

The Gospel Preceptor

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

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Christianity—“Wet” and Orderly

Cled E. Wallace

In a recent series of meetings, I was leading some audiences by easy stages through the book of Acts. Constant reference was made to what it took to make Christians in New Testament times. A crusty old townsman, with the usual amount of party prejudice, tossed a wisecrack: “I've heard a lot of these fellows in my time, but this is the **wettest** one I've ever listened to.”

All Wet

Come to think of it, the book of Acts **is** a pretty wet book. On the day of Pentecost, convicted sinners cried out, “What shall we do?” Peter's answer was, “Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins” (Acts 2:38 ASV).

Ananias told the agonizing Saul to, “arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16).

When the Ethiopian nobleman listened to Philip preach a while, he conceived a compelling desire to be baptized, which carried him down into, and up out of “a certain water” (Acts 8:36-39) which must have been quite a bit wetter than a camel's track or a crawdad hole. Philip was not exactly a dry preacher himself.

It is not necessary to squeeze the book of Acts, like Gideon did his fleece, (Judg. 6:36-38), to get much more than a bowl full of water. A man's religion is entirely too avid when it makes the plain teaching of the New Testament sound too wet.

A man who can preach 20 years on the subject of salvation and habitually neglect the mention of baptism must have long ago formed the habit of detouring around the book of Acts. It is an inspired commentary on the Great Commission. In this commission, Jesus said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16).

Decency And Order

Paul rebuked the Corinthians for confusion and disorder. It was not orderly for two or three or more to be speaking to the same people at the same time. For one to be speaking in tongues while another was prophesying was disorder. “But let all things be done decently and in order” (1 Cor. 14:40 ASV).

The old sectarian mourner's bench was a scene of confusion. The poor seeker after religion, or “what have you,” was subjected to a barrage of singing, praying, exhorting, and back patting, all going on at the same time. A revival of poise and ordinary good judgment broke up such a disorderly procedure. Some plain Bible teaching helped to restore order.

We still have a hang-over of disorder, even among churches of Christ. No preacher would try to preach while a congregation is singing, or while someone is leading a public prayer, or even while some brother is reading aloud a passage of Scripture. But the same preacher will charge up and down the aisles exhorting sinners while the congregation is singing, and not a half dozen people can understand a word that he says. It would have been the same if he were shouting in Russian or Yiddish or just shouting in no known tongue.

Why all this monkey business? If the exhorter has anything worthwhile to say to the people, why not let the singers be silent so all can hear? Why all the confusion? “Oh, but it gets results.” So did the mourner's bench! If it takes hysterics to get a man into the church, it may possibly take hysterics to keep him from backsliding.

Will Man Have a Second Chance After Death?

Dub Mowery

Both the Mormon Church and the Catholic Church teach that there will be a second chance after this life for those who die in sin. But these two religious groups approach this concept differently. The Mormon Church interprets 1 Corinthians 15:29 to justify a member of their church being baptized for their loved ones or others who die without having their sins forgiven. “Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized for the dead?” Instead of studying the subject discussed in its context, the passage is lifted **from** its context by the Mormons. It has been rightfully said that, “A text taken from its context becomes a pretext.”

The subject in verse 29 is the same as the rest of the 15th chapter. That subject is the resurrection of the dead. Emphasis in the first part of the chapter is upon the fact and proof of Christ's resurrection from the dead. Our resurrection to eternal life is based upon that of the Son of God. Some at Corinth denied that the saints would be resurrected. This was answered by Paul who wrote, “Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?” (1 Cor. 15:12). The Son of God was resurrected from the dead, in order for Christians to be resurrected to eternal life. With this in mind, Paul further said, “But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain” (1 Cor. 15:13-14). This placed those members of the body of Christ at Corinth who denied the general resurrection in a dilemma. They evidently accepted the fact of the resurrection of Christ, but denied the general resurrection of the human race (John 5:28-29).

First Corinthians 15:29 does not teach anything close to the false concept that living saints can be baptized for those who died without obtaining forgiveness. Salvation is not by proxy! Every person will have to give account for how he has lived.

Another passage of scripture is often used by those who teach a second chance after death:

For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: By which also he went and preached to the spirits in prison; Which sometime were disobedient, when once the long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water (1 Pet. 3:18-20).

Many conclude from this passage that Christ preached to lost men after they died. But the passage above does not say **when** the Son of God preached to those rebellious spirits of the antediluvian period who were—at Peter's writing—confined in the prison of the hades realm. Their disobedience took place while Noah and his sons were building the ark. God gave the human race 120 years in which to repent (Gen. 6:3), and it was at that time that Noah, “a preacher of righteousness” preached unto them. They rejected his preaching and he saved only his family (2 Pet. 2:5; Gen. 7:13). Jesus preached to them through Noah in the same sense that He later preached to the Gentiles (Eph. 2:17). Our Lord never personally preached to the Gentiles of the Christian dispensation. The apostle Paul was the Lord's “earthen vessel” to take the gospel unto the Gentiles.

The Word of God emphatically stresses that mankind has only this present life to prepare for eternity. We will be judged by how we live here in this physical world. Paul wrote, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good

or bad” (2 Cor. 5:10).

Hebrews 9:27 also tells us that we must face judgment according to our spiritual state at death. This is also vividly shown in the story of the rich man and Lazarus which tells us that the spiritual state of an individual cannot be changed in the next life (Luke 16:26).

Those who do not obey the gospel of Christ will be eternally lost (2 Thess. 1:7-9). The **scripture does not teach** that there will be a second chance for anyone after death.

What It Means To Preach Christ (Acts 8:5)

Foy E. Wallace, Jr.

Philip, the evangelist, holds a great meeting in Samaria—rather I should say—several great meetings and many people were baptized. In all of these meetings he preached only one thing—Jesus Christ. Notice the text: “Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them” (Acts 8:5). Now, just what does it mean to preach Christ? What do we include, and what do we exclude? What do we say something about, and what do we say nothing about?

Often people will remark—“I think you should just preach Jesus and say nothing about so and so or this and that.” Well, is that the way Philip did it? Did Paul do it that way? How did the apostles preach? That is a question for some of my own preaching brethren to ponder over—for some of them have the speak-softly, tread-lightly, step-carefully, method-of-approach kind of soft pedal preaching, too. I wouldn’t call it “soft-soap”—it slanders soap; for soap is a mighty good thing, but I have never found that kind of preaching good for anything except to spoil the brethren, and please the sectarians. The apostolic way of preaching is the only right way to preach. How, then, did Philip preach Christ? Take this passage: “But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized both men and women” (Acts 8:12). Don’t you suppose Philip should have just preached Jesus and said nothing about the “kingdom,” or “the name,” or about being “baptized”?

Philip Preached The Kingdom

There were many theories about the kingdom of Christ then and there are many now. The Jews then thought that Christ would be king on earth, and they rejected Him because He did not establish the kind of a kingdom they expected. Now, Philip preached the kingdom to these Jews whose materialism was the ground of their rejection of Jesus Christ. When he preached Christ, he did not preach the Christ to come, but that Christ had come. Then when he preached the kingdom he likewise preached the kingdom that had come, and not a kingdom to come. Some today are making the same mistake the Jews made in their speculations concerning a future kingdom of Christ on earth, when as a matter of fact he has only one, the present one, and the one Philip preached. John, the Baptist, preached: “The time is fulfilled the kingdom of God is at hand.” During John’s time the kingdom was “at hand”—approaching. It was then that Jesus told His disciples to pray “thy kingdom come”—praying and preaching should always be consistent. If it is still right to pray “thy kingdom come” then we should still preach as did John that the kingdom is “at hand.” But we should now preach, not what John preached, but what Philip preached, and should adjust our praying to fit the preaching. John’s preaching and the disciples’ prayer were both before the establishment of the kingdom, and the simple principle of the right division of the Word of God should be applied. Still later, Jesus said to the disciples “Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power” (Mark 9:1). John said that it was “at hand,” the disciples prayed for it “to come,” and Jesus said they would live to see it come. Evidently it has come, or Methuselah was just a baby compared with some people living, since they were to live until it came. Well, when Jesus died on the cross a man by the name of Joseph asked for His body and Luke said he was among those who “waited for the kingdom.” So, it still had not come when Jesus died. The Lord arose

from the dead, fulfilled His forty days on the earth, and when He was ready to ascend the expectant disciples asked Him when He would restore the kingdom to them—when they might expect that kingdom—and He told them to wait for the power which should come with the Spirit (Acts 1:6-8). They waited in Jerusalem. The Spirit came on Pentecost, (Acts 2)' the power came with the Spirit; and the kingdom came with the power (Mark 19:1); thus, the preaching before the cross and the prayer of the disciples and the waiting of Joseph and the expectancy of all the disciples found reward on Pentecost in the fulfillment of all these prophecies and promises concerning the kingdom. After Pentecost, the kingdom was preached, and all things concerning it, as an existent thing, and not a future thing. Thus, it was that Philip preached Christ on the kingdom question by preaching that Christ is King (not a crown prince) and has a kingdom (not just a vestibule) and is on His throne (not sitting in His Father's arm chair in the parlor). To preach Christ is to preach all that Christ has and all that Christ is. Yet, after so many years of preaching on the establishment of the church, or kingdom, some brethren now, under the influence of a late obsession concerning a future earthly kingdom, will object to such preaching. I know of a case in one church where a certain brother (a leader) took exception to the reading of Luke 22:29-30 at the Lord's Supper. "I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom." When it comes to pass that what the Lord Himself said about His table in His kingdom cannot be read without objections, more preaching is needed on both the kingdom and the table (the Lord's Supper), which is in the kingdom. If we do not have the kingdom, we do not have the supper, and in that case, we do not even have Christ. No wonder Philip preached the kingdom when he preached Christ. So should we.

Philip Preached The Name

Now, many people say that "there is nothing in a name." Then Philip preached "nothing"—or something in which there is "nothing" (take it either way); for he preached the name. What name did he preach, friends? Did he preach the Baptist name? Did he preach the Methodist name? Did he preach any human name, Catholic or Protestant? Verily no, for no such things or names existed. The text says Philip preached "the name of Jesus Christ." Well, if men preach only the name of Jesus Christ today, as Philip did then, will it—can it—make Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, Nazarenes, Pentecostals, Mormons and Catholics—or a lot of other stray what-nots? Friends, the world has heard so much of this name and that name, some church or what church, that it is beginning to wonder whether Jesus Christ ever has a church or not. There is only one name under heaven whereby men may be saved. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). When men preach any other name, they are not preaching Christ, and they are not preaching salvation. Since no man could become a human thing, bearing a human name, without that human name being preached, it simply follows that if only the name of Christ should be preached, there would not be a human denomination on the face of this earth today—exactly as it should be. For men to say that "there is nothing in a name," and "one church is just as good as another," and "it makes no difference what one believes"—all such is a lot of religious profanity that the devil has put into circulation. Yes, Philip preached the name of Jesus, the only saving name.

Philip Preached Baptism

Now, why didn't Philip preach Jesus and say nothing about baptism? For the same reason that Jesus did not say "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel" and say nothing about it. Jesus said something about baptism—yes, enough about it that every sectarian debater today is trying to get Mark 16:16 out of the New Testament by telling people that it is not inspired but interpolated. When a preacher has to use an "interpolated" argument to get around passages of scripture in the way of his doctrine, he is getting in a mighty bad way. It is an unbelief that borders on infidelity. Its getting too close to blasphemy for a man to be comfortable, and I don't believe they are comfortable. Who could be, trying to defend false doctrine? It's the hardest thing a man ever attempted to do and will make an infidel out of him if he keeps it up. That is exactly the reason we are having to fight modernism in religion today—preachers have turned infi-

del and do not themselves believe the Bible. Why, friends, Jesus Himself could not even tell the apostles to preach the gospel without mentioning baptism—it reads, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” But I hear somebody say (a preacher): “It doesn’t say ‘he that believeth not and is not baptized shall be damned.’” No, for the reason that the man who does not believe could not be baptized. He couldn’t if he would, he wouldn’t if he could, and it wouldn’t do him any good if he did! Don’t oppose the Lord’s words, friends, and don’t turn infidel and say that Mark’s record of it was not inspired. Believe what it says and do it—and be saved.

But how did Philip preach baptism? That story is in the eighth chapter of Acts also. Read the story of Philip and the eunuch. The angel directed Philip to leave his work in Samaria and go southward “unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.” What was the purpose or ministry of the angel? Simply to put the preacher to his task. It did not enter the law of pardon, nor the man’s conversion. The miracles of the New Testament never became a part of the law in any case of conversion. When the Word of God was in the man, it required miracles and signs to confirm it; but now the Word of God is in the book, revealed, and confirmed, and the miracle gives place to the law. In the beginning, God created the world by the miracle. Adam was created. He was not an improved monkey nor a glorified ape—he was created; but the next man was born. The miracle of Creation did not become a part of the created world in any part, but only the means of creating the world. So, the miracles and signs of the New Testament do not become a part of the revealed Will of God, but the means of revealing the Will of God. We should not magnify the miracles attending cases of conversion and repudiate the law. So, the angel performed the special purpose of all such, and we hear no more about the angel. But the Spirit directed Philip to join the chariot. What is the office, or work, of the Holy Spirit in the case? If you will observe that the direct influence of the Spirit was on the inspired preacher, and not on the unsaved man, it will not be hard to see. The influence of the Holy Spirit in conversion is through the Word of God—rational, intelligent, through testimony. The Holy Spirit never makes anybody act idiotic, conversion is not a convulsion, and repentance does not take place in a nightmare. Philip then ran unto the chariot—why the preacher, if the Holy Spirit operates on the sinner direct? What then was the task of the preacher? Ah, “he preached unto him Jesus”—that’s God’s only plan—preaching. “It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.” By man the gospel shall be preached to man—that is the divine plan. But what did it mean to preach Jesus? It meant just what preaching Christ meant back in Samaria where Philip had closed his other meeting. Did he preach baptism? He must have—as the man wanted to be baptized in the first water he saw. But he preached something before baptism. The man was reading Isaiah 53 and Philip “began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.” He preached the incarnation of Jesus (His life in the flesh); he preached the humiliation of Jesus (His chastisement for the iniquities and transgressions of man); he preached the atonement of Jesus (His death on the cross, His resurrection from the dead, and the offering of His blood for man’s redemption); and he preached the commands of Jesus (how Jesus commanded the gospel to be preached as stated in the three records of the last commission). When the man heard it, he believed it, and announced his faith in the simple confession—the gospel confession: “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” The chariot was stopped. They went into the water. He was baptized. He resumed his journey rejoicing, while the preacher departed for other fields to preach Christ.

How The Eunuch Was Baptized

But how was the eunuch baptized? Let the text speak. 1. They came unto a certain water. 2. They both went down into the water—both Philip and the eunuch. 3. He was baptized—and came up out of the water. Did you do that when you were baptized? If you did not, then you were not baptized. No amount of objecting can destroy the simplicity of the narrative. But it is often insisted that “into” just means “unto.” Well, just kindly refer to your text and observe that it reads that they came “unto” the water, and then went “into” it. If “into” means “unto,” then what does “unto” mean just above

“into”? And if “down into the water” means that they stayed out of the water, then when it says “they came up out of the water,” does that mean they stayed in it? It is harder to get around the simple narrative of this conversion than it is to believe what it says. If it be argued that they were in the middle of a desert and couldn’t have had water sufficient for a case of immersion—be reminded that the text says, water, unto the water, down into the water, and up out of the water. And furthermore, it was the town of Gaza which was desert—deserted—and not the country around, a desert. Anybody who thinks that it was a desert ought to study geography as well as the Bible. Then what did the man do—what was the duty of the man? It was plain and simple:

1. He heard the word.
2. He believed the word.
3. He confessed his faith in the Christ.
4. He was baptized.
5. He was saved and rejoiced.

What church did he belong to? The one to which the Lord added people (Acts 2:47). What denomination did he belong to? Try to classify him and witness a failure. He obeyed the gospel, was saved, added to the church, without “joining a denomination.” Then, if you will do what he did, you will be what he was. Friends, these gospel narratives are in the divine text for the exact purpose of telling us what to do and how to do it. They are too plain to be misunderstood, and only unbelief could keep you away. Why not take the Lord at His Word and do what He says? It is a plain issue—obey or rebel—which will you do?

God’s Standard of Nakedness and Modesty

Nana Yaw Aidoo

Adam and Eve had sinned against God. They had disobeyed God’s word not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:17; 3:1-6). When they did, their eyes were opened to know good and evil. With this knowledge, they realized their nakedness, “and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons” (Gen. 3:7). Notice if you would that once Adam and Eve knew they were naked, they sought to cover themselves. What a lesson many living today need to learn.

In seeking to cover themselves, they “made themselves aprons.” The word translated *aprons* is the Hebrew word *hagorot*, which according to the Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible is “a belt (for the waist).” It is also translated *girdle*, which basically is cloth for the loins (cf. 1 Kings 2:5). The clothes which Adam and Eve made to cover their nakedness were clothes that covered their loins. The loin is “the part of the body that is above the legs and below the waist especially the sexual organs.” (*Cambridge Dictionary*). Of David, Peter said that Christ was “the fruit of his loins” (Acts 2:30). Thus, Adam and Eve in seeking to cover their nakedness, covered only their private parts, leaving the part of their bodies from the shoulders to the middle parts uncovered. They “sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons; not to cover their whole bodies, but only those parts which, ever since, mankind have been ashamed to expose to public view, and which they studiously conceal from sight.” (*John Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible*).

After putting on these clothes, “they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day” (Gen. 3:8). Knowing what they had done, “Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.” God then called unto Adam who replied by saying he hid himself because he was naked. (Gen. 3:10). This is of all things the most interesting. Does the record not say prior to this that Adam and Eve “made themselves aprons?” Why then does Adam yet tell God he is naked? Evidently, even though Adam had covered his private parts or his waist area, he was naked because he was scantily clothed, being uncovered from his shoulders to his middle parts. “Through his new knowledge of good and evil, Adam was able to determine that being nude is not the only form of Biblical nakedness. Being

scantly clothed is another form of nakedness, and of such, God does not approve.” (*The Northside Anchor*, Calhoun, Georgia, July 24, 2016). In view of this, is it alright for a Christian woman to show her cleavage, her back or her tummy to the world and is it alright for a Christian man to walk bare-chested in public?

Consequently, God made for Adam and for his wife, “coats of skins, and clothed them” (Gen. 3:21). The Hebrew word translated *coats* or *tunics* (NKJV), “was a kind of shirt without sleeves, reaching down **to the knees**” (*Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*). It was “a **long**, shirt-like garment, usually of linen but as described in this verse, made from animal skins” (*learn-biblical-hebrew.com*). Notice that after God made the coats, Moses recorded that God “clothed them.” Were Adam and Eve not clothed initially? Not in the sight of God. Not when they were scantily clothed. To be scantily clothed is to be naked in the sight of God and only when a person is **properly** covered from the shoulders to the knees is such a one modestly clad. **That**, my friends, is God’s standard of nakedness and modesty.

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Death Comes To All

Jerry C. Brewer

Death is the common denominator of all men. Rich and poor alike must some day walk through the valley of the shadow. That truth is expressed in these lines from the classic poem, *Thanatopsis* by William Cullen Bryant: “All that wealth, all that beauty e’er gave await alike the inevitable hour, the paths of glory lead but to the grave.”

Death is an appointment that every man, woman and child upon the earth shall keep. That is plainly stated by the Hebrews writer who said, “...it is appointed unto man once to die, but after this the judgment” (Heb. 9:27). Death isn’t a pleasant thing to think about, so many people simply ignore it. And not only that, but they have some strange ideas about death that are not found in the Bible. For instance, many people think that death automatically makes a person a Christian and sends him to heaven. But that’s not true. As one dies, so he remains for all eternity. One who dies in sin is forever separated from God’s presence. Jesus demonstrated that fact in His account of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31. He said there is a great gulf fixed between the wicked and the righteous dead that can **never** be crossed after death.

Neither is death extinction. The good and the bad continue to exist after death. Of both, Jesus said, “And these shall go away into everlasting punishment,” but “the righteous into life eternal” (Matt. 25:46). And the apostle Paul further said that God will recompense tribulation to the wicked and rest to the righteous when Christ returns in judgment (2 Thess. 1:6-9).

Death is an appointment that is both certain and uncertain. According to Hebrews 9:27 it is certain in that all shall die. But it is uncertain in that no man knows when that hour shall come to him. Death is certain for all men, but its time is always uncertain and life, at best, is brief. “For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away” (Jas. 4:14).

But there is hope of life after death for Christians. For them, death is the end of labors and trials which will be rewarded (Rev. 14:13). However, the key to eternal rest is **faithfulness** in this life. One’s eternal destiny is sealed at death. There is no “second chance.” Now—in this life—is the time to prepare for death by believing in Christ (John 8:24), repenting of our sins (Luke 13:3), confessing our faith in Christ (Acts 8:37), being baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38) and living a life devoted to Christ. Death will come to all of us. Are you prepared to meet God?

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“Confidence in Man”?

Gary Summers

Okay, I've never counted them, but experts tell us that Psalm 118:8 is the middle verse in the Bible. The first verse is truly a significant one; the last one is a sentiment often repeated. Whether or not the middle verse could be expected to be important, well, it is. It contains one of the most important messages contained in the entire Bible, which is: “It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man.” Why is this so crucial? It is a warning for everyone to go to the source, God and His Book, rather than to rely on someone or something else.

How many times have people uttered words like these? “My pastor said...”; “A friend told me...”; “My grandfather always told me... .” The problem is that all of those individuals are fallible human beings. Look closely at their hands; not one of them have nail prints in them. As Paul asked the Corinthians on a different matter: “Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?” (1 Cor. 1:13). Jesus is the One Who died for us, and He is the One we must listen to. Jesus said: “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” (John 12:48).

What the friend, the grandfather, or the spiritual leader think are irrelevant—if they disagree with the Lord. Here is one example. Jesus said: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved...” (Mark 16:16a). Whenever anyone says, “He that believeth and is **not** baptized shall be saved,” he is not to be trusted for he has said the exact opposite of the One Who died for us. Every teacher, preacher, relative of friend must agree with the Scriptures that Jesus spoke—because we will all be judged by Him, not them. No one has the right to disagree with Jesus.

In 1 Kings 13, God gave an individual known only as “the man of God” instructions concerning what to say to King Jereboam. They included two travel items. He was not to eat and drink within the city, nor was he to return from his visit by the same road he had entered (1 Kings 13:9). An older prophet assured him that an angel told him that it was all right after all for him to have a meal in the city. The older prophet, in saying those words, lied to him. He died on the way back for not doing what God had told him. How many today are listening to spiritual leaders such as the “old prophet”—and losing their souls. No one should put confidence in man. Trust in the Lord.

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Is Baptism Essential To The Soul's Salvation?

Thomas B. Warren

The majority of people say, “No”! But the Bible says, “Yes”! However, the minds of men and women have been prejudiced against this Bible truth by the multitude of preachers who teach otherwise. Preachers have taught people to cry “Water salvation” when this Bible doctrine is taught. But baptism is not the savior; Jesus Christ is the one and only Savior. Every man who is saved will be saved by the grace of God, and the fact that the Lord has set down certain conditions which must be met before He will save man makes it nonetheless a matter of grace. An illustration may help to clarify this point. In 2 Kings 5, is found the story of a Syrian captain who was a leper. When he heard that there was a prophet of God through whom he might be healed of his leprosy, he made haste to go to the prophet Elisha. Elisha gave him instructions to go and wash in the Jordan River. When he had done so, his flesh was cleansed. The fact that he had to obey some instructions from God did not void the idea of grace. So it is with baptism today. One's reaction to the commands of Christ reflects the condition of his heart. Baptism is not the savior: it is simply a divinely appointed condition precedent to the forgiveness of sins.

The essentiality of baptism can easily be seen from the fact that it stands between the sinner and the following spiritual blessings:

Baptism Stands Between the Sinner and Salvation

In Mark 16:16 are found these words: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned.” Note that the essential statement of this sentence is “he ... shall be saved.” Now, how does **Jesus** describe this “he” who “shall be saved”? Jesus said, “He **that believeth and is baptized shall be saved...**” Preachers say: “He that believeth and is **not** baptized shall be saved.” Which one are you following? But perhaps someone objects and says, “But he only said 'He that disbelieveth shall be condemned': he didn't say 'He that disbelieveth and is not baptized shall be condemned'.” Thus many reason. But a simple illustration will serve to show the falsity of that idea. Compare this statement with Mark 16:16: “He that eateth and digesteth shall live: but he that eateth not shall die.” Now note: (1) There are two conditions stated here as being necessary to life (just as in Mark 16:16), and (2) there is only **one** condition stated as being necessary to death (just as in Mark 16:16). It is plainly evident that one does not have to say: “He that eateth not and digesteth not shall die.” All know that a mere lack of eating is sufficient to cause one to die. And, too, one cannot digest if he does not eat. So it is with Mark 16:16. Jesus points out that in order to be saved, one must both believe and be baptized (repentance and confession are enjoined in other passages), but that a mere lack of faith is sufficient to cause one to lose his soul; and, too, one **cannot** be baptized if he does not believe. Yes, Mark 16:16 furnishes indisputable evidence as to the essentiality of baptism.

Baptism Stands Between the Sinner and Remission of Sins

Note the words of the inspired Peter as he told a group of believers what they must do: “Repent ye and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). Here is evidence that those who have only believed are not yet saved. They must yet repent of their sins and be baptized. Believers have only the right to **become** children of God (John 1:12); they are not yet children of God. They must be born of water and the Spirit before they enter the kingdom of God (John 3:3-5).

Baptism Stands Between the Sinner and Getting Into Christ

Since all spiritual blessings are in Christ (Eph. 1:3), and redemption through His blood is in Christ (Eph. 1:7), and salvation is in Christ (2 Tim. 2:10), it is plainly evident that no one can be saved outside of Christ. The saved person is **in** Christ; the unsaved person is **out** of Christ. The question then as to **how** one gets into Christ is of greatest import. Paul gives the answer in very plain language: all can very easily understand: “For ye are all sons of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ.” There is not one word in all of the Bible which says anything about a man getting **into** Christ save by being baptized into Him. Neighbor, are you really concerned about the salvation of your soul? You can understand the Bible: take it and read it for yourself—then remember that the salvation of your soul depends upon your obedience to the gospel of Christ (2 Thess. 1:7-10). Don't let a preacher kid and joke you out of obeying the plain commands of the Lord Jesus.

Christ died that men might have salvation (Rom. 5:8-9; Heb. 2:8-9). To get into the death of Christ is to get into the spiritual realm where one becomes a beneficiary of the blessings which come through the death of Christ. No one can be saved without the blood of Christ (Heb. 9:22; Rom. 5:9); but His blood was shed in His death. (John 19:34) How then does one get into the death of Christ? Let Paul answer: “Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized **into his death?**” (Rom. 6:3). There is not a word in the Bible which says anything about anyone getting into the death of Christ save by being baptized into it.

Baptism Stands Between the Sinner and the Washing Away of His Sins

In Acts 22:16 are found the words which Ananias spoke to Saul of Tarsus: “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name.”

Baptism Stands Between the Sinner and Being Saved

Note 1 Peter 3:20-21:

That afore-time were disobedient, when the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved through water: which also after a true likeness **doth now save you, even baptism**, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the interrogation of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Baptism Stands Between the Sinner and Cleansing From Sin

In writing to the church at Ephesus, Paul said: "That he might sanctify it (the church—TBW), having cleansed it by the washing of water (baptism, TBW) through the word." Yet to these same Paul said, "By grace have ye been saved through faith..." (Eph. 2:8). Isn't it then plainly evident that the essentiality of baptism in water for the remission of sins does not conflict with the idea of grace?

What is Conversion?

S.C. Kinningham

Conversion is a Bible subject that has to do with the salvation of the soul. Thus, it behooves us to make a diligent study of the scriptures that we may learn what it is.

In the second recorded sermon of the apostle Peter, after the giving of the great commission and the descent of the Holy Spirit, (Acts 2), the matter of conversion was pressed upon the people in these words: "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19). Conversion is here shown to be the thing that leads to the blotting out of sins and the seasons of refreshing sent from the presence of the Lord. Conversion is necessary to the enjoyment of such blessings on the part of all men.

A true description of conversion is given in few words in the scripture: "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins" (Jas. 5:19-20).

Conversion, then, is a turning from one state and condition to another. When man is converted **from** God, he is turned from truth to error. In turning from truth to error, his condition is changed from that of a saint to a sinner. Being changed in condition to a sinner, man is thereby brought into the state of death. The condemnation of God and the sentence of death have passed upon all who sin. Death is declared by inspiration to be the wages of sin (Rom. 6:23).

When man is converted **to** God, the opposite changes are made. He must turn again to the Lord that he may have his sins blotted out and enjoy seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. He must retrace the steps that were taken in turning away from God. He must turn from error back to truth. He must then be purified from sin by obeying the truth. "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently" (1 Pet. 1:22). With this change in condition, he is brought again into a state of love, communion, and fellowship with God where he enjoys the forgiveness of sins. This process is described as one's "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever" (1 Pet. 1:23). In conversion he is saved from death and given the promise of eternal life.

The process of man's conversion to God may be further illustrated by reviewing the fall of man in the beginning and pointing out the steps taken in the process of that departure from God. God made man in His image, and after His likeness. He was just the kind of creature God would have him be. There was no impurity in his heart, no evil in his life, and no guilt attached to his soul. He dwelt in a state of purity, enjoying holy communion with God in the Paradise of Eden.

When God thus made man and placed him in this state, He gave him a law to govern

his conduct.

And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die (Gen. 2:15-17).

As long as man obeyed the law that God gave, he enjoyed the blessed state of communion with Him. But the tempter soon came to turn man away from God and from man's holy state into a state of transgression and separation from God.

First, the tempter put a question mark over the word of God to weaken the force of it and to cast a doubt in the mind of man regarding it. He said unto the woman. "Yea, hath God said ye shall not eat of any tree of the Garden?" (Gen. 3:1). The woman then repeated the law God had given them. "And the woman said unto the serpent, Of the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die" (Gen. 3:2-3).

The tempter then preached a lie to the woman. "And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die" (Gen. 3:4). He thereby sought to turn man from truth to error. The woman placed her confidence in the tempter, believed the lie, and was led by that faith to disobey God. "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat" (Gen. 3:6).

Having disobeyed God, man was guilty of sin, and entered into a state of death. This is descriptive of the condition of all mankind. Paul said, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Rom. 5:12).

Briefly summarizing the steps taken in man's fall, we find that a lie was given to supplant the truth, man believed the lie and was led into error, he disobeyed God and became guilty of sin, and thereby passed into a state of death.

With these things before us, it should be easy to understand the process of conversion to God. One must be turned back to truth and away from all error. God's word is truth (John 17:17), and all that differs from it is error. One must repose his confidence in God and believe His word as man believed the lie (John 8:24). He must obey the truth as man obeyed error in the beginning (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38).

When man obeys the truth in baptism, he is purified, or cleansed, from the guilt of sin and disobedience. Being thus purified by obedience to the gospel, man is brought from a state of death into life—translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's Son (Col. 1:13) and again enjoys communion with God.

Sin Against God Has Consequences

Edd Holt

"God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions" (Eccl. 7:29).

The Bible says much about sin. It tells of its origin and nature as well as its consequences. It describes the punishment of sin which enables us to know just what it is to sin against Him in whom "we live and move and have our being." It gives the only solution to the problems occasioned by sin, which means the plan of salvation from sin. Upon His own terms "the Lamb of God taketh away the sin of the world."

Men sin against God today, as Adam and Eve did, by transgressing His law, "for sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4). We know God's law by the proper division of His word. We are not responsible to God for what Adam did. We do not inherit his sins, nor those of any other. We are accountable for all our violations, and for ours only, which is quite enough responsibility. "Each of us shall give account of himself to

God” (Rom. 14:12 ASV). Again, “Jehovah's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but **your iniquities** have separated between you and your God, and **your sins** have hid his face from you, so that he will not hear” (Isa. 59:1-2 ASV).

But notice that the one who “transgresses” the law is a **sinner**, which means those who are in the denominations about us are sinners, for they had to transgress God's law to get into them. They went beyond His law to get their organizations, their names, their doctrines, their worship and manner of life. They trampled under foot the word of God to **form** the denominations, but cannot overthrow His judgment to **uproot** them (Matt. 15:13).

Denominational churches go down as sinful when sin is again defined: “All unrighteousness is sin” (1 John 5:17). We anticipate the question, “How is it that the denominations are unrighteous?” That should be easily seen. They are no part of the gospel—the New Testament, and whatsoever is not of the gospel is no part of the righteousness of God, “for therein (the gospel) is the righteousness of God revealed” (Rom. 1:16-17). That which is not of the gospel is not right—it is sinful. It means that they who go by what **they think** or by what the **creeds decree**, and not by what the New Testament says, are sinners.

Under this definition of sin, as under other quotations defining it, the practice of using mechanical instruments of music in the worship takes a licking. The practice is without gospel authority and is, therefore, classed with things unrighteous. Hence, it is sinful. The same conclusion is reached when the Bible defines sin as “the transgression of the law.” Let this emphasis on the music question be uncompromising, and let it illustrate the sinfulness of any addition to God's word.

We often hear the question, “Can a good man be saved outside the church?” Of course not, unless he can be saved without Christ, for He is the Saviour of the body—the church (Eph. 1:22-23; 5:23). But is the man a **good** man who knows his duty and will not do it? No! If he does not believe in Christ, he has “an evil heart of unbelief” (Heb. 3:12). He is a sinner, for Jesus said, “Except ye believe that I am, ye shall die in your sins” (John 8:24 ASV). Unbelief is sinful. Negligence of duty is sinful. “To him therefore that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (Jas. 4:17 ASV). Church members sin against God when they refuse to meet for worship as He has commanded, when they fail to give as they have been prospered, and when they fail to help the needy—when they know to do good and leave it undone.

Temptation And Sin

Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man; but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death (Jas. 1:13-15).

Beware of the devolution of sin. It is a “rolling down”—from lust down to sin, on down to death. “Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people” (Prov. 14:34).

There are certain avenues through which men are tempted to sin. The apostle John says, “For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world” (1 John 2:16). It was through these that Adam and Eve were tempted. The forbidden fruit was seen to be “good for food”—lust of the flesh; “pleasant to the eyes”—lust of the eyes; and a “tree to be desired to make one wise”—pride of life.

These are the same avenues through which Jesus was tempted. He was tempted to “make bread of these stones”—lust of the flesh; “cast himself from the pinnacle of the temple”—pride of life; and to worship the devil to obtain the kingdoms of the world—lust of the eyes (Matt. 4). Against each temptation, Jesus fought back with the “sword of the Spirit, the word of God.” With each pricking rebuttal, He exemplified for us how the fight is to be made. This sword is mortifying to sin. Use it against all errors, “isms,” and schisms. Try it suicidally sometime! We are encouraged to know that “there hath

no temptation taken you but such as man can bear: but God is faithful...who will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it" (1 Cor. 10:13 ASV). May our wisdom be equal to seeing and our desires strong enough to pursue the way of escape from every temptation.

The Punishment For Sin

Sin is deceptive. The pleasures of sin—the devil's only picture of it—have blinded our eyes to its consequences. He makes us ask, "What is the harm in the things we want to do?" If you insist in doubting the rightness of some sin, he will insist that it is "a little sin" or a "respectable kind of sin." "Be not deceived...he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption" (Gal. 6:8). You had better "Put...on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof" (Rom. 13:14).

The Bible pictures God's hatred of sin, His love for the sinner, and the punishment for sin from which He offers the way of escape. But "because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil" (Eccl. 8:11). Do not mistake God's delay in punishing sin for His tolerance of sin. Peter says the delay in judgment is to give men time to repent (2 Pet. 3).

Did you ask for a change of the word of God on the punishment of the wicked? I would not if I could, nor could if I would change His word on any subject. If I should think the punishment that is in store for the wicked too severe, it would only be what **I think** about it. And who am I? Am I not a sinner, saved by God's grace? Shall the sinner say what his punishment will be.

Are you among that class of infidels who say they believe the Bible, but question the justice of God who gave it, because He says the wicked shall "go away into everlasting punishment"? To belittle the punishment for sin is to belittle the Bible and its Author, and encourages sin and man's ruin because of it. We love the only Saviour when we know it is from eternal destruction that He saves us. The enormity of sin is measured in terms of the sinners' punishment. Salvation is sought as a pearl of great price when we know the cost of being lost.

It cannot be denied that men suffer directly or indirectly for sin in this life. Variations of nature's laws lead to suffering. But the question is asked, "Is there a punishment for sin after death?" The Bible says, "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God?" (Heb. 10:28-29). This is something worse than "dying without mercy"—the capital punishment of this world. Jesus said, "Fear him, who after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell" (Luke 12:5 ASV). After death, at the judgment, Jesus said "These (the wicked) shall go away into eternal punishment: but the righteous into eternal life" (Matt. 25:46 ASV).

Don't enter eternity unprepared and in your sins. Hear the Saviour, believe His word, and "repent and be baptized for the remission of sins." Or, if you were once faithful and have again become entangled in sin, will you not repent of your sins, confess your faults, and pray God for forgiveness?

What About Spiritualism?

C.R. Nichol

Death does not end all. "The body without the spirit is dead..." (Jas. 2:26). One of the results of the separation of the spirit from the body is the death of the body. Inspiration never predicates death of the spirit. The spirit cannot die, because by its very nature it is immortal. It is the offspring of Jehovah; the body is of the dust.

Consciousness is an attribute of the spirit, not of the body. Consciousness continues with the spirit after the death of the body. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord..." (Rev. 14:13). The word from which *blessed* is translated may properly be rendered *happy*. Happy are the dead which die in the Lord. Consciousness is necessary to happiness.

Through the centuries man has desired to see beyond the grave—to know the condition of the dead and talk with them, and through all the years there have been those who professed to have the power to communicate with the dead. In our modern days those professing to have such power are called,

“Spiritualists”

With many it is thought Spiritualism had its rise in 1847 with the Fox sisters. The facts are, the same things now taught by Spiritualists were known in Egypt among heathens; in Rome by the wicked; in Greece by the curious; and in the Old Testament by God's enemies centuries before the birth of Christ.

What Is Spiritualism?

The outstanding doctrine of Spiritualism is the teaching that the spirits of those who have died not only can, but in many instances do, return from the spirit world and communicate with the living of our world; that the communications are made possible by certain persons called “mediums.” Those Spiritualists—now called “mediums”—were in other ages called “witches,” “diviners,” “necromancers.” All such were said to possess “familiar spirits.”

Spiritualists insist that the spirits of good people return to earth and are ever present to look after and guard their loved ones; the spirits of the wicked who have died are hovering around places of vice. Spiritualists teach that surrounding the earth are seven spirit spheres. The first two spheres are occupied by wicked and undeveloped spirits. The sphere a spirit occupies is determined by how nearly it has apprehended perfection; that the ones most nearly perfect are in the seventh sphere. These disembodied spirits breath a psychic ether; they are clairvoyant—can see through all space; they are psychometric—in touch with everything and can hear everything.

Meetings had by Spiritualists are usually had at night—with lights extinguished or dimmed. The method by which the “mediums” claim to communicate with the spirits of the dead are varied. At times it is by the rapping of a table, by means of the Ouija board, by looking into glass as clear water, by closing their eyes and maintaining silence and imposing silence on all within the room where the seance is being held. Many have been the ones who have fallen into the hands of Spiritualists and been deceived—things they did not understand were presented. In fact, every trick of Spiritualists has been exposed. Years ago, famed magician Harry Houdini proposed to post a sum of money which would be given to the Spiritualists if he did not duplicate any “demonstration” a Spiritualist would make in one of their meetings, and that then he would explain just how the trick was performed. Not a Spiritualist could be found who would rise to the contest!

Take from Spiritualism its claim that it receives messages from the dead, and the cult will die within the year. Trickery, jugglery, mesmerism, and sleight-of-hand performances account for nine-tenths of the things held by Spiritualists.

Darkness Rather Than Light

Jesus said there were those who “loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil” (John 3:19). The works of Jesus were not performed under the cover of darkness—His works were not done in a “corner.”

God Condemns

When thou art come into the land which Jehovah thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found with thee anyone that maketh his son or daughter to pass through the fire, one that useth divination, one that practiseth augury, or an enchanter, or a sorcerer, or a charmer, or a consulter with a familiar spirit, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For whosoever doeth these things is an abomination unto Jehovah... (Deut. 18:9-12 ASV).

The foregoing passage needs no comment. Its meaning is evident to all who read it.

Yes, ancient magicians, soothsayers, diviners, wizards, and necromancers had various ways by which they professed to communicate with the spirits of those who had died, and all such “mediums” were condemned by Jehovah, and He forbade his people con-

sulting with them.

The Witch Of Endor

It is insisted by Spiritualists that the witch of Endor is the example of a “medium” calling up and communicating with the spirit of one who had died. If the history of this witch and Saul's visit to her is an example of necromancy, it is the story of a wicked woman and a man Jehovah had forsaken engaging in something He forbade.

Saul was the first king of Israel. He was highly honored by Jehovah and the people. Samuel anointed him king (1 Sam. 10). Saul disobeyed God—“turned his back from following him,” told outright lies, and tried time and time again to commit murder. Through Samuel, God made known the fact that He would remove Saul as king of Israel, and Samuel mourned Saul's wicked course.

After the death of the prophet Samuel, the Philistines camped at Shunem, and defied Saul to come out and do battle with them. Fearful of the Philistines, Saul stole away by night across the valley of Jezreel to the home of the necromancer of Endor. He knew God's wrath was resting on him—and such men are cowards. His confidence gone, lashed by an outraged conscience, he rushed on, defying God's command to have naught to do with such women or their like.

Though he came to the witch disguised, his attempt to conceal his identity could not change the fact that he stood head and shoulders above his fellows. The witch must have known Saul—Saul the tall king of Israel who had put a ban on all the “mediums” of the land. When she reminded Saul of the edict, he gave promise that she would not be molested if only she would serve him. Saul told her that he wished to consult Samuel.

Samuel, God's faithful servant, had anointed Saul, and then lived to know of his flagrant disobedience to the law of Jehovah; he heard him tell lies, and then revealed to him the fact that he would lose his kingdom. Can you entertain the view that after the death of Samuel, God permitted a wicked woman to “disturb” him? Is it possible that every wicked hag throughout the land, if she chances to be a “medium,” is possessed with power to “disturb” saints who have passed on?

No, it is not said that Saul saw Samuel. A wicked woman, at the request of a wicked man, would interview the dead! God puts an end to the whole scene by sending Samuel and telling Saul of the certain defeat that awaited him, and a few hours later Saul committed suicide. The surprise of the witch at Samuel's appearance is proof that she did not really expect him to appear.

It has been insisted that if there is nothing real about the “carrying-on” of the “mediums,” if Spiritualism is without any foundation in fact, it would long since have come to naught and there would be no reason why Jehovah legislated against it. How careless some people are in their thinking! In days of old men worshiped idols—worshiped dumb stones carved into the images of men, beasts, birds. They thought there was power in the lifeless stone to hear and answer prayer, to bestow blessings, and to afflict with curses. Though there was no power in the idol to act in any way, Jehovah, nonetheless, legislated against idols.

So when Jehovah legislated against “mediums,” forbidding people to consult them, that in no sense argues that the “mediums” possessed power so professed by them—it no more argues the genuineness of the claim of the “medium” than legislating against the idol argued that the idol could bestow blessings.

You will be astonished if you ask an informed Spiritualist if he believes in legal marriages. With Spiritualists, Jesus was no more divine than any other man is divine. They insist that the doctrine of the atoning blood of Christ is nonsense, and declare that Tom Paine is saved in the same sense the righteous are saved.

Use ***The Gospel Preceptor*** to teach the lost.
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Humanism—Enemy Number One

Dub McClish

I am a threat that is even more sinister and dangerous to mankind than political terrorism. The grave danger I pose lies partly in the fact that most people do not recognize me. I do not grab dramatic attention by attacking innocent people with hijacked airplanes or car bombs, causing immediate physical injury or death. Rather, I subtly attack the spirits and minds of men, undermining and eroding the very foundations upon which sane lives are built. I wage war by means of demonic ideas that urge the unfettered pursuit and fulfillment of every fleshly desire. I elevate human nature and pleasure to absolute supremacy. I corrupt and rot the soul. I foment anarchy and destroy civilization. I am **Humanism**.

Definitions and Identifications

Some have confused Humanism with “humanitarianism,” and some even with the “humane” organizations that seek to protect animals from cruel treatment. Humanists portray Humanism as an innocent philosophy that pursues truth, justice, and the well-being of humanity. **Beware:** It is none of these.

Humanism claims two branches: Secular and Religious. However, the only distinction is that Religious Humanists dabble a bit in certain free-wheeling religious ritual and ceremony, while Secular Humanists make no such pretense. Theism and Humanism stand juxtaposed to one another. Theism is God-centered. Humanism is mankind-centered and God-denying.

Humanists generally deny that Humanism is a religion. However, their own “bible” (*Humanist Manifestos I & II*, Prometheus Books, p. 9, hereafter *HM*) so describes it, and more than one court decision has thus identified it. In his book, *Religions in America*, Edward L. Erickson defined Humanism as the philosophy “...that man must look to human experience for moral and spiritual guidance, **without believing that there is a supernatural God, or divine power to support him**” (p. 257, emph. DM). The best definition of this religion comes from their *Human Manifestos*:

Traditional theism, especially faith in the prayer-hearing God, assumed to love and care for persons, to hear and understand their prayers, and to be able to do something about them, is an unproved and outmoded faith.... We find insufficient evidence for belief in the existence of a supernatural; ...As non-theists [a euphemism for *atheists*, DM], we begin with humans not God, nature not deity.... But we can discover no divine purpose or providence for the human species.... No deity will save us; we must save ourselves... (pp. 13, 16).

James Curry, former president of the American Humanist Association, candidly wrote: “Humanism is a polite term for atheism.”

Background and History

Many Humanists claim the words of Protagoras, fifth century B.C. Greek philosopher, as the foundation of their creed: “Man is the measure of all things.” The first Humanist was actually the first man who denied God and determined to manage his own life and destiny independent of Him.

When Darwin published his theory of evolution, Humanists were given a “scientific excuse” for abandoning the idea of the personal Creator-God to Whom men are accountable. Utter secularism, **independent of God**, is Humanism’s sum and substance. Atheism, with its awful implications and consequences, is its cornerstone.

If Humanists are right in asserting that man is merely a highly developed paramecium, he is under no “moral” obligation to behave a certain way. He is accountable to no one but himself, and he need not think about duty, good, right, conscience, or consequence of behavior any more than a worm or a housefly does. Dostoyevsky was right: “If God did not exist, everything would be permitted.” If there is no God, there is no basis for moral laws or ethical absolutes. Unbridled carnal instinct becomes the sole basis of “right” and “wrong.”

In 1937, Aldous Huxley candidly admitted his moral relativist motivation for being a Humanist:

I had motives for not wanting the world to have meaning, consequently assumed that it had none.... For myself,...the philosophy of meaninglessness was essentially an instrument of liberation. The liberation we desired was... from a certain system of morality...because it interfered with our sexual freedom (*Ends and Means: An Inquiry into the Nature of Ideas and into the Methods Employed for Their Realization*, pp. 312, 316).

Effects and Consequences

If Darwin was right, there is no God. If there is no God, Huxley should not be censured. At least three generations have been fed such poisonous Humanistic philosophy to one degree or another in our public schools. The home environment that for many generations taught children moral principles (and insisted on adherence to them) has utterly failed millions of children as normal family life has degenerated. It is no mere coincidence that values placed on human life and private property in our nation are at an all-time low and continue to decline.

The foregoing definitions and descriptions, and the fact that Humanists occupy numerous places of great influence and authority, explain the major source of the burgeoning and destructive secularism in our nation. Following are some of the effects that are directly related to Humanistic ideology:

- The ascendancy of moral relativism, based on totally selfish and individual “felt needs” and situations
- The “sexual revolution” of the 1960s that produced the “Era of No-shame,” which has led to the recreational sex culture and the push for “normalization” of homosexuality
- The power of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), which serves as the legal arm of Humanism
- The removal of every vestige of God and the Bible from public schools, and the agenda to do the same from all public life (led by the ACLU)
- The feverish attempts to rewrite and/or revise history, particularly the fact that our Founding Fathers believed in the God of the Bible and the Bible as His Word to the extent that they based our Constitution, Bill of Rights, and most of our civil laws on Biblical principles
- The creation of the myth of “separation of church and state”
- The general ruination of public education
- The menace of “political correctness” (i.e., censorship by intimidation) and its related offshoots (hyper-tolerance, non-judgmentalism, multiculturalism, sensitivity training, overemphasis on diversity, et al.)
- The devaluation of human life seen in zealous championing of abortion and a growing cry for euthanasia
- The potential for unimaginable harmful policies in the field of “medical ethics” (e.g., genetic engineering, cloning, in vitro fertilization, stem cell research, eugenics, psycho-surgery, et al.)
- The attack on personal responsibility and accountability for one’s behavior, treating even the vilest criminals as “victims” rather than perpetrators

Humanistic Relativism is to blame for the moral collapse of the past several decades in the USA, the influence of which is far out of proportion to the actual number of card-carrying Humanists. Infidel theologians, who, for almost two centuries, have spewed forth the poisons of German Rationalism, Modernism, and Existentialism, have been (and are) their willing accomplices. Through their seminaries they have spawned several generations of denominational pulpiteers who treat the Bible as a fairy-tale product of literary evolution, and who question/deny every fundamental tenet of Christianity. These skeptics have robbed the masses of their faith in God, in the Bible, and in its absolute ethical principles, leaving them sitting ducks for Humanistic propaganda. As

long as the Bible was a dominating influence in our nation, Humanism's moral relativism could not thrive.

Humanism feels no threat from any religion except genuine Christianity, because the Bible declares its God, its religion (the church), and its ethical doctrine to be **exclusive, objective, and absolute**. Accordingly, Humanists do not oppose, but actually encourage, promotion of pagan religions in the public schools and elsewhere (i.e., Wicca, "Native American" religion, Islam, New Age-ism, Eastern religions, et al.).

They State Their Own Case

Humanists best state their attitudes toward moral absolutes, concerning which the following quotes are but a tiny sampling: Paul Kurtz, a past editor of *Humanist Magazine* and editor of *HM*, stated: "As secular humanists we believe in the central importance of the value of human happiness here and now. We are opposed to Absolutist morality..." ("A Secular Humanist Declaration," *Free Inquiry* 1:1 [Winter 1980–81]:5).

Frederick Edwards, a leading activist in efforts to remove any trace of "creation" thesis from public education, and at one time the administrator of the American Humanist Association, wrote:

We base our ethical decisions and ideals upon human needs and concerns as opposed to the alleged needs and concerns of supposed deities or other transcendent entities of powers.... We oppose absolutistic moral systems that attempt to rigidly apply ideal moral values... ("The Humanist Philosophy in Perspective," *The Humanist* 44:1 [January–February 1984]: 18–19).

In 1966 Joseph Fletcher wrote his infamous book, *Situation Ethics*. In a 1967 sequel (*Moral Responsibility—Situation Ethics at Work*), Fletcher explained his version of moral relativism:

In some situations unmarried love could be infinitely more moral than married unlove. Lying could be more Christian than telling the truth. Stealing could be better than respecting private property. No action is good or right in itself ([Westminster Press], p. 34).

He was at least consistent, if not "honest" (by his credo there is no such thing as "honesty"). He eventually gave up any pretense of belief in God and became a full-fledged Secular Humanist.

Inconsistencies and Absurdities

In the world of humanists, one could be "immoral" at one point and "moral" in the same act a moment later (e.g., a doctor performing an abortion immediately before and then immediately after the Roe v. Wade ruling). However, one of many fallacies of relativism is the assertion that time and place (i.e., situation) determine the morality of an act. In truth, **only the act itself does**. The **act** of abortion is right or wrong, moral or immoral. The relativist who pronounces, based on the court ruling, that abortion is "moral," implies that it was previously "immoral." In both cases, he makes an absolute claim. Like it or not, the relativist unavoidably ends up as an absolutist.

At the personal level ethical relativism always breaks down. The relativist loudly pontificates: "No one can say that adultery, theft, lying, or even rape, homosexual behavior, and murder are 'wrong'" (which is itself a statement of absolutism). But what does he do when his wife commits adultery or someone rapes his daughter, murders his son, or steals his car? He suddenly morphs, if only momentarily, into a staunch absolutist!

Humanists cannot logically or practically escape **absolutes** or avoid making moral judgments and claims in **absolute terms**. The moment one of them pronounces the Nazi Holocaust "evil" and the Nuremberg Trials "good," he has made an **absolute** ethical claim that denies his relativist premise. No Humanist can consistently say that one who attempts rape is "worse," and one who prevents the attempted rape is "better." To pronounce anything "good" or "evil," "better" or "worse," implies an **absolute standard**. The Humanist must therefore avoid—at all cost—the use of such words as *all*, *none*, *never*, *always*, *must*, *completely*, and (above all), *absolutely*.

The statements, "All moral values are relative" and "There are no moral absolutes" are both absolute statements. Reread Fletcher's comment above, and let its blatant self-

contradiction soak in: “No action is good or right in itself.” He uttered an **absolute** denial of all **absolutes**. The moment the Humanist makes any such claim he forfeits his case, exposing its inconsistency and absurdity.

The True and Only Alternative

Ethical values must be either **objective** (from an unvarying source exterior to us) or **subjective** (arising from within us)—there are no other choices. One correctly identifies moral absolutes with an **objective ethical standard**. If a standard of absolute ethics exists, this standard implies an absolute and objective Source. This Source must possess and exemplify all such absolutes to perfection. God, the omnipotent, omniscient Creator revealed in His creation (Psa 19:1–4; Rom. 1:19–20), is further revealed in the Bible as perfect in every moral attribute (i.e., love, kindness, justice, purity, long-suffering, righteousness, et al.). From His nature flows His standard and pattern of ethical absolutes for mankind, His ultimate creation: “Be ye holy, for I am holy” (1 Pet. 1:16). Ethical absolutes are rooted solely in God and His special revelation (the Bible). Herein lies the explanation for Humanism’s bold assault against everything pertaining to the Bible. **It must destroy the Bible or be destroyed by it!**

Biblical ethics are based on two great fundamental principles of conduct, stated by Jesus the Christ :

Jesus answered, The first is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God, the Lord is one: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. The second is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these (Mark 12:29–31).

Love of God with all of one’s being is primary, followed by love for one’s fellow man as one loves himself. The Ten Commandments reflect this very order. The first four commandments establish man-to-God obligations, while the remaining six set forth man-to-man ethics. In direct contradiction to Humanism, the Bible exalts God and ties all human behaviors to this ultimate loyalty. This loyalty drives us to His revealed, absolute standard of conduct—His law, as revealed in the Bible. Love for God cannot be defined apart from respecting and obeying His law: “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments” (1 John 5:3a).

The Bible (God’s law) is infallible: “The scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35b). It is indestructible: “But the word of the Lord abideth for ever” (1 Pet. 1:25a). It therefore alone qualifies as the absolute standard that defines good and evil, right and wrong, truth and error. One of its major themes is this distinction. Scripture enables men to “...have their senses exercised to discern good and evil” (Heb. 5:14; cf. 2 Cor. 6:14–16; Gal. 5:19–23; Tit. 2:12; 1 John 2:15–17; et al.). To use some other standard invites God’s eternal condemnation: “Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness...” (Isa. 5:20a).

Conclusion

Humanism is but one more attempt of rebellious men to eschew the restraints of their Creator. Paul described Humanists in every age:

[They] became vain in their reasonings, and their senseless heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, ... they refused to have God in their knowledge... (Rom. 1:21, 28).

Automobiles do not write their operator’s manuals; their makers do. And so it is with God and puny men. We must resist this deadly religion/philosophy with all our might.

Coming Soon! A New Book by Jerry C. Brewer

“The Thing That Hath Been...”

“There is no new thing under the sun” (Eccl. 1:9-10). The author parallels the apostasy of the church in the 19th century with current apostasy, identifying its roots and modern manifestations in “mainstream churches of Christ.” It will surprise most readers and probably infuriate many, in the vein of Ira Y. Rice's *Axe on the Root*.

The Uniqueness of Jesus (Concluded)

Ron Cosby

Jesus Christ is the greatest person who ever lived. His moral character, His teachings and His influence upon history demonstrate that He is indeed unparalleled.

His Death

Though some do weird things to avoid death, all men die. Benjamin Franklin said, "In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes." It has been more than two centuries since he uttered those words, but they are still true today. Paul said, "...death reigned from Adam until Moses..." (Rom. 5:14 ASV). Even our Lord died.

Paul states that, when Jesus died, He, unlike other men, was the substitute for the sins of men. "...it is appointed unto men once to die... so Christ also, having been once offered to **bear the sins** of many, shall appear a second time, apart from sin, to them that wait for him, unto salvation" (Heb. 9:27-28 ASV). There is no redemption outside of Christ.

Man's redemption permeates the pages of the Bible, from cover to cover. Verse after verse in the New Testament speaks specifically of the vicarious death of the Lord. Here are two:

Much more then, being now justified by his blood, shall we be saved from the wrath of God through him" (Rom. 5:9 ASV).

...we thus judge, that one died for all, therefore all died; and he died for all, that they that live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him who for their sakes died and rose again... Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in him (2 Cor. 5:14-15, 21).

Jesus' death was physical; He **did not die spiritually!** Therefore, because of His sinlessness He is the only One who could die for us. The following illustration from the World Library helps us to understand how one may be worthy and valuable enough to die on behalf of many.

A war broke out between two tribes in the territory that is now Alaska. One old chief saw that if the war continued, neither tribe would put up its winter supply of food (mostly berries and salmon) and both tribes would die of starvation. Under a flag of truce he pledged that his men were willing to stop fighting. The other chief said, "No," since his tribe had lost ten more men in the war. The old chief then declared, "I am a chief. I am worth more than ten of your men. You may kill me and let the people have peace." The proposal was accepted. They killed the chief and peace came. It is claimed that years later a missionary came and preached to those tribes. When the cross was proclaimed to them, it made sense to the people as they remembered the kind old chief.

If we reject Jesus' sacrifice for the sin of our souls, there remains no other method or manner of atonement (Heb. 10:26-27). Forgiveness is possible for all, no matter how wicked one has been.

His Resurrection

Jesus is not the only one to be raised from the dead, nor is He the first. However, four truths set His resurrection apart from all others.

1. The Lord's resurrection is the only one specifically predicted. Centuries before it occurred, David made known the Messiah "For thou wilt not leave my soul to Sheol; Neither wilt thou suffer thy holy one to see corruption" (Psa. 16:10 ASV).
2. The Lord's resurrection is unique because, except for the Lord, all that were raised died again. "Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death no more hath dominion over him" (Rom 6:9-10). He has the keys of death (Rev. 1:17-18).

3. The Lord's resurrection is unique because He raised Himself. All resurrections are passive, except for Jesus'. He said, He had the power to take up His life again: "...I lay down my life, that I may take it again...I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" (John 10:17-18 ASV). Scholar Albert Barnes is correct when he said, "None but God can raise the dead; and as Jesus had this power over his own body it proves that he was divine." Who Raised Jesus? The Father? The Son? The Spirit? All raised Him, just as all of deity has a part in our salvation.

4. The Lord's resurrection is unique because it declared Him to be the only begotten Son of God, "who was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead; even Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 1:4 ASV). Christianity is established on the resurrection —no resurrection, no Christianity. If Christ is not Deity, the whole superstructure of the church falls.

A man supposedly went to a famous French statesman for advice. This man tried to found his own religious system and had failed to draw a following or much interest. The statesman told him how he could gain a great following: "Go and be crucified and then raise yourself from the grave the third day."

It appears that founding a genuine religion is not so easy. Jesus did that which only God could do. He raised Himself and established the church of Christ (Matt. 16:16-18; Rom. 16:16). We ought to follow Jesus. It cannot be wrong.

His Ascension

... as they were looking, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they were looking stedfastly into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; who also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye looking into heaven? this Jesus, who was received up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as ye beheld him going into heaven (Acts 1:9-11 ASV).

Jesus lived. Jesus died. Jesus rose again. But, what then? What happened after He arose from the grave? What happened after He appeared for forty days with the disciples and others? What was His fate?

Was His departure lowly? Or, was it a spectacular display of Deity? Did He fall down to the ground and return to the dust, as all men one day will? Did He simply fade or vanish, disappearing into thin air? Did He gallop off into the sunset on a white steed?

We need not guess. We know. The narration is simple, but it is filled with great meaning and assurance. The special departure of the Lord makes it obvious that He is not like other men. He is without an equal. He is unmatched in all history.

The inspired historian Luke gives us the answer. He ascended (Acts 1:9-11; Luke 24:50-53). Prophets of old also give answer. He ascended. David said, "Thou hast ascended on high..." (Psa. 68:18). Daniel adds, "... behold, there came with the clouds of heaven one like unto a son of man, and he came even to the ancient of days, and they brought him near before him" (Dan. 7:13-14).

They not only declare that Jesus ascended but that He ascended into heaven. The Lord's ascension **into heaven** places Him in a category of His own. "And no one hath ascended into heaven, but he that descended out of heaven, even the Son of man, who is in heaven" (John 3:13 ASV). Daniel speaks of that glory, and His place of ascension (Dan. 7:13-14). Stephen saw Him in heaven (Acts 7:55-56). John saw Him in heaven (Rev. 5:6-7).

Jesus lived, died, rose again, and ascended to heaven! What great encouragement!

His Coronation as King

In the first century, Rome appointed kings who reigned even in Judea. How is it possible for Paul, who saw dozens of rulers seated as kings, to say that Jesus is the "only Potentate" (1 Tim. 6:15)? Did Paul refuse to acknowledge the reign of others or did he emphasize that Jesus' rule is without equal? Jesus **reigns without equal**.

Jesus' coronation set Him apart from all kings because He reigned **after** His death. At Mary's house, the angel proclaimed her yet-to-be-born child King. However, He was not crowned until after He ascended into heaven. Jesus predicted that the day of Pentecost (33 AD) was the day He would be crowned (Matt. 16:28; Mark 9:1; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4). Jesus died to become king.

There's an old painting in a church that's entitled, *King of Kings and Lord of Lords*. It shows Jesus Christ sitting high up above the earth, looking down on the creation, robed in gorgeous purple, crowned with a gold crown, and holding the old time trappings of power—a scepter and a long two-edged sword. One day, a group of Junior High students was ushered into the room to view the painting. After gazing at it for some moments, one of the students looked at the teacher and asked, “Where are the nail cuts?” The one called King of Kings and Lord of Lords, has nail cuts, because He died to become King (copied and edited, RLC).

Jesus' coronation set Him apart because He reigns **from** heaven. Shortly before He died, Jesus told His hearers that He had to go into a far country (heaven) to receive the kingdom (Luke 19:14ff). A few months later, Peter said that He was seated on David's throne (Acts 2:29-36). Both Luke and Daniel inform us that He reigns now from that “far country” (Dan. 7:13-14). Furthermore, Paul gives us a clear time line, saying that He will reign until He returns; at which time, He will give the kingdom to the Father (1 Cor. 15:22-26). No other reigns **from** heaven's throne.

Jesus' coronation set Him apart because He reigns **over** a spiritual kingdom **in** the hearts of men. The reason He can reign from heaven is because the kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36-37). The kingdom is spiritual and within the heart (Rom. 14:17; Luke 17:20-21). None reign as the Lord does.

Jesus' coronation set Him apart because He reigns **above** all that is in heaven and upon the earth (Eph. 1:19-23; 1 Tim. 6:15; Matt. 28:19; Phil. 2:9-10). Let Him reign in your heart.

*O that, with yonder sacred throng,
we at His feet may fall,
Join in the everlasting song,
and crown Him Lord of all.*

His Salvation

“And in 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).

Jesus is called Saviour. “And we have beheld and bear witness that the Father hath sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.” (1 John 4:14 ASV; Eph. 5:23). Jesus did not die to save men from the slums of Chicago or Cairo, but from the sins of the soul. He did not die to save mankind from worry or war, poverty or politicians, hatred or heartache, or illness and pain. Heaven announced Jesus saves from sin, “And she shall bring forth a son; and thou shalt call his name JESUS; for it is he that shall save his people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21 ASV).

Salvation is only in Christ (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). Muhammad Ali, who was a Muslim, wrote concerning his mother, “My mother was a Baptist. She believed Jesus was the Son of God, and I don't believe that. But even though my mother had a religion different from me, I believe that on Judgment Day my mother will be in heaven.” Jesus responds, letting all know that He is the door (John 10:7-9). Paul adds that Jesus is the only mediator (1 Tim. 2:5-6). To say that salvation may be obtained outside of Christ is to conclude that the crucifixion of Jesus is unnecessary (Gal. 2:21). The belief that there is one God and only one way to God stands at the center of the Gospel.

Jesus' way of salvation shows He is unique. It is not by money or by great and precious gifts, nor through world conquest. During the Crusades, Catholics assured those who might be injured or killed a reward in heaven. Not to be outdone, Muslims in the Middle East want men and children to blow themselves up, promising a heavenly reward for those who do. Martyrs are assured of 70 virgins in a heavenly harem—far

more generous than the Catholic offer. The truth is, we must give self (Matt. 16:24-25). It starts with faith (John 8:24) and immersion in water unto the remission of sins (Luke 7:29-30). Faith and obedience are necessary (2 Thess. 1:9-10). Jesus is the fountain of forgiveness.

*There's a fountain free, 'tis for you and me:
Let us haste, O haste to its brink;
'Tis the fount of love from the Source above,
And He bids us all freely drink.*

It may be politically incorrect to claim Jesus as the unique Savior of the world, but it is Biblically correct. Jesus is unique because salvation is only in Him. Certainly, His salvation is unique, but He is unique because of His salvation (John 8:24; 6:67-68; 14:6).

A “Personal Relationship With Jesus”

Lee Moses

God is a personal God. There are three individual Persons Who make up the Godhead.

And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased (Matt. 3:16-17).

God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are present in this passage, and they are clearly three separate Persons.

God also has an interest in each being of His creation: “Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God?” (Luke 12:6). God’s interest is far more keenly seen toward mankind, whom He made ruler over all His creation (Gen. 1:26-28). The sparrows of which God takes note are of small value compared to that of each human being: “But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows” (Luke 12:7). Jesus emphasized the value of one human being’s soul when He asked, “For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matt. 16:26). One soul is worth more than all the world, and “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9). Christ is the only way to salvation (John 14:6), and it is essential that one has a certain relationship with Him if that person desires his soul to be saved.

However, in modern denominational terminology—“the speech of Ashdod” (Neh. 13:24)—a “personal relationship with Jesus” has come to mean something far different from any Scriptural concept of such.

One denominational website features an article entitled, “Personal Relationship with Jesus? Hah!” This article contains the following “characteristics of personal relationships”:

1. You recognize each other's voice over the phone before they identify themselves.
2. You also recognize their handwriting.
3. You share each other's feelings & hopes.
4. You spend time playing together.
5. You provide mutual emotional support for each other, as needed.
6. You tolerate imperfections in each other.
6. You communicate w/ gestures in addition to words ("That look")
7. You spend time together without much concern over what, if anything, is getting done.
8. You require interaction. It is not a very personal relationship if the communica-

tion back-and-forth between the people isn't personal.

9. Mass market communication is not personal. Something written to 'everyone' is not personal.

While applying such criteria to human relationships would certainly be subjective, applying such to relationships with Christ is blasphemous. Brief response is given to each of these. **1.** Jesus is not going to call anyone on the telephone. **2.** The writer's reference to handwriting is vague. **3.** Christians indeed strive to grow more like Christ, and thus to share His feelings of love for His Father and for mankind, and in the hope of eternal life. **4.** Christians do not "play together" with Christ! While Christians have authority to participate in recreational activities and must continue to manifest Christ in their lives during such activities, Christ will not interact in playing. **5.** Christ provides emotional support for Christians, but the Divine Christ has no need for "emotional support." **6.** Christ has **no** imperfections (Heb. 4:15; 1 Pet. 1:19; 2:22). He may tolerate imperfections in mankind, but He cannot tolerate sin—the very reason He had to die for all humanity. No. 7 is ludicrous, as is No. 8: Jesus has a great concern for what, and whether anything, is getting done (John 4:34; 9:4; Rev. 2:5). Nos. 9 and 10: Jesus speaks to us through His word: "God...hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son" (Heb. 1:1-2). This is something that has already taken place, yet the words continue to speak to each person who will hear (Rev. 2:29; et al.). His word gives each person "all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (2 Pet. 1:3).

The writer's concept of what a "personal relationship" needs to be is self designed and has nothing to do with what the Scriptures teach one's relationship with Jesus is to be. The apostle Paul described his relationship with Jesus: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). The relationship the Christian has with Christ is different than any held between any two human beings. It may not have some of the characteristics of relationships we consider to be our closest on earth. Yet it is far more beautiful. Christ is described to be **in** us, and we **in** Him (Gal. 3:27). Christ showed His love for us by dying for us on the cross, we continue to show our love for Him by following His word (John 14:15). Could any relationship be more personal?

Reply to a Methodist "Pastor"

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following is a letter to the editor replying to an article that appeared in *The Oklahoman*, Aug. 11, 2007. In that article, a Methodist pastor, Andrew Tevington, answers a question and makes a number of incorrect assertions about churches of Christ.

Jess Whitlock

Having been a minister for the "churches of Christ" (Rom. 16:16) for almost 40 years, I was intrigued by the article, "Church of Christ Guided By New Testament," written by Mr. Andrew Tevington. But it occurred to me that it was a colossal blunder on your part to have a Methodist minister explain what he thought he knew about the church of Christ.

Mr. Tevington thought the church of Christ had its origin in America in the 18th or 19th century. I guess he never thought to check his sources. Churches of Christ were in England in the 1600s and in Germany in the 11th century, and they existed in the first century (Rom. 16:16).

Christ's church had a glorious beginning on the day of Pentecost in the city of Jerusalem in approximately 33 A.D. (Acts 1:4-2:27). The gospel was preached with power on that day and 3,000 souls obeyed the gospel by being baptized for the remission of their sins (Acts 2:38) and were added to the church of Christ by the Lord (Acts 2:41, 47). It is surprising that a man who refers to himself as a "pastor" in the United Methodist Church is not familiar with the Scriptures in these matters.

He is correct in stating that Barton W. Stone, Alexander Campbell, and a host of others

withdrew from denominationalism, obeying the gospel and becoming simply Christians. They threw away all man-made creeds and sought to follow only the teaching of the New Testament. Isn't that what God asks of all men in every age and in every place?

God's word comes through His Son Jesus Christ (Acts 10:36). His word is inspired and furnishes us completely to every good work (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Jesus said, "Thy word is truth..." (John 17:17) and that truth will set men free (John 8:32). That word is styled, "the sword of the Spirit" (Eph. 6:17), every word of God is pure (Psa. 119:140; Prov. 30:5-6), and by that word every person living today will be judged (John 12:48)—not by a *Book of Discipline* or some other man-made creed.

Mr. Tevington also correctly points out that those men and women who sought to follow only the Bible were believers in Jesus Christ (John 8:24) and were in congregations called "churches of Christ" (Rom. 16:16). In light of the Scriptures, no one could possibly object to that practice. To do so would require one to be more wedded to an uninspired man like James O'Kelly, John or Charles Wesley, or Martin Luther, rather than to Jesus Christ.

Mr. Tevington correctly observes that churches of Christ—which still follow the inspired word of God—oppose missionary societies and other organizations that seek to replace the authority and autonomy of the local congregation. He also points out that divisions have occurred among churches of Christ, resulting in more man-made denominations such as The Disciples of Christ and the Independent Christian Church denominations. The apostles said, "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). Disobedience to God generally results in division and those who stand solidly for truth must never compromise with error or false teachers and their ways. **God's** word must always be the **last** word (Matt. 28:18; Heb. 1:1-2; John 17:17; Col. 3:17; Eph. 3:3-4; 2 Thess. 2:15; Jude 3; Gal. 1:8-9; John 12:48).

Mr. Tevington expressed surprise at the unity of faith and practice among churches of Christ when he wrote, "...each church of Christ decides for itself what it believes and teaches. Despite this autonomy, there is a surprising degree of similarity among churches in practice and doctrine." First Corinthians 1:10 explains that "mystery" at which he expressed surprise: "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."

It's simple. When everyone is following the same Bible authority and not subscribing to a man-made creed, catechism, or oracle, it is easy to be "in the same mind and in the same judgment." There is no mystery here. It is simple obedience to God's will expressed in the New Testament.

Mr. Tevington correctly represents **faithful** churches of Christ when he writes that the church of Christ, "typically prohibits the use of musical instruments in worship." A question about instrumental music is what prompted the question he answered in the article. He is correct saying that **faithful** churches of Christ, "allow in church (sic) only those things that the New Testament specifically authorizes." In this, he hit the proverbial nail right on its head. There is **no authority** for mechanical instruments of music to be used in worship to God. He thinks that authority is found only in Ephesians 5:19, but look at every other passage in the New Testament where music is mentioned and one will not find mechanical instruments in any of them. Here they are: Matthew 26:30; Acts 16:25; Romans 15:9; First Corinthians 14:15; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 2:12; James 5:13. Also consider Hebrews 13:15. Now, let us list every passage in the New Testament where mechanical instruments **are** used in worship to God: _____ . Not a single one exists.

Tevington says instruments of music were not used, "in Christian churches until the 600s." Have you ever wondered why they were not used until six centuries **after** the establishment of the church? Actually, they were not popular in worship until after the 1200s. In A.D. 139, Justin Martyr wrote, "The use of singing with instrumental music was not received in the Christian churches, as it was among the Jews in their infant

state, but only the use of plain song.”

The *Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia* says, “In the Greek church the organ never came into use. But after the eighth century, it became more and more common in the Latin Church; not, however, without opposition from the side of the monks.” In the 16th century, the eminent Roman Catholic scholar and theologian, Erasmus, wrote,

We have brought into our churches a certain operose and theatrical music... The church rings with the noise of trumpets, pipes and dulcimers; and human voices strive to bear their part with them. Men run to church as to a theatre, to have their ears tickled.

And John Wesley, founder of Mr. Tevington's Methodism, was quoted by Adam Clarke as saying, “I have no opposition to the organ in our chapel, provided it is neither seen nor heard” (*Clarke's Commentary*, Vol. 4, p. 684).

It is correctly pointed out that members of the church of Christ baptize persons “for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38) when they seek such baptism of their own free will. We do not pour or sprinkle water on a baby against his will because that would avail nothing. To be saved, one must be baptized, but first one must hear and believe God's word (Rom. 10:17; John 8:24; Heb. 11:6). A baby can neither understand God's word nor believe it. Then one must repent of his sins (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3-5; Acts 17:30). A baby is innocent and has no sins of which to repent. One must then confess the name of Christ (Matt. 10:32-33; Acts 8:37). Babies cannot make such a confession.

I chuckled a bit at Mr. Tevington's statement that churches of Christ, “do, however, celebrate Holy Communion (sic) every week, using grape juice instead of wine.” Why would he think we had any desire to imbibe wine is beyond me. Surely, at some point in his studies, he must have come across the phrase, “fruit of the vine,” in Matthew 26:29, Mark 14:25, and Luke 22:18. They all say, “**fruit of the vine.**” Where does he—or anyone else—think we can find Biblical authority for substituting alcoholic wine for the “fruit of the vine”—grape juice? The Bible clearly condemns imbibing strong drink of any kind in the pages of both the Old and New Testaments.

Another amusing statement is found in the final line of his article. He says, “Therefore, the congregations are led by male elders.” As they say in the common vernacular, “Duh!” First Timothy 3:2 declares that, “A bishop then **must** be blameless, the **husband** of one **wife**” (emph. JW). It appears that the elder (bishop) would **have** to be a **male**. How else could this qualification be met?

Titus 1:6 is also plain in this regard: “If any be blameless, the **husband** of one **wife**...” (emph. JW). The Holy Spirit did not want anyone to misunderstand this qualification. In the Greek, this is a “one-wife **man**” but **not** a one-wife **woman**! One would need **two** PhDs to misunderstand this qualification for an elder!

Finally, I set forth the following propositions to Mr. Tevington for public discussion:

1. “The Methodist Church is scriptural, according to Christ's New Testament.” I will deny. Will Mr. Tevington affirm?
2. “The church of Christ is scriptural, according to Christ's New Testament.” I will affirm. Will Mr. Tevington deny?
3. “Singing is authorized in worship to God in Christ's New Testament.” I will affirm. Will Mr. Tevington deny?
4. “Mechanical instruments of music are authorized in worship to God in Christ's New Testament.” I will deny. Will Mr. Tevington affirm?

Things to Which Salvation is Ascribed

W.R. Craig

The subject of salvation is fully discussed in the New Testament and it is to that book we must go for information about the salvation of our souls.

The New Testament ascribes salvation to a number of things. It is the purpose of this study to show that all of them must be considered if we are to be saved by Christ.

Well informed people do not select a few verses from the scriptures, claim them as theirs, and build a religious system upon them. Those who sincerely seek to do the Lord's will and be saved will receive the entire Bible as a harmonious whole and endeavor to find out all that God has spoken on any subject that pertains to the salvation of their souls. Having said that, let us now consider the following:

Two Seemingly Opposite Views

Two views of salvation that seem opposed to each other are found in Ephesians 2:9 and James 2:24. The first says, “not of works,” while the latter says, “by works.” Both of these statements can be harmonized because the Bible does not contradict itself.

Martin Luther regarded these two statements as contradictory and decided only one could be right. As a result, he chose Paul's statement in Ephesians and rejected James' statement. Luther also held that the entire book of James was without authority.

Others have decided that the difficulty can be solved by supposing that the two writers were talking about different kinds of faith. But there are two reasons that prove this view incorrect.

1. Neither writer was talking about faith. That was not the subject under consideration.
2. The Bible knows nothing about different **kinds** of faith (Eph. 4:5). All faith is the same in kind, though not in the same degree. A gallon of pure water is the same in kind as a gallon of ocean water, but not in the same degree.

How then is this question to be settled? The difficulty is not about faith, but about works. Paul was speaking of the works of the Law of Moses while James spoke of the works of the gospel of Christ. Each would have assented to the view of the other (cf. Eph. 2:10).

The Case of Noah

Noah's salvation was ascribed to three things—faith, the ark, and water (Heb. 11:7; 1 Pet. 3:20). Now, if salvation is by “faith alone” how can it be by something else too? We must be careful about taking something alone which the Lord has joined to something else, or separating that which he has joined together.

Not only was Noah saved by faith, but in his conduct we have a clear example of the strength of faith necessary to save. Notice that, “being warned of God,” he was “moved” with godly fear. To what extent was he “moved?” His faith was strong enough to move him to do exactly what God told him to do and, as a result of his obedience, he was saved. Do you think Noah would have been saved if he had refused to do as God instructed him?

One may search the Bible through, but he will not find any other principle upon which men may be saved. Each man must believe God and then do what God instructs (Heb. 11:6; Mark 16:16).

“But,” one objects, “if people must be baptized to be saved, that means the majority of them will be lost.”

That statement is absolutely true. It was also true in Noah's day. Few people were saved then, and people today should accordingly take warning.

The Salvation Promised Through Jesus Christ

The New Testament says we are saved or “justified by faith” (Rom. 5:1). This is a general statement and is true in every case, whether specifically mentioned or not. This was also true in Paul's case (Acts 22:16).

The New Testament also says we're saved by the following things:

1. The blood of Christ (Rom. 5:9).
2. The life of Christ (Rom. 5:10).
3. Obedience to the will of God (Matt. 7:21).

Baptism is also mentioned in connection with our salvation.”The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us...” (1 Pet. 3:21). This is also a general statement and is true of everyone who is saved by Christ (Mark 16:16; Gal. 3:26-27). Those who say we “make too much of baptism” need to ask themselves, “Is baptism a command of God?” If it is—and it is—then what must be done with it if one expects to be saved?

That “too much is made of baptism” could also be said of denominations. It makes no difference how much faith a person has, he will not be received into any denomination which teaches baptism without first submitting to that which that particular denomination **calls** “baptism.” How essential, then, has the Lord made baptism? Just as essential as denominations have made it. Christ will not accept anyone into his church without their submission to his command to be baptized (Col. 1:18; Gal. 3:27).

The New Testament also says we are saved by grace (Eph. 2:8). Salvation is the gift of God, but it takes two parties to complete a gift—the one who offers and the one who accepts. God provides and offers salvation, while man receives and appropriates it (Titus 2:11-12).

It is true that we are justified by faith, but that faith does not justify unless and until we are willing to take God at his word and do what he commands. And that includes baptism for the remission of sins. (Acts 2:38).

“By Grace Are Ye Saved Through Faith”

Jerry C. Brewer

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God...” (Eph. 2:8).

The gospel system of justification is one of grace on God’s part and faith on man’s part. So the gospel—the message of grace and faith—is that which reveals God’s grace and produces obedient faith in those who accept it. It was through the free gift of Christ that God’s grace was manifested to the world, but it is through the faith of man that His grace is applied to our souls. The plan of salvation is singular, but consists of two parts—God’s and man’s.

The Grace Of God

So far as God’s grace is concerned, He has done everything He’s going to do to bring about our salvation. His plan to save the race of man was purposed from eternity, executed in the birth, life, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and coronation of Jesus Christ, and revealed to man by the Holy Spirit through Christ’s apostles in the first century. His purpose was carried out, Christ died once for sin (Heb. 9:27), and everything necessary for man to know about God’s plan of salvation has already been revealed by the Holy Spirit (Jude 3; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Titus 2:11-12). Note the past tense of Titus 2:11—“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men.” God has completed His work in saving man, His grace has been revealed and there is nothing more He will do.

As the prime cause of salvation, God willed it according to His eternal purpose (Eph. 3:7-11). As the sacrificial cause of salvation, Christ freely gave Himself for our sins (Rom. 5:6-8). As the procuring cause, His blood purchased us from sin (Acts 20:28; 1 John 2:2; Eph. 1:7). As the revealing cause, the Holy Spirit miraculously guided the apostles into all truth (John 14:26; 16:13) and revealed the mystery—or plan—of salvation through them (Eph. 3:3, 5). As the instrumental cause of salvation, the gospel which was revealed by the Spirit brought life and immortality to light, (2 Tim. 1:10), and is God’s power to save (Rom. 1:16-17). Since God has done all of this, that leaves man responsible for availing himself of God’s grace and that must be done “by faith.”

Man’s Faith

It is by faith that man appropriates the grace of God and receives salvation. That was Paul’s argument in Galatians 3:6 when he said, “Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” Notice that Paul doesn’t say “Abraham

believed **in** God,” but that, “Abraham **believed** God.”

When Moses disobeyed God’s instruction to speak to the rock at Kadesh and struck it twice with his rod, God told him he would not enter Canaan, “Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel...” (Num. 20:12). Moses believed **in** God, but did not **believe** God. One may profess belief in God, but if one does not obey God, he is an unbeliever and in this sense, Moses was an unbeliever.

Faith in God is not mere mental assent to His existence, but a willingness to do whatever God says. That is amply illustrated in Hebrews chapter eleven. The faith of those worthies listed there was one which moved them to action. “By faith Abel offered...” (Heb. 11:4). God told Abel what to offer, and Abel did what God told him, for “faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). Likewise, “By faith, Noah being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear and prepared an ark to the saving of his house” (Heb. 11:7). By His grace (Gen. 6:8) God instructed Noah to build an ark, and gave him the specifications for it. By faith, Noah obeyed and built the ark according to God’s instructions and it was said of him, “Thus did Noah according to all that God commanded him, so did he” (Gen. 6:22). That was acting “by faith.” So it was with Abraham’s faith. He heard God’s voice and acted upon the commands God gave him. Thus, “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” Faith is doing what God says because God says to do it. No other kind of faith is acceptable to God, and no other kind of faith will make one righteous.

Concerning “Joining the Church”

J. Roy Vaughan

There are many honest hearts in the land without hope of eternal life. They are not mean characters, nor are they prejudiced toward the truth. They simply have not heard the gospel of Christ preached in simplicity and purity. The doctrines of men have not satisfied the yearnings of their hearts, and the gross inconsistencies of these doctrines have but added to their troubles.

One problem that troubles them is, “What church shall I join?” They have been brought up with but little Bible knowledge, but much tradition. They have been taught they should some day join a church. They intend to join a church some day.

There is another class of people, also without hope of life in the world to come, to whom this question is of little concern. Some of these people have already joined a church. Some joined a church to be with their wives, or the wife joined the church of her husband’s choice. Some join a church for the prestige that it lends them in society or in the business world. It may be they made their choices because they liked the preacher, or their friends were members of it. Some like to be members of a church that can boast a beautiful church building.

Of course, to the man who knows the Bible, all such reasons for church membership are absurd and ridiculous. If these reasons are good for being a member of one church, they are also good reasons for joining a dozen churches. Men sometimes join more than one lodge because one organization offers advantages that another does not, and in order to get all the good they offer to join several. Now, if there are advantages found in one church that are not found in another, why not join two or even several churches? There is really no reason why one should not join more than one church if he joins them for any or all of the above-named reasons.

The truth is the Bible does not talk about a man “joining the church.” The expression, “joining the church,” is not in the Bible, nor does it convey the scriptural idea. Leaving Bible names for Bible things and substituting names and phrases of men for these things has led into error. When we use the language found in the Bible, there is little danger of misunderstanding the truth. The Bible speaks of men “obeying the truth,” but we would not get the idea from that statement that a man has joined a denomination and that he did it merely to be with his wife. It takes one thing to put a man into a denomination and something else to make him a Christian. Denominationalism teach-

es men to be converted, and then go and “join the church of their choice”; but the Bible teaches that the same thing that makes a man a Christian also makes him a member of the church.

Peter wrote, “Seeing ye have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth unto unfeigned love of the brethren, love one another from the heart fervently” (1 Pet. 1:22 ASV). Paul said, “But thanks be to God, that, whereas ye were servants of sin, ye became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching whereunto ye were delivered; and being made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness” (Rom. 6:17-18 ASV). This is the way the Bible speaks. Their souls were purified by obeying the truth and they were made free from sin when they obeyed the truth. Does the expression, “joining the church” express the same? Certainly not. Neither do men conclude from the above Bible language that one does not have to obey the gospel to be saved.

Furthermore, Paul wrote that Jesus would render vengeance “to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus; who shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might” (2 Thess. 1:8-9 ASV). Why talk about “joining the church”? When people are taught to obey the gospel, they will not worry about which church to join.

Again, the Bible speaks of the Lord adding the saved to the church. “And the Lord added to them [to the “church” KJV] day by day those that were saved.” (Acts 2:47 ASV). “And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women” (Acts 5:14). “They then that received his word were baptized: and there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls.” (Acts 2:41 ASV).

Does this sound like “joining the church”? The Lord does the adding, and He adds to the right church when men obey the gospel and are saved. This is why we know that all the saved are in the church. The Lord is not a partial Lord, nor is He negligent in His duty. It is His business to add the saved to the church, and He adds **all** the saved to the church.

In His conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus said, “Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God!” (John 3:5). Is one born again when he “joins a church”? According to denominationalism, one is converted, born again, then goes off and “joins the church of his choice.” But the Bible teaches that one is born again when he obeys the gospel.

Seeing ye have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth unto unfeigned love of the brethren, love one another from the heart fervently: having been begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the word of God, which liveth and abideth (1 Pet. 1:22-23 ASV).

James wrote, “Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.” (Jas. 1:18 ASV).

Now, the church is the house of God—God's family. Paul wrote concerning “how men ought to behave themselves in the house of God, which is the church of the living God...” (1 Tim. 3:14-15 ASV). The house of God is God's family, and Paul called it the church. When one is born again through obedience to the truth, he is a child of God, a member of God's family, the church. He did not join it, but was “born again.” All of God's children are in His family, the church. All the saved are added to the church. They do **not** “join it.”

Be sure to visit our website at www.thegospelpreceptor.com for lots more articles not included in our monthly editions. You will also find links to other Bible study sites and video and audio sermons.

Editor's Travels

October 1 found us preaching on the Lord's Day morning for the London & Macomb church in El Reno, Okla. where we preached 50 years ago. Gary Henson, a long time

friend and author of *The Ivory Domino*, is their preacher. It was a delight to renew old acquaintances with brethren we had not seen in a half-century. We preached at Willow, Okla. Oct. 13, and in Chillicothe, Texas Oct. 27. We are grateful for each opportunity to go “everywhere preaching the word.”

“What Saith The Scriptures?”

Harrell Davidson

A reader asks this question:

Please does 1 Corinthians 6:16 prove that God joins people in marriage only when they “know each other?” I have heard some preach that even after the marriage ceremony, with both families consenting to the union, the newly married are not really married until they “know each other.” Please I would very much appreciate your thoughts on this.

I sincerely thank you for this question. It is not the first time nor will it be the last time that the same false claim the “know each other” mistake will be made and comes about by a misunderstanding of what Paul is and is not teaching.

Perhaps here is the background that is used: “And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD” (Gen. 4:1). “And Cain knew his wife; and she conceived, and bare Enoch: and he builded a city, and called the name of the city, after the name of his son, Enoch” (Gen. 4:17). “And Adam knew his wife again; and she bare a son, and called his name Seth: For God, said she, hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew” (Gen. 4:25).

Notice please that it is the case that Adam “knew his **wife**.” (bold added HDD) They were already married, if you please, by God. No one would argue differently. Adam knew his wife again in Gen. 4:25. Again it was his wife that he had known from the time that God made her from his side. Again, notice that Cain also “knew” his wife. She, as well as Eve were wives to Cain and Adam respectively before the conception. I am not sure why this cannot be seen by honest readers of the Scriptures. Why called *wife* if not so?

If “knowing” a woman out of wedlock—marriage—was the case then there are possibly thousands upon thousands who are married and do not know it! “How is that?” so one asks. If knowing a woman equals marriage—and it does not—then every boy and girl who have been this romantic are married in the rolling back seat of the automobile of fornication, or nowadays in the bedroom of the girl or boy. That is fornication. We should understand the terms involved. For brevity’s sake all adultery is fornication but not all fornication is adultery.

What about every man who “looketh on a woman?” Are they married or do they “know each other,” strictly speaking? Jesus said, “But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Matt. 5:32). Was physical contact made by looking? That is not what Jesus said. Remember that all adultery is fornication but not all fornication is adultery. Think about it!!

Let’s look at the broader context of First Corinthians 6:

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God (vv. 9-11).

Some of those converts had gone back into the sin that they pretended to leave behind

it seems. and they are reminded that they should have left that past behind or that such works of the flesh would lead to torment.

In verse 12 we begin a section that goes all the way through chapter 10: 23. Notice that verse 12 of chapter 6 says, “All things are lawful, but all things are not expedient; all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.” If you look at chapter 10:23 he says, “All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.” Therefore, when we look at 10:23 we understand what kind of things he is talking about. He is referring to matters of indifference or matters that do not affect morals. There must be a distinction made between moral sins and the matter of the things that he was discussing as being lawful and whether engaging in something was an expedient.

Whenever the Bible prohibits something there is no way that it can be an expedient. When the Bible commands something there is no way that we can eliminate it. Here are two things we must get in mind. Anything that is prohibited by God does not come in the realm of expediency. Anything that God has commanded does not come in the realm of expediency. Here is where we have a great deal of trouble in separating matters. Many troubles exist because there are things that come in the realm of expediency and things that have to do with faith, that is, divine things that God has commanded or prohibited.

Therefore, let me state it this way—Bible things and Bible ways. This is clearly stated and the substance of the whole. A Bible thing must be specified. A Bible way does not have to be specified. There are Bible ways of doing Bible things. This is what Paul is addressing. He is saying that something must be lawful for it to be expedient. If something is not lawful it is not expedient. Thus, he is addressing things in the area of liberty in this section. Now, it is vital that we understand that a Bible thing is that which is authorized or stated explicitly. For example, on the night of the Passover God authorized the killing of a lamb. He specified its age; it had to be without blemish. Here are Bible things! How were they to kill the lamb? Could they knock it in the head or just cut its throat? It is not specified. Thus any way they killed the lamb would be fulfilling what God had said or what God did not say. He was silent on the way the lamb was to be slain. There was also the matter of the red heifer whose ashes was mixed with water. Why a red heifer instead of a white heifer? When God specified the kind no other could substitute for it. There is a difference between something that is a Bible thing and a Bible way. Therefore, this section deals with matters of liberty.

Another thing to keep in mind as we study this section is that Corinth was a pagan, idolatrous city. What went on there was as pagan and immoral as could be found anywhere. The worship of Venus took place in Corinth. There was a temple where such worship went on. In this worship there was fornication or prostitution that was practiced in pagan worship. Here are people who had been living in this pagan city. The eating of the meat of the sacrifice that was offered, and the matter of fornication was not only approved by the people, but was practiced in areas of worship. Paul used the children of Israel as an example in 1 Cor. 10:7-8: “Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.” If you go back to Numbers 24 you will read about how Balaam tried to get Balac to lead the nation of Israel into sin. That is exactly what they let happen. Pagan worship was practiced, but pagan worship and fornication were tied together and this has a bearing on what was happening in Corinth.

It is in this context that Paul wrote verse 15: “Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid.” Here, in my judgment, is the gist of verse 15. From this passage on down indicates that the sin of fornication differs from all other sins. I may not be able to explain all of that, but it is quite clear from this passage that while other sins may be committed with the body fornication is a sin against the body. Proverbs 6:30-32:

Men do not despise a thief, if he steal to satisfy his soul when he is hungry;

But if he be found, he shall restore sevenfold; he shall give all the substance of his house. But whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul.

Even the book of Proverbs shows that while stealing is a sin and fornication is a sin that there is something about fornication that is different from the sin of stealing. It is true that a man that stole and did not repent would be lost, but this shows there is a difference between the two. Why does it read the way it does if there is not a distinction in some way about how that fornication is a sin against one's own body and is the worst sin that a man can commit? This is what Paul is saying in 1 Cor. 6. You will not read this in the morning newspaper. This is the only place that will give us specific teaching anywhere regarding this. It is so contrary to what the world believes and practices today. I would like to emphasize that **any sin** not repented of will cause one to be lost regardless of what it may be. Sin is sin! We realize this but there may be consequences that are much different.

Verse 16 given at the top of this piece shows that there is a difference between marriage and committing fornication here there is one similarity. Paul quotes from Genesis 2 and the union that is formed.

Let us now look at verse 17: "But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." Let us go back to Romans 6 and look at some things there. In Romans 6:1 people wanted to know if they should sin more that grace might abound. He showed that those who had obeyed the Gospel should not live any longer in sin. Notice the word "live." This indicates a habitual practice. This comes about by weakness and we do not strive to not live in sin. Those baptized into Christ were baptized into His death. We are not only brought in relationship to His death—His death becomes ours. It is there that we appropriate all that was invested in that death—that is the cross.

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. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.

We should not serve sin. When one becomes a penitent believer he resolves to break with the life of sin. We are dying with Christ thus a union is made with Christ. Realizing this we are not our own. We have another master. We leave behind a world of wrong. Out in the world there is an empty seat. If we have not become dead to sin then the seat is still filled. We must leave the world—that seat becoming empty and take up our abode with Christ. Obeying the Gospel is not just a form. There is a reality that takes place. We are translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. A change takes place. We are not going to think, act or live like we used to because a change has taken place. A change in our values has taken place. We value things that are noble and righteous.

Look at 1 Cor. 6:11 and following again. They had obeyed the Gospel and were washed, sanctified, and justified. They now belonged to Christ. They were to leave the world behind. They were different, but some had not come to appreciate that. We turn ourselves over—even our bodies—to the service of the Lord. In Romans 12 Paul said to present your bodies a living sacrifice. The flesh cannot have dominion over us and this is why fornication is the worst sin that a Christian can commit. He takes a body that belongs to Christ and makes it one with a harlot. Keep in mind that Corinth was a pagan city, but that does not change the Scriptures. They had been surrounded by immorality. In obeying the Gospel there were things that they learned. These matters were related to the immediate situation.

Probably less than a hundred years ago a man and a woman decided to start living together and they were one at that point in time. There was and still may be in some states of what is called a "common law" marriage. I have known individuals in the past who did this. They were recognized as married before they ever "knew" each other in that sense.

Today, most states have marriage laws that must be met before people are married and these laws must be kept. Christians are citizens of two kingdoms in effect—civil and

spiritual.

Brother Davidson answers readers' questions in this column each month. If you have Bible questions, you may email them to him at harreld@charter.net

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Believing a Lie

Homer Putnam Reeves

Believe a lie and be damned! A working of error is imposed upon those who receive not the love of the truth. This causes them to believe a lie and be damned. (1 Thess. 2:10-12).

The Love Of Truth

“The love of truth” is a highly significant expression. One will never be disposed to accept truth until he possesses a love for the truth. Embracing truth depends almost entirely upon one's attitude toward truth. If one is disinterested in truth, he will never search for truth.

Truth is to be discovered. “Seek and ye shall find.” Seldom does one “stumble onto” truth. It is imperative that one cultivate a love for truth if he would come to possess truth.

Alternative

If one possesses not the truth, there is only one alternative. Those who possess not truth are possessors of untruth. They are victims of error. Having failed to embrace truth, they necessarily embrace untruth. The man who holds not truth is a prey to lies, and if one's faith rests upon lies, he stands condemned.

What Is Truth?

Here is a question of fundamental importance. By way of comparison, all other questions are quite insignificant. Jesus answers, “Sanctify them in the truth: thy word is truth.” (John 17:17). The word of God is truth!

Man discovers truth as he becomes familiar with the word of God. Apart from God's word, man must ever grope in error and be ever victimized by lies. Jesus declared, “If ye abide 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).

It Seems Right

How often have you heard these expressions? “I think I'm alright, so I'm alright,” or “I feel that I'm saved, and that's all that matters.”

If either or both of these expressions represent your thinking, **you are believing a lie**. Both statements are absolutely false, and every man who attempts to live by them is building on the sand. Solomon said, “There is a way that seemeth right unto a man; but the end thereof are the ways of death.” (Prov. 14:12).

Paul is an excellent example attesting to the truth of Solomon's statement. Paul was satisfied in his own mind that he was doing right in persecuting the followers of Christ. While he thought he was doing right, he was certainly doing wrong. He later said, “I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.” (Acts 26:9).

Jacob believed that his son Joseph was dead. He believed a lie. He acted upon this false belief and mourned for his son. His grief was as poignant as if the boy had actually been slain (cf Gen. 37). Surely, anyone can see the folly of such illusory thinking.

Moral Man

Is your thought that you can do what seemeth good, live a good moral life, and be justified by your morality? If “yes,” **you are terribly deluded**. Only the blood of Christ can remove your sins. (1 John 1:7).

The Name

“I think one name is as good as another.” Did you ever hear that? If one is naming a baby, a type of flower or species of plant, perhaps one name is as good as another. But in religion it simply isn't true. There is a name that is above every name (Phil. 2:9).

What would happen if people began referring to an orchid as a cauliflower, and a cauliflower as an elephant ear? What confusion! Why? Because names are words with agreed meaning. They are useful only so long as agreement regarding meaning continues. Having come to agreement on the meaning of a term, one must be exact in the usage of terms. All responsible people know the importance of this.

Christ's name is above every name. A Christian is a follower of Christ. The name “Christian” is offensive to no student of God's word. By wearing that name, disciples can be justifiably proud, and thereby constantly proclaim that “in none other (name) is there salvation.” (Acts 4:12).

Any Faith?

Do you believe that one faith is just as good as another? If “yes,” **you believe a lie!** “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” (Rom. 10:17). “There is...one Lord, one faith, one baptism.” (Eph. 4:5).

Faith Alone?

Do you believe that justification before God is by faith only? If “yes,” **you believe a lie!** “Ye see than how that by works a man is justified and not by faith only.” (Jas. 2:24).

Saved?

Do you feel you have been saved without having learned the truth? One man recently stated that he “got saved” 10 years ago, and then added that he didn't know anything about the Bible. The man was deluded. It isn't possible for one to be saved independently of the Bible.

“Every one therefore that hath heard and hath learned of the Father cometh unto me.” (John 6:45). Ignorance of the truth forever precludes conversion to Christ.

Can't Fall?

Do you believe that if once saved, you are saved forever, and cannot fall? If “yes,” **you believe a lie!** “Ye are severed from Christ, ye who would be justified by the law; ye are fallen away from grace.” (Gal. 5:4 ASV).

How tragic that one should live in error, build upon lies, and be eternally condemned.

The Kingdom of Heaven

B.C. Goodpasture

John the Baptist was the first preacher of the New Testament. He came at an opportune time. Immediately preceding him there had been 400 years of silence, the Jewish Dark Ages, the inter-biblical period. Malachi, the writer of the last book of the Old Testament, had foretold the coming of a great prophet. He said, “I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of Jehovah come. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers” (Mal. 4:5-6 ASV).

Jesus said that John was the Elijah of whom Malachi spoke (Matt. 17:9-13). Those who are devoted to the uniformly literal interpretation of prophetic language cannot consistently accept the Master's application of Malachi's prediction, because John the Baptist was not literally Elijah. John came in the “spirit and power” of Elijah (Luke 1:17). He came to prepare the way of the Lord. The faithful Jews had been waiting for four long and weary centuries when John appeared with his simple raiment, his strange diet,

and his marvelous message.

This fearless harbinger of the Messiah began his work in the wilderness of Judea by calling the unrighteous to repentance and by announcing the kingdom of heaven as at hand. He said, "Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:2). This is the first use of the expression, "kingdom of heaven," in the New Testament. It is peculiar to Matthew, who uses it more than 30 times. Other phrases used to designate the same institution are, "kingdom of God," "the kingdom," "kingdom of Christ," and the "kingdom of the Son of his love." These are not the only terms employed to describe this institution, but they are the ones most frequently used to describe it as a kingdom.

Thayer defines "kingdom of heaven" or "kingdom of God" as, "that perfect order of things which He (Christ) was about to establish, in which all those of every nation who should believe in Him were to be gathered into one society, dedicated and intimately united to God, and made partakers of eternal salvation." Even Thayer does not in this definition attempt to make any microscopic distinctions in meaning between "kingdom of heaven" and "kingdom of God."

The epitome of John's preaching, "Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," clearly teaches two facts concerning the kingdom: first, that it had not been established; second, that it would not be long until it would be established. Certainly, if it had already been in existence, he would not have announced it as being in the future; and if it had been thousands of years in the future, he would not have described it as "at hand" and have urged its immediate approach as a motive to repentance.

When Jesus sent out the 12 and the 70, He commissioned them to preach the same doctrine concerning the kingdom. He said, "And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 10:7; Luke 9:2). Suppose we had been Jews and had been in the audiences of these primitive preachers and heard them say that the kingdom of heaven was then at hand, and after we heard John the Baptist, the 12, the 70, and Jesus unite in thus testifying, some modern speculator had come along, professing to be a disciple of Christ, and had told that the kingdom of heaven would not yet come for several hundred years, would he not have appeared to us to contradict all that was said by the original witnesses on the subject? How could these inspired preachers urge their hearers to repent in view of the approaching kingdom if they knew that these same hearers would be dead thousands of years before the kingdom would ever be established? A reasonable consideration of their message shows unmistakably that they thought the kingdom would come during the lifetime of those to whom they preached.

Again, Jesus told Peter that He would give him the keys of the kingdom of heaven, with the promise that whatever he bound on earth would be bound in heaven, and that whatever he loosed on earth would be loosed in heaven (Matt. 16:19). Moreover, He used the word "kingdom" in verse 19 as equivalent to "church" in verse 18. So if we can find when the church was established, we will have found when the kingdom was set up. "Upon this rock I will build my church" does not mean that the church had already been built. Nor does it place the establishment of the church, or kingdom, beyond the lifetime of the apostles, otherwise neither they nor Peter could have used the keys which were given to them.

From this language it can be seen that the kingdom of heaven would come sometime between the promise of our Lord and the death of Peter. The Saviour said, "Verily, I say unto you, there are some here of them that stand by, who shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God come with power" (Mark 9:1 ASV). Or, as Matthew records it, "Verily I say unto you, there are some of them that stand here, who shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom" (Matt. 16:28 ASV).

According to this teaching of the Saviour, the kingdom of heaven had not yet come with power, or been set up; **in it** the "Son of man" had not yet come, but all this would take place before the deaths of many of those then present. This shows that the kingdom was not established in the days of Abraham, the prophets, or John the Baptist. John had fulfilled his mission, but the kingdom was not yet come. And if the kingdom had not yet come, some of those present must yet be alive, since they were told they

would not taste death until they saw the “kingdom come with power.”

The kingdom, or church, came on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus. On that day the Spirit came (Acts 2:1-4), the power came (Acts 1:8), and since the kingdom was to come with the power, it **also** came on that day (Mark 9:1).

On that day, Peter announced that Jesus had been raised from the dead in fulfillment of God's promise to David to “set one upon his throne” (Acts 2:30 ASV). Henceforth, the kingdom, or church, is **not** spoken of **in prospect**, but as **in existence**. Paul and the Colossians had been translated into it at the time Paul wrote to the church at Colosse (Col. 1:13).

Interpreting Scripture

Dub Mowery

When two people are discussing a religious topic on which they disagree, one of the individuals will often say to the other person, “Well, that's just your interpretation!” Or one of them will go as far as to declare: “You interpret the Bible the way you want to, and I'll interpret it the way I want to.” This erroneous concept that the Word of God can be interpreted however an individual chooses has long been the norm of the average person's approach to the inspired scripture. Just what does the word *interpret* mean? Webster's Collegiate Dictionary gives the following definition of it: “To explain or tell the meaning of; to elucidate.” If we understand a particular passage of scripture, then there is only one correct explanation of it. Any other view of that passage is incorrect and therefore should be rejected. It is possible for two people to disagree on scripture and both be wrong, but there is only **one correct** interpretation of it.

The Roman Catholic Church believes that it has the sole right to interpret the Bible. Their explanation of the verse at Second Peter 1:20, which says, “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation” is that an individual cannot understand the scripture without it being interpreted for them by the officials of the Catholic Church. This is an instance in which a passage is taken out of its context. That passage does **not** refer to those who **read** the scripture to learn the Heavenly Father's will for them. It has reference to the Old Testament prophets who **wrote** the prophecies found therein. Let us now consider verses 20 and 21 together: “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.” These two verses simply tell us that what the prophets foretold and taught was not their personal concepts, but that which was given unto them by the Holy Spirit.

Each of us is personally responsible to learn what the Lord would have us to do. This principle was stressed by the Apostle Paul in his letter to the church at Philippi. “Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Phlp. 2:12). Neither those Philippian Christians nor we are given the green light to determine right from wrong religiously separate and apart from the inspired Word. The Philippian letter itself was Paul's instruction to them in doing the will of God. We are assured by Jesus Christ that the truth is obtainable (Matt. 5:6; John 5:39; John 8:32).

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A Heart Problem

David Ray

Why isn't the church growing? Why is it having so many problems? Why are members becoming so biblically illiterate? Why aren't we as evangelistic as we used to be? There may be several reasons we could address in order to answer these questions. I

would like to address a heart problem that is at the center of each of these concerns.

As I talk to folks in our local community, I come across many “religious” people who refuse to worship anywhere, though they claim to believe in God and Jesus Christ. They say things like, “the church is full of hypocrites,” or “I have my own relationship with God,” or “I can worship in my house by myself.” It seems that too many people subscribe to the view of the late singer Don Williams who said, “I don’t believe that Heaven waits for only those who congregate.” This is a very popular view, but is it truth?

I find in my Bible that one becomes a Christian when he is baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:15-16; Rom. 6:3-6; 1 Pet. 3:21; et al.). It is at this point that he is added to the Lord’s church (Acts 2:47). This point is reiterated in 1 Cor. 12:13 when we see that we are “**baptized into one body**” and that this one body is Jesus’ one church (Eph. 1:22-23). Can a Christian then return home and never assemble with the body? No more so than his physical body was intended to be divided into pieces and exist alone in separate places!

Hebrews 10:25 has often been a misused passage when it comes to worship attendance. I’ve heard some say that this verse forbids a member of the church from ever missing a single service (excluding illnesses, etc.), while others comment that this isn’t the context, and it has nothing to do with whether or not a member misses services. What does this verse teach?

When we study the book of Hebrews, we notice that inspired the author clearly has a purpose for writing, a problem to deal with. That problem was that the Jewish members of the church were still struggling with Judaism and how it did or didn’t fit in with Christianity. The writer therefore uses several comparisons/contrasts to show that Christ brought a new and better covenant (8:6-7) and that the old covenant was never able to take away sins (10:4). Many of these brethren were apparently leaving or contemplating leaving the church altogether and returning to Judaism. It is this problem that he is addressing when he writes in 10:25, “not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is....”

This passage is not addressing a Christian missing a single assembly. It is actually much deeper than that. These brethren to whom Hebrews is written were struggling with the question of which system to follow, Judaism or Christianity. Some were forsaking the assembling of themselves as the church because they thought another system of religion was better. They were **not** skipping services because they’d been up late on Saturday night, or were on vacation, or just had something better to do. They were committed, but to the wrong system. They simply needed to realize that Christianity was the right way. Had this not been an issue, these brethren would not have needed to be told to assemble together. They would have been doing it.

So what is our excuse today when we miss worship? Is it because we think Christianity is not the true way and we’re searching for a better way? Are we not at worship or Bible study because we’ve decided to return to Judaism? Certainly not! Even members whose attendance is lacking usually understand that Christ’s church is the only way to Heaven. Yet, amazingly, they won’t assemble! Must each Christian assemble with the saints? If we must ask this question, we have **a heart problem**. Why would a Christian—one who has had his sins washed away by the blood of Christ—not want to meet with others of the like precious faith and worship the very God who forgave his sins? Why wouldn’t a Christian jump at every opportunity to learn from God’s Word, to encourage the brethren, and to be encouraged? This person clearly has a heart problem. Remember that our word *church* comes from the Greek word meaning “called out; assembly.” The church, by definition, assembles together.

Why isn’t the church growing? Because too many members have heart problems. Their hearts are too focused on other things as higher priorities (none of which can save their souls). If we expect to grow as a church then we must first grow as **individual Christians**. Fortunately, this can happen, but only when we stop ignoring things as fundamental and foundational as church attendance, and decide to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Pet 3:18).

Calling on the Name of the Lord

Landry Brewer

You might be surprised to know that “calling on the name of the Lord” doesn't mean praying. Many people think that you can initially have your sins forgiven by praying. This misunderstanding is based on Paul's words in Romans 10:13 “For whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” But this passage has nothing to do with prayer.

So, what does “calling on the name of the Lord” mean if it doesn't mean praying? To call on somebody's name is to appeal to that person's authority. An ambassador deals with foreign governments and speaks “in the name of the United States” by speaking with the authority of our government. If you get married in the state of Oklahoma you must have a blood test, obtain a marriage license, have a man who is authorized by the state to perform the ceremony, and have witnesses attest that the ceremony took place. By doing all those things, persons who are married in Oklahoma appeal to the state's authority. They “call on the name of the state.”

To “call on the name of the Lord” is to appeal to the Lord's authority. There are examples in the New Testament of appealing to the Lord's authority for a variety of reasons. In Acts three, Peter and John healed a lame man outside the temple in Jerusalem. In Acts 3:6, Peter tells the lame man to arise and walk, “In the name of Jesus Christ.” Peter could as well have said, arise and walk, “by the authority of Jesus Christ.” Peter couldn't have healed the lame man by himself. He appealed to Christ's **authority**, or **name**, to perform the miracle.

In the next chapter—Acts 4—Peter told the Jewish leaders who had him arrested that not only was the lame man healed “by the name of Jesus,” but it is also through the name—or **authority**—of Jesus that we are saved from sin. In Acts 4:12, Peter said, “There is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved.” That means if we are saved, it is because we have appealed to Christ's authority for forgiveness.

That's the same thing Peter told the crowd on Pentecost in Acts 2. There, he used the same words that Paul used in Romans 10:13 when he told the audience that “whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Acts 2:21). When Peter's hearers were convinced of their lost condition, they cried out and asked what to do. In Acts 2:38, Peter told them **how** to call on the name of the Lord for salvation. “Repent and be baptized every one of you **in the name of Jesus Christ** for the remission of sins.” If “calling on the name of the Lord” meant praying, Peter would have said that. But he didn't. He told his audience to “repent and be baptized.”

There is another example on the book of Acts of a man being told to “call on the name of the Lord” for forgiveness. When Paul was on his way to Damascus to round up Christians and imprison them, he was blinded by a light. Jesus appeared to Paul and accused him of persecuting the Lord. When Paul asked Jesus what to do, Jesus told him to go into the city and wait for instructions.

Jesus then sent a man named Ananias to preach to Paul and some of his words are recorded in Acts 9. But to get a fuller picture of what was said, we must look at Paul's account of this event in Acts 22. Ananias asked Paul, “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, **calling on the name of the Lord**” (Acts 22:16). Paul had been praying for three days since he had seen Jesus. If any man could be saved by prayer, it would have been Paul. Yet, he had to be baptized to wash away his sins, indicating that he was still lost when Ananias came to him.

No person in the New Testament was ever told to pray for forgiveness in order to be saved. But Peter told the thousands on Pentecost in Acts 2 to repent and be baptized **in the name** of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and Ananias told Paul to **call on the name of the Lord by being baptized**. That's what it means to “call on the name of the Lord” for salvation.

Pure Speech is Indispensable

C.A. Norred

Purity of speech in religious discussion is not merely a theological consideration, as some might easily suppose, but is a necessity. Teachers of expression in all fields insist that clearness of expression depends upon clearness in thinking; and this dependence of clearness upon thought arises from the truth that words are merely symbols of ideas. This leads us to observe that similarity in thinking will tend toward similarity in speech. Hence, if we think as God thinks, we shall speak as He speaks.

The truth of true religion originated in the thinking of the Almighty, and was communicated to man in words divinely given (2 Pet. 1:21; 1 Cor. 2:13). Furthermore, it is our duty to refrain from adding to the divine word (Deut. 4:2; 1 Cor. 4:6; Rev. 22:18-19). If we respect the sanctity of God's divine will, we will then express our religious sentiments in terms of the Holy Scriptures. To fail in this particular entails the danger of adding to the divine word of God.

This danger of altering the divine will asserts itself in many ways. First, since words in a living language are constantly subject to gradual change in meaning, there arises the danger of using a Bible word to express an idea that is not in accord with the teaching of the Lord. Then there is the danger of creating words to express ideas that have originated with ourselves. We should, therefore, always exercise care to make our speech expressive of the divine will. In studying the need for pure religious speech, let's give careful attention to a few current religious expressions.

“The Church”

Everywhere we hear religious discussion, we hear mention made of “the church.” But this term is one with a distinct meaning in the Scriptures. In the New Testament, the term is used to designate that body of persons who belong to the Lord (Eph. 1:22-23). When we examine the matter more particularly, we observe that this body is composed of those who, on their faith in Jesus as the Son of God, have been baptized into Christ (Gal. 3:26-27; Rom. 6:4). The church is, therefore, simply the body of persons baptized into Christ.

Unfortunately, though, the average individual does not bear in mind this exact meaning of the term, but employs the term as meaning a denomination. This is naturally very confusing. From careful observation over a number of years I have come to hold the conviction that this misunderstanding in regard to the nature of the church is one of the most prolific sources of confusion with which we have to deal. In the very nature of things, we shall never get back to the Bible order of things until we come to understand the significance of the Bible term *church*.

“Joining The Church”

This is an expression which does not occur in the Scriptures. It arises out of our having created a term to name an idea which is of our own making. The average person makes a distinction between what he thinks of as becoming a Christian and becoming a member of the church. He is confused in his speech because he is confused in his ideas. What he needs is a correction of ideas, and this can be accomplished only by the word of God.

His principal trouble relates to two things:

1. **Conversion.** In all probability, he is thinking of conversion as some sentimental change which approximates what the Bible student thinks of as repentance. But repentance is not conversion, for it is expressly named as distinct from it (Acts 3:19). When he is led to compare Acts 3:19 with Acts 2:38, he will find that conversion as named in Acts 3:19 corresponds exactly with baptism as named in Acts 2:38. Hence, he may be led to understand that in the speech of the New Testament, conversion is simply that change of relationship accomplished in baptism—a translation from Satan's kingdom into Christ's (Col. 1:13).
2. **Addition To The Church.** And he needs to be made to understand that the Lord adds one to the church—one does not add himself in any process called

“joining” (Acts 2:47). And one becomes a member of Christ in baptism (Gal. 3:27). The pure speech of the divine word will, therefore, remove the confusion and enable the individual to understand that when he obeys the Lord in baptism he accomplishes his conversion and is added to the church by the Lord.

Names Worn By God's Children

The average individual is inclined to express himself in the terms of those about him and speak of Christians as Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Adventists, and such like. He should be shown in kindness that such is not in accord with the speech of the Holy Spirit. In the Lord's speech, the followers of Christ are called Christians, saints, disciples, brethren, and such like. If we are today what they were in the first century, these terms are sufficient to describe us.

God has revealed the things of true religion in order for us to be completely furnished unto every good work (2 Tim. 3:16-17). That revelation is made in the knowledge we have of His word (2 Pet. 1:3). Therefore, if we would be faithful to God, we should endeavour to know and respect His word.

In his labors to restore the pure religion of Judaism following the captivity, Nehemiah found the children of the Jews speaking half the language of Ashdod. It is easy for us today to slip into the faulty habit of speaking in the language of Ashdod. We need to purge all denominational jargon from our language and express our faith in terms of the Blessed Book. **Let us call Bible things by Bible names.**

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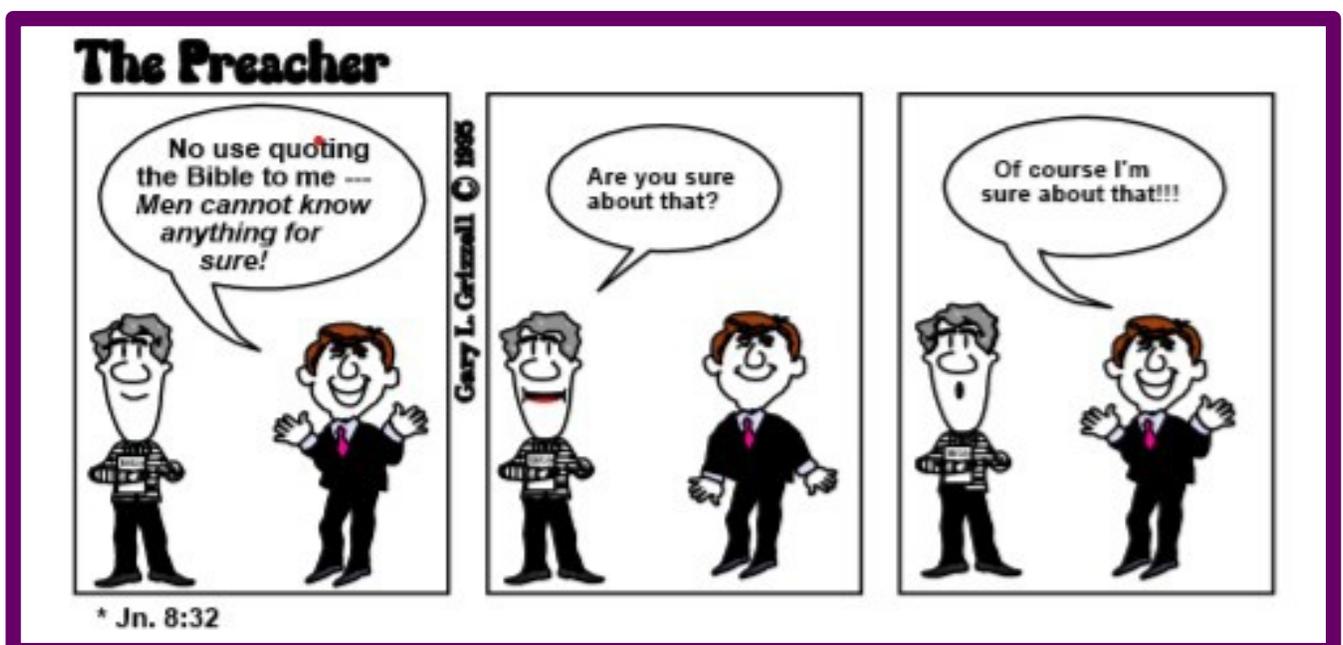
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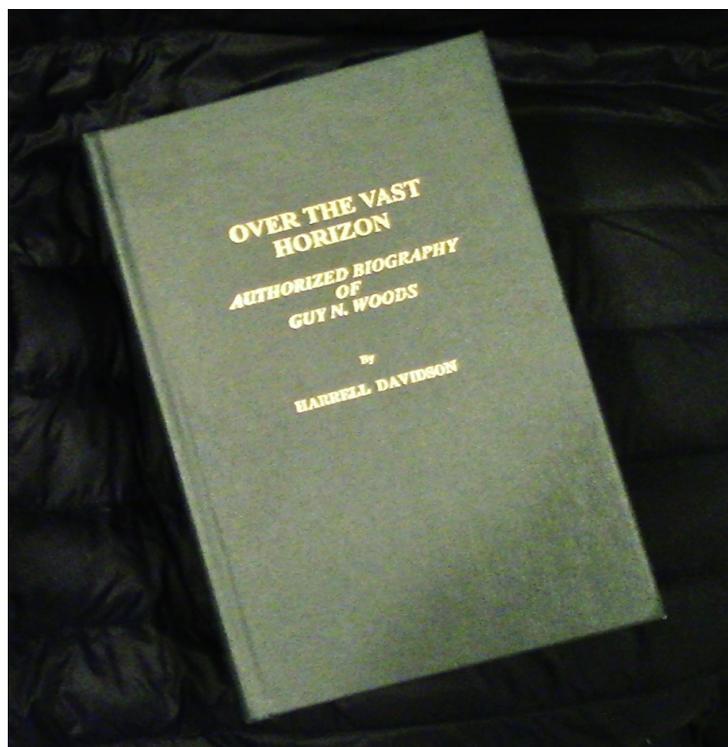
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