16-25 where God instructs Jared to build a boat or barge. They were to build these barges "according to the instructions of the Lord." The bottom, sides, top, and when the door was shut, were all "tight like unto a dish." Jared has to remind God that the people need air or they would die, and they will need light to steer the barge. To provide the air in this barge God, instructs Jared to make a hole in the top and bottom of the barge and when they need air to unstop the hole. When water starts coming in the hole they are to stop it up so they will not die in the flood. Compare this with God's instructions to Noah in the building the ark (Gen. 6:14-16). The author of the Bible is obviously not the simpleton who wrote the "other" so-called "testament of Jesus Christ."

If this book is from God, it would be free of mistakes. When one studies The Book Of Mormon, he finds many mistakes. One glaring mistake is the birthplace of Jesus. Alma 7:10 declares, "And behold, he shall be born of Mary, at Jerusalem which is the land of our forefathers, she being a virgin, a precious and chosen vessel, who shall be overshadowed and conceive by the power of the Holy Ghost, and bring forth a son, yea, even the Son of God." This has Jesus being born in Jerusalem. All who know the Bible know that Jesus was born of the virgin Mary in Bethlehem (Matt. 2:1), not Jerusalem. Surely, a book from God would not and could not make such an obvious mistake. We find another glaring mistake in Alma. Because of these individuals' belief in Christ, "And those who did belong to the church were faithful; yea, all those who were true believers in Christ took upon them, gladly, the name of Christ, or Christians as they were called, because of their belief in Christ who should come" (Alma 46:15). The Book of



Mormon has this taking place in 73 B.C. in America. Notice that he speaks of people belonging to the church and being called Christians. Yet the Bible teaches that Jesus had not established the church at this time. Jesus taught that He would build (future tense) the church (Matt. 16:18). Luke records that the name "Christian" was first used in Antioch (Acts 11:26). This is just another of the many blunders in The Book of Mormon. This book is not from God. It is an addition to God's Word (Rev. 22:18; Gal. 1:6-9; 2 John 9) and must be rejected.

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## False Views Of Divorcement

### H. Leo Boles

The influence of sentiment has led many into error with respect to the breaking of the marriage bond. It seems that those who have studied this question have gone to two extremes. One extreme is that the bond of union cannot be severed except by death of one of the parties, and the other extreme is that there is a multitude of causes which justify the severance of the marriage relation.

Both of these extremes claim scriptural authority. The advocates of both have wrested the teachings of Christ to sustain their extreme positions. Both of these extremes cannot be true. It is possible for both to be false, but impossible for both to be true. We ought to know what the New Testament teaches on this question.

It should be remembered that Christ did not institute any new law on marriage and divorce. He did abrogate the law of Moses with its tolerations and placed marriage and divorce on the original basis. He placed marriage on its fundamental basis. He restored the law of God with respect to marriage. His teachings are clear enough and simple enough to be understood.

God wants man to understand His teachings on this question, and holds man responsible for every violation of the fundamental law of marriage. The fixed, irrevocable, and universal law of God should be recognized and obeyed. Christ emphasized it in His teachings and we would do well to be governed by it. This law of indissolubility is recognized by Christ and has been enforced by the Holy Spirit in the New Testament.

Man has granted—and grants—divorces on many grounds. There are *many* justifiable causes as far as man is concerned. "Desertion" is one of the common grounds for divorcement. "Penal servitude," or sentence to imprisonment for crime, is another cause. "Insanity" is another ground of divorce with man, and "Incompatibility" is another, which covers a variety of causes. "Drunkenness with cruelty" is still another cause in many countries for divorcement. "Adultery" is another cause.

So, in the estimation of man, there are many causes for breaking the marriage relation—that is, man has assigned many causes for breaking the fundamental law of human relationship in marriage. Since God is the author of this basic law, He and He alone can assign the reason for the dissolution of the union. The courts of the land dissolve many unions which God still holds as fundamental and binding. Human laws grant divorces for causes which God does not permit.

Man's laws cannot change the mind of God or the fundamental law of God. Hence, man's laws cannot annul the marriage union which God has sanctioned. Marriage is a solemn oath of union in which both parties vow fidelity till death parts them. All the legislatures and teachings of men in the world cannot set aside the fundamental law of God.

Jesus said, "Everyone that putteth away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, maketh her an adulteress: and whosoever shall marry her when she is put away committeth adultery" (Matt. 5:32). Later on in the earthly life of Jesus, the Pharisees tested him, asking, "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?" (Matt. 19:3). Here they meant to ask if one could put away his wife for "any cause." They thought there were many causes for which a man could put away his wife and give her a bill of divorcement.

Jesus plainly and simply said, "No!" He referred them to the fundamental law of



marriage. "Have ye not read, that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh? So that they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matt 19:4-6).

They then asked him, "Why then did Moses command to give a bill of divorcement, and to put her away?" (Matt. 19:7). Jesus answered them, saying, "Moses for your hardness of heart suffered you to put away your wives; but from the beginning it hath not been so" (Matt. 19:8). Here Jesus restores the marriage relation back to its original and fundamental law. It matters not how many causes were granted under the law as grounds of divorcement, Jesus pushes these aside and places the marriage relation on its fundamental and basic law.

After restoring marriage to its original, fixed, universal law for the human family, Jesus then proceeded to teach them the one and only sin by which the union could be dissolved. "Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and he that marrieth her when she is put away committeth adultery" (Matt. 19:9).

Why should one misunderstand this? Not only does Jesus bring marriage back to its original state and intention, but he plainly states that the only way by which the union may be broken. Whosoever, then, is married contrary to God's original law is in a state of adultery. Ignorance of God's law does not excuse one for disobeying it. His law is as old as the human race, and man has a record of that law. Hence, it is folly to be ignorant of it and sinful to violate it.

During the patriarchal and Jewish ages, God saw fit to tolerate some things that He does not tolerate now. The right and strict law, such as had been in the beginning while Adam and Eve were in the state of innocency, and before sin with all of its entailment had made havoc of the human family, now has been restored.

The principles of Christianity with respect to the marriage and divorcement of people restore the lofty and holy relationship in marriage.

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## “Choose You This Day”

**A. G. Freed**

The Bible and evolution cannot both be true. A man may choose between the two, but the two cannot be mixed. It is a serious choice, and will have an influence on anyone's life. Evolution cannot escape the law of God that declares everything must bring forth "after his kind." A man may turn away from the God of the Bible and accept evolution, but if he does, he is an infidel.

The god of evolution is not the God of the Bible. God said, "Let us make man in our image." He tells us plainly how he made him But the evolutionist says he made man some other way. He is an infidel. The epithet may not be very pleasing, but he made the choice. The originators of the theory of evolution were agnostics, higher critics, atheists—all infidels.

Its adherents are true to type—"everything after its kind." They all want placards removed which say, "*Read the Bible*," and they object to opening our courts with prayer. All who believe the Bible to be the word of God are, with them, ignoramuses, and all "*wisdom*" will die with them.

The theory of evolution is a march toward the jungles. It links man up with the beast of the field, and leaves him in death with the same hope of the ox in the stall.

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## Peter Preached A Feel “Bad” Religion

**Jerry C. Brewer**

In the circus of life that is modern America, religion is its cotton candy. Those big balls of fluffy stuff that are eagerly consumed by circus-goers promise a lot, but have no real substance. Cotton candy is fun to eat—while it lasts—but provides no substantial nour-

ishment. That's a fair description of the denominational industry's version of "Christianity" today. It's all about preaching a "feel good" religion for the moment, with no spiritual substance for life. But that's not the kind of religion Peter preached. He preached what folks today would call a "*feel bad*" religion.

Consider Peter's words in the first sermon recorded in this dispensation. He began his discourse by explaining the phenomenon the multitude had witnessed—the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles, accompanied by the sound of a rushing mighty wind and the appearance of "cloven tongues like as of fire" (Acts 2:2-4, 14ff). After his explanation of those things, he reminded them of events which they knew—that Jesus of Nazareth had been approved of God by the mighty works He did among them (Acts 2:22).

Having reminded them of those things, he immediately charged his hearers with murder in delivering Jesus to be crucified. "Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:23).

Peter's aim wasn't to make his auditors "feel good" about themselves as is the case in today's denominational industry. His purpose was to lay before them the bare facts of their sin, Christ's sacrifice for their sins and to bring them to repentance for their sins. No "cotton candy religion" here.

Then, after proving from their own scriptures that Jesus Christ was the promised Messiah, and had ascended into heaven, he capped his message, saying, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). The gospel message Peter preached had its desired effect on those who heard him. "When they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37).

Answering their anguished cry, "...Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins... and with many other words, did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation" (Acts 2:38, 40). Responding to Peter's words, the record says, "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:41-42). That's a far cry from the "cotton candy" religion preached by denominational preachers today.

Had Peter been a modern spokesman for the denominational industry, his speech, and their response in Acts 2:14-42, might have gone something like this:

Men and brethren, there is some validity to your belief that some of us may be drunk. And though we have diversity of opinion on this matter, we can continue to be brethren because I believe we can find strength in diversity and in our love for each other. Indeed, most of us have been drunk at one time or another, or at least done other things that were just as indiscreet. But I cannot condemn any of my colleagues, nor would I presume to judge any of you for thinking we are drunk because we have different interpretations of this event and there is certainly room for diversity among all of us.

However, though we have different interpretations of this event, that is not the case today, and I can still call you 'brother.' What you have witnessed today is a great revival of Holy Spirit renewal that some ancient scribe researched and wrote about in a scholarly work that the rabbis often attribute to Joel.

Now listen, all you good Jewish brothers! I have some good news for you! Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God by the love he showed in recent years by feeding the hungry, washing feet, and generally being nice, as most of you are aware, Him, being approved of God, even though some may have made mistakes in judgment about Him, was crucified on a cross. But that is in the past. We all make mistakes and you are no worse than anyone else. But now the great news is that the Holy Spirit has come to tell you God loves you and wants you to feel good about yourselves and your intimate personal

relationship with Him.

Now when they heard this, they felt good about themselves and cried out to Peter and the others, Men and brethren, glory hallelujah! Tell us what else to do. Then Peter said unto them, '*Do?! Do?!* There is *not one whit* you *can* or *need* to do. Jesus did it all. We are just telling you the good news. Just ask Jesus to come into your hearts, be nice to each other, love each other, tell the Romans, Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians that you love them, and make sure your kids have plenty of food, fun and fellowship.

Get involved in a blood drive in your communities, let the Holy Spirit direct you to parking places. And with many other soft, kind, sweet, and gentle words did he testify and exhort saying, 'Form Family Ministries, Youth Ministries, Outreach Ministries, and Children's Ministries. Send your kids to camp, let Youth Ministers take them to Six Standards Over Jerusalem, and busy yourselves with lots of programs to make everyone feel good.

Then they that gladly received his word really felt good about their own lives, and had their self-esteem raised, and about 3,000 formed a Church Family that day. And they continued to shout and clap their hands, and they formed an *a cappella* singing group that could make sounds with their lips just like the harps and lyres of the Romans. And they accepted all into the Church Family and called all men 'brothers' who recognized Jesus as a good buddy and they all dwelt under the all-inclusive, diverse, non-judgmental, umbrella of egalitarianism.

No, none of the apostles wanted men to "feel good" in their sins. Sin is tragic and will cause souls to be lost in an eternal hell. The religion of Jesus Christ is not designed to make men "feel good" as sinners. It is designed to make one sorrow for sin (2 Cor. 7:10). The man who "feels good" about himself while remaining in sin is lost and will be lost in hell unless he genuinely sorrows for his sin, repents, and is baptized for the remission of sins. Peter did not sugar-coat the gospel of Jesus Christ on Pentecost. He plainly pointed out that those in his audience were sinners who had murdered the Son of God, and told them how they could be forgiven of their sins.

The "feel good" religion of today's denominational industry is daily sending millions to a devil's hell. What the world needs is more "*feel bad*" religion as Peter preached on Pentecost. To preach an "I'm OK, You're OK" religion is like telling a man in a burning house that he is safe and needs to do nothing.

"All have sinned and come short of the glory of God," (Rom. 3:23) and, "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23) That's not a "feel good" religion, but that's what the world needs to hear. To genuinely feel *good* one needs to *first* feel *bad* about his sinful condition, believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God (John 8:24), repent of his sins (Acts 2:38), confess his faith in Christ (Acts 8:37) and be baptized "for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16). Having done that, one can then *truly* feel good that his sins are forgiven and, as the Ethiopian nobleman did in Acts 8:39, he can "go on his way rejoicing."

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## Back To The Church Of The Bible (Conclusion)

**Roelf L. Ruffner**

### **The Church of the Bible is Divine in Origin.**

All the denominations trace their origins back to some definite date, illustrated in the following:

1. Catholic—first pope, Boniface III, 606 A.D.
2. Baptist Church—1609
3. Methodist Church—1739
4. Assembly of God—1914

The church of the New Testament was established in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost, 30 A.D. Before the Book of Acts Chapter 2, the church is mentioned in the future tense. "And I say unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock, I will build

my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Mat. 16:18). After Acts Chapter 2 it is mentioned in the present tense (Acts 2:47; Rom.16:16).

On that Sunday morning, almost 2,000 years ago, the Old Testament prophecies concerning when, where and how it would begin came to pass. In Isaiah 2:2-3 the new law (the Gospel) was to go forth from Jerusalem. An outpouring of the Holy Spirit was to take place (Joel 2:28). All were fulfilled beginning in Acts 2. All other churches, sects and denominations were formed too late to be from God.

### **The Church of the Bible Has Jesus Christ as it’s Head.**

The Bible is quite clear who is the head of Christ’s church—Jesus Christ. “And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build **my** church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Mat. 16:16—emphasis mine). “And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence” (Col. 1:18).

Jesus has every right to be head of the church of Christ.

1. He built it (Mat.16:18).
2. He is the “Savior of the body” (Eph. 5:23) and died for it.
3. He purchased it with His own blood (Acts 20:28).
4. He has authority over it (Mat. 28:18).

Though many religious groups today claim Christ is their head, they all have some human figure or figures in control. For example, they may have a president, a pope or a preacher (a pseudo-pastor) who pulls all the strings. Yet the inspired apostle Peter, a real pastor or elder, wrote his fellow elders, “Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being examples to the flock” (1 Pet. 5:2-3).

Other man-made groups have a council, synod or a convention which dominate their affairs. Yet the local congregations of the church of the New Testament were autonomous and independent of centralized control. For example, the church in Jerusalem had no control over the congregation in Antioch (cf. Acts 15).

The pattern of authority in the church of the Bible was one of autonomous congregations with a plurality of elders with Christ as their head: one body with many congregations. “And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed” (Acts 14:23).

### **The Church of the Bible Has the Right Name.**

Today names abound for churches. Some initially reflected what they did: *Baptist*, *Methodist*, etc. Some reflected their view of church government: *Episcopal* and *Presbyterian*. Others were named after famous men: Lutheran. Many go to phrases from the Bible: *River of Life Church*, *Jesus Name Tabernacle*, *The Family of God*. Others have no rhythm or reason for the name they wear: *The Happy Church*, *The Gathering*, *The Cowboy Church*.

Where is the Scriptural authority for these names? There is none. Yet the church of the Bible must have Scriptural authority for what she does, including her name. “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him” (Col. 3:17).

Names do mean something. For example, what if a man’s wife came to him and said, “Honey, I love you, but I want to be known as Mrs.\_\_\_\_\_ (neighbor’s name)?” Why shouldn’t the bride of Christ, the church, be called by His name? “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it” (Eph. 5:25). Why should I want to be known as anything else? “Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?” (1 Cor. 1:12,13).

### **The Church of the Bible Proclaims God’s Plan of Salvation.**

The religious world mainly proclaims three messages of salvation to humanity:

1. “Universalism”—“I’m ok, you’re ok” or “Come join our club.” But the Bible says, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23).

2. “Faith-only”—one is saved spiritually at the point of belief. But the Bible says, “Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only” (James 2:24).
3. “Salvation by works of merit”—one works his way to Heaven. But the Bible says, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Eph. 2:8,9).

Yet the New Testament of Jesus Christ teaches that there is only one plan of salvation:

1. Hear the word of God or the Gospel. Rom. 10:17
2. Believe in Jesus Christ as God’s Son. John 8:27
3. Repent of sins. Acts 17:30
4. Confess Jesus as the Son of God. Rom. 10:9,10
5. Be baptized in water for the remission of sins. Acts 2:38
6. Remain faithful to the Lord. Rev. 2:10

At baptism one becomes united with Christ and his sins are forgiven (Rom. 6:4; Gal.3:27). “The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 3:21).

### **The Church of the Bible Worships God According to the Bible.**

Humanity is made to worship our Creator (Acts 17:23). Jesus declared the way men should worship God under the New Covenant—“in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). The “spirit” means sincerity (Josh. 24:14) and the “truth” is God’s word (John 17:17).

The early church of Christ followed this pattern of worship: preaching or exhortation, singing, praying, partaking of the Lord’s supper, and giving. “And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42). The inspired example of the early church shows us that they did this each Sunday (Acts 20:7).

The singing of the church of the Bible was *acapella* or unaccompanied by a choir or mechanical instrument of music. “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Col.3:16).

Through the centuries men have tried to change the pattern of worship:

1. Worshipping on Saturday rather than Sunday.
2. Using mechanical instruments of music and choirs and solo.
3. Partaking of the Lord’s Supper yearly, quarterly, monthly.

All of this is but “vain worship” (Mat.15:9), unauthorized by the word of God (Col. 3:17).

Today many de-emphasize public worship and say that doing good to others is as important if not more important. This is called the social gospel. But Jesus showed us that worship of Him is no less our responsibility than doing good to others. When Mary worshipped Him by anointing Him and was criticized for wasting money that could have been given to the poor Jesus said, “Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this. For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always” (John 12:7,8).

### **The Church of the Bible is NOT a Denomination.**

In the New Testament there is only one church or body of Christ mentioned (Mat. 16:18; Acts 20:28; Eph.4:4). Today there are churches claiming to be a part of the body of Christ but hopelessly divided into denominations all believing and practicing different things. They are not the church of the Bible. “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Cor. 1:10).

When one becomes a Christian according to God’s Plan of Salvation, he is born again into Christ’s kingdom—the church (Acts 2:41, 47). He does not become a member of a club, an association or a denomination (John 3:3,5). As the late brother Thomas B.



Warren said, "The Bible makes Christians only and the only Christians."

We can see that the church of the Bible is a far cry from the churches and religious bodies of present. Is the church you belong to the church of the Bible?

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## God Is: Three Arguments

W. B. West, Jr.

### The Ontological Argument

The word "ontology" is derived from two Greek words, *ontos* and *logos*, which mean "the reason or ground of being." Stated briefly, God exists because we think He does. This is the argument from thought to being. Human thought is always a signpost pointing to something beyond itself; deny this something and all human thought is denied.

The very idea of God is possible to us only because God is behind it and by God, Anselm, the father of the ontological argument, meant "that than which nothing greater can be conceived. Anselm argued that the fool who denies the existence of God thereby proves only that he is a fool, for he shows that he has the idea of God in his understanding even though he does not go on to understand that such a being exists.

Descartes added to the conception of Anselm by saying that the idea of God, that is, of a perfect being, could not originate in the human mind since it is finite and imperfect. Consequently it must be referred to a perfect cause or God; therefore, God exists.

The contingency of all finite things, since the reason for their being does not lie within themselves, requires the assumption of a being whose ground of existence is in himself alone: self-existence is a necessary element of perfection, and therefore of God. Another way to express it is that the idea of God includes necessary existence; therefore God necessarily exists.

What is the value of the ontological argument for the existence of God? It was severely criticized in Anselm's day and by Kant, who accepted it as regulative thinking, but not constitutive of knowledge.

It is true that it has the weakness of saying that every thought of the mind must have an objective reality, but in all fairness to its most ardent supporters it must be said that they "do not contend that every subjective conception must have an objective reality, but only that certain ones must have," such as are conceived by the mind as demanding necessarily a corresponding objective reality, because the idea of God in the mind is an idea of Him as necessarily existent; consequently the mind must believe in Him as actually existent.

Somehow the ontological argument—always being shown out the front door in a polite manner—enters quietly again at the back door. It seems to be here to stay, a valuable argument for the existence of God.

### The Cosmological Argument

The word "cosmological" is from two Greek words, *kosmos* and *logos*, the former meaning "world" and the latter "a reason for." In its usual acceptance, the cosmological argument deals with the principle of causality as applied to the relation of God to the world. It is claimed that God is the cause and the world is the effect.

A more exact statement would be that everything that's begun is a result of a cause sufficient to produce it. In this form, the argument might be called the *aitiological*—the Greek word, *aitia*, meaning "cause"—but for the purpose of generally accepted understanding, we shall use the term "cosmological."

The most common response of the man on the street to the challenge to prove that there is a God is the sweeping gesture of the hand, and a rhetorical question: "Who, then, made all this?" Every honestly thinking person knows that every effect has a cause and every cause an effect. The world and all that is within it is here. What or who caused it?

A beautiful and ordered world is seen everywhere. On a clear night in Texas when the sky is a blaze of brilliant diamonds against a deep blue curtain, with one star differing from another star in glory, presenting a ceiling of unsurpassing beauty, we overwhelmingly exclaim with David, "The heavens declare the glory of God" (Psa. 19:1).

The gorgeous beauties of the sunrise are the glory of God's trailing robes, and the rainbow is the scarf which He throws about His shoulders. The sun, the moon, and the stars send forth their light to guide by day and by night. When we see these manifestations of a Divine Cause, we say with the Hebrew poet, "When I consider the heavens, the moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained, what is man that Thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that Thou visitest him?" (Psa. 8:4).

During the French Revolution, a revolutionist said to a peasant, "I will have your steeples pulled down that you may no longer have any object by which you may be reminded of your superstitions." But the peasant replied, "But you cannot help leaving us the stars."

A man who never enters a church building went with a preacher one night to a planetarium. When he saw the unfolding and the great drama of the sky, he said to the preacher, who was sitting by his side, "There is no room for chance in what we are seeing tonight, is there? It is no marvel that, speaking of the heavens, Pascal once said, "The eternal silence of these infinite spaces terrifies me."

One can go from an observation of the heavens to the beauties and wonders of the world of nature and as obviously and convincingly see a Divine Cause. One makes a visit to the Himalayas of that intriguing land of India, to the towering Alps of picturesque Switzerland, to the vast rooms and corridors of Carlsbad Caverns with their fascinating formations, or to the grandeurs of Grand Canyon, and unreservedly says with the Psalmist, "The firmament showeth his handiwork" (Psa. 19:1).

It is said that an atheist living in New York went to Los Angeles by the way of the Grand Canyon. Leaving Grand Canyon, he said, "No longer do I disbelieve. I now believe in God."

"God is and God created" is the only answer when we look at the cosmos or the world about us. Truly did Moses write, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth (Gen. 1:1) and, "By faith we understand that the worlds have been framed by God so that what is seen hath not been made out of things which appear" (Heb. 11:3).

### **The Teleological Argument**

The word "teleological" has its parentage in the Greek language, being derived from *telos* which is defined as "end or purpose" and *logos* as "the reason for." The teleological argument is closely related to the cosmological—the original meaning of the noun *kosmos* being "order." The verb is *kosmeo* and means "to arrange," and it is akin to the Sanskrit root, *mand ornare* meaning "adorned or ornamented." A *kosmos* cannot be conceived without a *telos*. The world and all that is in it must be for some end or purpose.

Evidences of a purposeful universe are so numerous and clear in all the realms of nature and life that space will permit the naming and discussion of only a small number. Let us mention the order and purpose of the heavenly bodies. The mathematical astronomers say that the more carefully they investigate the movements of the heavenly bodies, the more certainly do they know that they show order and obey law.

Sir James Jeans, the great physicist, said, "The universe begins to look more like a great thought than a great machine." Centuries before modern science, Socrates expatiated on the orderly movements of the heavenly bodies, on the blessed gift of sunlight, and on the silence of the nocturnal hours designed as if to invite repose. Concerning the reason for all this, Samuel Rogers said, "The very law which moulds a tear/And bids it trickle from its source/That law preserves the earth a sphere/And guides the planets in their course."

As revealed in the first chapter of Genesis, all creation shows marks of design—light and darkness, day and night, the collecting of the waters and dry land, seed time and harvest, the sun, moon, and stars, the animal kingdom, and man. Everything in the universe is adapted to a purpose. Let us think of the realm of the living, where design, end in view, aim to be had, order, method, and system are clearly evident.

It is singularly characteristic of some animals that they are adapted for life on dry land, others for life in the air, still others for salt water, brackish water, and fresh water. Some fish never leave the unlighted abysses of the ocean, others leap into the sunlight foam of tropical seas. A common animal like the mole is adapted to the ground be-

neath the surface of the earth, where it lives much of its life. Its barrel-like body, its pointed snout, its shovel-like hands, its athletic breast muscles, its well protected eyes, and its rapid digestion attest to the adaptation of the mole to life under the ground.

The chicken is well adapted for its purpose in the universe. More than 2,000 years ago Plato studied the development of the chick within the egg, and his observations are good for today. A story is told of the visitor to London, who could not be persuaded to leave the shop window in Regent Street where chick incubators were for sale, with the young chicks often scrambling out of the egg shells. He said to his companions: "That's a thing to have seen. After that there ain't no use telling me that there is no God."

I wish there were space to tell of all the wonderful revelations of the telescope and the microscope, to say nothing of the most obvious observations of the eye, all of which would testify to their teleology. It is difficult not to use Paley's illustration of the watch, which is as good now as ever, to prove that there must be a Designer for every design, but space forbids. In the twelfth chapter of First Corinthians Paul says that members of the body have different functions. This will be the final illustration of the teleological argument for the existence of God, using the human eye as an example of the marvelous adjustment of means to ends.

There are many marvelous things that could be said about the eye, but only a few will be mentioned. The eye is adapted to perceive objects at different distances, varying from inches to miles. In telescopes this would be accomplished either by putting in another lens, or by some focusing arrangement. We do not know exactly how the eye can see objects at different distances, but we know that it can and does do it with amazing correctness. A landscape of a number of miles is brought within the space of half an inch in diameter. At least the larger ones of the multitudes of objects it contains are all preserved, and can each be distinguished in its shape, color, size, and position. And what is even more amazing is that the same eye that can do this can read a book at a distance of a few inches!

Again, the eye can see objects in different directions, for it is constructed to turn right or left, up or down, without moving the head. To keep it moist and clean, both of which are essential to its utility, a special fluid is supplied constantly, the superfluous moisture passing through a hole in the bone to the nose, where it is evaporated.

This valuable instrument is in duplicate, the two eyes being so arranged that while each one can see separately if the other should get injured, they can usually see together with perfect harmony. Our admiration for the eye is further increased when we know that it was formed before birth. It has been called a prospective organ being of no use at the time that it was made. This shows design more plainly than anything else. In view of all this and much more that could be said, the eye is an optical instrument of ingenuity. The conclusion is that it must have been made by someone and that someone must have known and designed its use.

Whence all the order and intelligent purpose in the universe which we have been discussing? Surely no reader will agree with the atheist who says,

*The world rolls round forever like a mill;  
It grinds out death and life and good and ill;  
It has no purpose, heart, mind, or will.*

We would not say that intelligent order in the universe is here by chance. The best thinkers of the ages have ascribed our teleological world to Supreme Intelligence, to a loving Planner and Designer. The Greek philosopher ascribed the movement and order of the world by analogy to *nous* or "mind". Socrates not only developed the proof for the purpose of the world but gave it a definite theistic reference. Despite Charles Darwin's pseudo-science, the best scientists of the ages have seen God behind our world. The Bible produced by the Holy Spirit, through the greatest minds of the ages, abundantly testifies that all creation has purpose and that behind this creation and purpose is the Great Creator and Designer of the universe, who is none other than God.

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## **Jesus Christ Built Only His Church**

**E. M. Borden**

Jesus said, "Upon this rock I will build *my church*; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18). Notice, He said "my church"—not Luther's, Wesley's, Calvin's or any other man's. Notice also that the word "church" is in the singular. It is *one*—not many. Now, are we right when we refer to it as "the church of Christ?" It was not the Jewish congregation, but the church of Christ.

Jesus not only said, "my church," but He said, "The gates of hell [hades] shall not prevail against it". That same church is in existence now and all Christians are members of that church. To be a Christian is to be a member of the church of Christ. On the day of Pentecost the Lord added the saved to the church (Acts 2:41, 47). The Lord does not add people to the Methodist or Baptist churches, or any other man made denomination. He adds them to *His* church.

The popular idea of a person becoming a child of God and then joining the church is absurd. It is true that a person can become a Christian, then afterward join some human institution to his own detriment. But when one becomes a Christian he becomes a member of the church of Christ by a spiritual birth (John 3:3-5), and Paul said that church is, "the house of God"—God's family (1 Tim. 3:15). How can a man join a family *after* he has been born into it? Think on these things.

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## **“Today I'm Nearer To My Home...”**

**Jerry C. Brewer**

A beautiful hymn that I recall from long ago is entitled, "One Sweetly Solemn Thought." The words of that hymn express the sobering thought that with each passing day we are all nearer to eternity:

“One sweetly solemn thought comes to me o'er and o'er

Today I'm nearer to my home than e'er I've been before.”

Last year is past and we now stand at the threshold of another. The passing of time ought to remind each of us that one day we shall go the way of all flesh and that our days are, "swifter than a weaver's shuttle." It should also cause us to ponder the question, "Where shall I spend eternity?" I cannot conceive of eternal existence apart from the holiness, love, and comfort of God the Father. Such a place is described in Holy Writ as "outer darkness," filled only with "weeping" and "gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 8:12). Can you imagine such a place, inhabited by the refuse of the earth, from the wicked of Noah's day to the likes of Saddam Hussein, Adolph Hitler, rapists, murderers, and all other enemies of God?

But because God "so loved the world," (John 3:16) no one *has* to live in such an eternal state. The faithful child of God can confidently sing, "Today I'm nearer to my home"—a blessed home where the righteous dwell in splendor and glory, in an eternal land where no tears will ever come, across which no shadow will ever fall, no sorrows will fill aching hearts, and no parting will void a life.

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## **Justification By Faith Includes Baptism**

**C. R. Nichol**

"By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were swallowed up" (Heb. 11:29 ASV). The Israelites crossed the Red Sea "by faith," but they were not on the other side the moment they believed. They spent a night of anxious toil and great fear before they could sing the song of deliverance on the other side. Here the phrase "by faith" spans the Red Sea, and includes every step they took in crossing.

By some it is thought that because Paul says we are "justified by faith" (Rom. 5:1) that baptism is excluded. But the phrase "by faith," instead of excluding the acts of faith, which, in reality, make faith perfect, actually includes obedience. And it can be plainly shown that "by faith" in this case includes baptism. Paul says, "For I would not, brethren, have you ignorant, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea" (1 Cor. 10:1-2 ASV).

They crossed the Red Sea "by faith," and in crossing they were baptized. "By faith" includes what was done in crossing. But in crossing they were baptized. Therefore, "by faith," in this example includes baptism.

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# Where The Faithful Meet

## **FLORIDA**

### **Pensacola**

Bellview church of Christ  
4850 Saufley Field Road, Pensacola, Florida 32526  
Phone: (850) 455-7595  
Email: bellviewcoc@gmail.com  
Website: [www.bellviewcoc.com](http://www.bellviewcoc.com)  
Elders: Paul Brantley, Bill Busch, Michael Hatcher  
Preacher: Michael Hatcher

## **OKLAHOMA**

### **Willow**

Willow church of Christ 111 South Mayer  
PO Box 236, Willow, Oklahoma 73673-0236  
Preacher: Jim Foster

### **Yukon**

Yukon church of Christ  
702 S. Ranchwood Blvd. Yukon, Oklahoma 73099  
Phone: (405) 354-0238  
Email: yukoncofc@hotmail.com  
Website: [www.yukoncofc.org](http://www.yukoncofc.org)  
Preacher: David Ray

## **TENNESSEE**

### **Hornbeak**

Hornbeak church of Christ  
P. O. Box 97, Hornbeak, Tenn. 38232  
Phone: (731) 504-1141  
Email: harrelld@charter.net  
Preacher: Harrell Davidson

### **Rives**

Berea church of Christ  
621 S Central High Rd., Rives, Tenn. 38253  
E-mail: [truth@bereacoc.org](mailto:truth@bereacoc.org)  
Website: [www.bereacoc.org](http://www.bereacoc.org)  
Preacher: Lee Moses (731) 599-5037

## **TEXAS**

### **Denison**

Morton Street church of Christ  
2223 W. Morton Street, Denison, Texas 75020  
Phone: (903) 465-4127  
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Preacher: Jess Whitlock (903) 647-0736

### **Denton**

Northpoint church of Christ  
4224 North I-35, Denton, Texas 76207  
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Website: [www.northpointcoc.com](http://www.northpointcoc.com)  
Preacher: Philip Smith

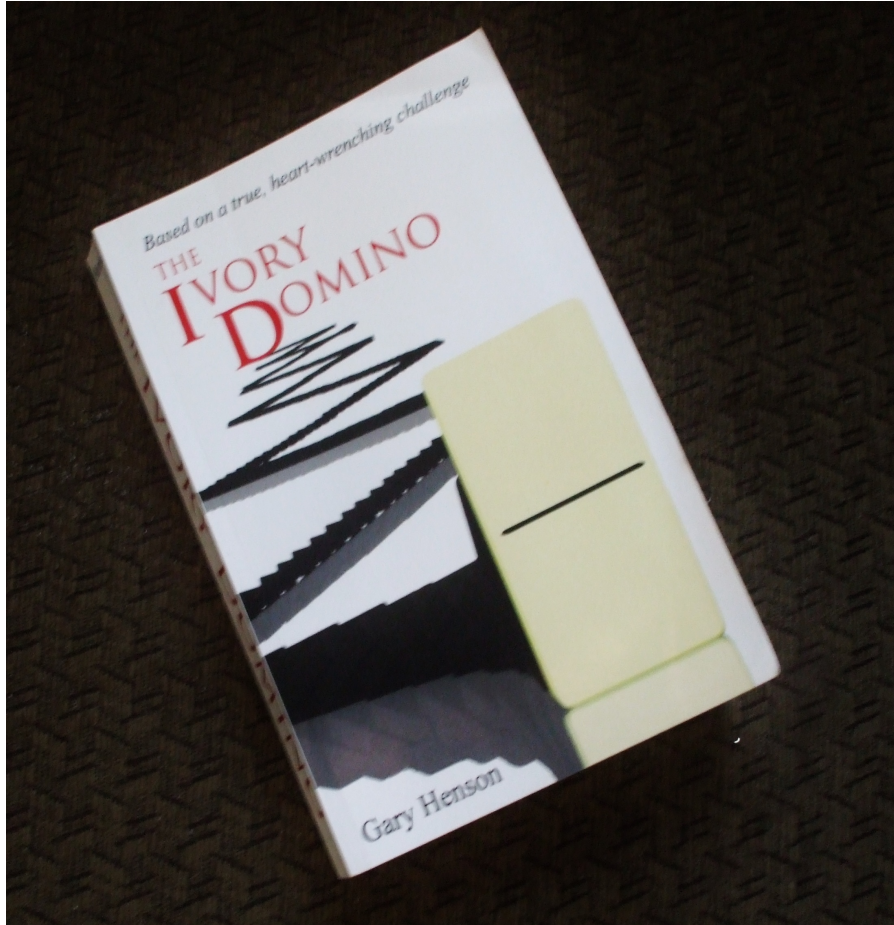
### **Huntsville**

Fish Hatchery Rd. church of Christ  
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Preacher: Bruce Stulting

### **Spring**

Spring church of Christ  
1327 Spring Cypress Road, Spring, TX 77373  
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Phone: 281-353-2707  
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Website: [www.churchesofchrist.com/](http://www.churchesofchrist.com/)  
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