

The Gospel Preceptor

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

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The Gospel Preceptor In Electronic Format

After ceasing publication of the print edition more than 11 years ago, *The Gospel Preceptor* is being revived in a new format. We inaugurated publication of the print edition in Feb., 2000 and published it in that format for seven years. It was extensively used by churches and individuals to teach the gospel to the lost, and that *remains* our purpose in this revival of it. In our first print edition, we expressed our purpose, which we reiterate here for the first issue of the electronic edition:

With this premiere edition, *The Gospel Preceptor* is sent forth to proclaim the unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ to a lost and dying world. The name echoes David's praise of the Word of God in Psalms 119:104, when he declared, "Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way." Webster defines "preceptor" as a, "teacher; tutor." It is our purpose to teach the gospel of Christ, hence, our name.

Unless you have been living in a hermit's cave for the last few decades, you have noticed the headlong decline in morality, civility, and decency in our society. Children carry guns to schools that have banned any mention of God and the Bible, mothers routinely murder their unborn children, and what would once have outraged a decent society is now commonplace. Many people are crying for answers amid all of the spiritual and moral chaos that is now pandemic. But even religious institutions have abandoned any pretense of preaching eternal salvation and are playing the Pied Piper to a world gone mad with entertainment and the "social gospel."

The Gospel Preceptor, now in electronic format, is published monthly and sent free of charge to anyone who requests it. We urge readers to send us the email addresses of others who would like to receive it each month, and use it to teach lost friends and loved ones. Churches may also send us names and email address of members who would like to receive it.

In this publication, you will find fundamental articles from the pens of sound gospel preachers today, and a great many from previous generations. It is not our purpose to deal with current issues in the church, as other fine publications, such as *Contending For The Faith* and *Defender* do an excellent work in that area. *The Gospel Preceptor* is designed solely to reach the lost with the simple, sole, soul-saving gospel of Christ.

Thank you for considering this publication, and we hope and pray that you will find it useful in taking the gospel into your small corners of the world.

Jerry C. Brewer
Editor and Publisher

Bible Baptism

E. G. Creacy

The Saviour said to His apostles, in giving them the great commission, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be condemned” (Mark 16:15- 16). On the day of Pentecost, when the apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit and began their work of preaching “repentance and remission of sins in the name of Christ,” the Spirit-filled apostle Peter, in answer to the question: “What shall we do?” said, “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). For clearness of expression these texts stand at the very head of the divine statements of the plan of salvation. They condense that plan into the fewest words possible and confound the theological world with their brevity and simplicity. Realizing that these passages destroy every vestige of denominational teaching, the theologians have given battle to these inspired passages more than any other in the attempt to get rid of the doctrine therein set forth, and relieve the doctrines of men of the withering effect of these passages.

Prejudice often prevents men from ascertaining the truth upon all religious subjects. Baptism is conspicuous among the subjects thus misjudged by thousands of sincere but misguided people. No other New Testament subject is so detested by many professed Christians.

The Term Baptism in the New Testament

The terms “baptism,” “baptize,” etc., occur in the New Testament ninety-two times. As a positive command it occurs four times, as a universal command, one time; as connected with a promise, thirteen times.

The office of the “baptizer” is mentioned fifteen times. Baptism is one time declared to be “unto (for, in order to) the remission of sins”; twice it is stated that we are “baptized into Christ;” once that “baptism doth also now save us”; once, that we must “be baptized and wash away” our sins; twice that we are “buried with Christ in baptism” and from that burial raised with Him to walk in newness of life. Out of the eight detailed cases of conversion recorded in the Acts of Apostles, faith as a condition of salvation is actually mentioned four times, repentance once, but baptism is stated in all eight instances. Faith and repentance are implied, but not baptism—it is actually named. It is definitely stated that the Pharisees and lawyers, in rejecting baptism, “rejected the counsel of God against themselves.” These facts are too numerous to be ignored by people who claim to have the knowledge of the Bible and believe it. There is something radically wrong with a theology that can set aside, as worthless, such a volume of evidence on any subject. Yet, according to theology—I mean of course the doctrines of denominational churches—nothing in the Bible is so worthless and nonessential as baptism! According to denominational teachers, baptism is not only unnecessary, but in reality they make it very necessary to say nothing about it.

The Passages Considered

In the first text quoted (Mark 16:16) the Lord Jesus said: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” He did *not* say: “He that believeth is saved, and should be baptized as an outward sign of an inward grace.” The Lord placed salvation after baptism, not before it. In the second text (Acts 2 :38), the Holy Spirit through Peter said: “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.” In this passage repentance and baptism come before

remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. That is why both repentance and baptism are “unto” the remission of sins, and the reception of the Spirit. But Jesus said that one must believe before he is baptized; therefore, faith precedes repentance. Faith, repentance and baptism are the conditions of pardon. They are in order to the remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Belief results in a change of mind; repentance kills the sinner, and baptism buries the dead man. The sinner can do nothing more for himself in obtaining salvation. That is why he must be baptized—he cannot baptize himself any more than a dead man can bury himself. Believe and repent are verbs in the active voice, something done by the living child of Satan. But “be baptized” is in the passive voice—something that must be done for the dead sinner by another—the gospel agent whom God has appointed, and hence by the Lord, through his agent (Matt. 28:18-20). Thus the sinner is “buried in baptism.” Man can kill; but man cannot make alive. Life comes from God. “Man’s extremity is God’s opportunity.” The dead and buried sinner is now in God’s hands only. Through the name acknowledged, by the sinner before his death and burial, in that name, does God raise him from the dead into newness of life in Christ. The scriptural subject for baptism is the believing penitent. Only one who is old enough, and intelligent enough, to believe in Christ, and repent of sins, can be scripturally baptized. Infants cannot believe, and have no sins of which to repent, and are not commanded to be baptized, and therefore cannot be. Infant baptism is a relic of Rome.

Sprinkling Is Not Baptism

In passages cited we learn that baptism is immersion in water. Sprinkling and pouring cannot be baptism. There is no such thing as “modes” of baptism. Baptism is an action. Then, if sprinkling, pouring and immersion are modes of baptism, what is baptism? Of course, sprinkling is mentioned in the Bible, but never in connection with baptism.

In the Old Testament, in the Jewish law, there are twenty sprinklings; eight sprinklings of blood; three sprinklings of blood and water mixed; two sprinklings of oil; four sprinklings of mixed water and oil; hence, six sprinklings only in which there was water and then the water was mixed, and never unmixed. The truth is, God never at any time, in any dispensation, commanded anybody or anything to be sprinkled with water only (unmixed water) for any purpose.

Now, let us see what is in the New Testament on sprinkling. I shall give you every passage where it is mentioned. (1) Heb. 10:22: “Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience;” (2) 1 Peter 1:2: “The sprinkling of blood;” (3) Rev. 19:13: “Garments sprinkled with blood;” (4) Heb. 11:28: “The sprinkling of blood;” (5) Heb. 9:13 : “Blood of bulls and goats; ashes of a heifer;” (6) Heb. 12:24: “Blood of sprinkling.” So sprinkling is never used in connection with baptism in the New Testament.

What Baptism Requires

The lexicons define baptism to dip, to immerse, etc. The use of the word in the New Testament carries out this definition. Note what baptism requires: (1) A subject; the believing penitent (Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38); (2) An administrator (Matt. 28:19); (3) Water; “see here is water” (Acts 8:36); (4) Much water (John. 3:23); (5) Going to the water (Matt. 3 :5-8); (6) Going down into the water (Acts 8 :38); (7) A burial in water (Rom. 6 :4); (8) A resurrection from the water (Col. 2:12); (9) Coming up out of the water (Acts 8 : 39).

They Thought Wrong

W. R. Craig

Thinking we are right does not make us right. Even Paul admitted, “I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth” (Acts 26:9). In the verses following, he then listed a catalog of vicious things he had done in his unregenerate days. We can be wrong when we *think* wrong. “Wherefore let him that *thinketh* he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor. 10:12).

Our thoughts have consequences. Like so many others, Simon of Samaria had been saved—become a Christian (Acts 8:12-13), but then he sinned (vv. 18-22). As a sinning Christian, he was directed to repent and pray for forgiveness of his sinful *thoughts*.

Some ways that *seem* right are sometimes ways that lead to death. Solomon said, “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof *are* the ways of death (Prov. 14:12). And he further noted that, “He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool” (Prov. 28:6). We can either be self-deceived or deceive others to our own condemnation. “For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself” (Gal. 6:3). Paul also wrote that men will allow others to deceive them because, “they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (2 Thess. 2:10-12).

Many *think* they are serving God when they are fighting Him. Jesus spoke of those when He told His disciples, “They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service” (John 16:2). We cannot be sure we are serving God unless words spoken by God and found in the scriptures tell us so. “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 7:21). At no time has God said that sincerity alone would make us sure that we are acceptable serving Him.

Many years ago, when Sulfa drugs first came on the market, we knew of a little girl who died from taking a Sulfa preparation. The medical manufacturer who made it *thought* he was right. The physician who prescribed it *thought* he was right, and the loving parents who gave it to her *thought* they were right. Nevertheless, the little girl died. Their *thinking* they were right could not prevent her death. If thinking wrong with a powerful drug is deadly, how much more the misuse of the word of God!

Many people *think* they are children of God when they are not. Children of God today are those who have *obeyed the gospel*. “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:26-27). “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new (2 Cor. 5:17). Those who obey the gospel by repenting and being baptized (Acts 2:38-42, 47) are those who have undergone the “washing of regeneration” (Titus 3:5). Thus, they have been born of water and Spirit and have been added to the church.

Now, it is possible we may not reach heaven because we have been given the wrong orders by men who are wrong. A railroad engineer lay dying under the wreckage of his engine. Clutching the green tissue train orders in his hand, the dying man cried, “They gave the wrong orders.”

Many *think* they have a long time to live and prepare to meet God. But we must seek God while we are in the acceptable time, because we do not know how long that will be. “Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon” (Isa. 55:6-7). Jesus also warned, “Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour ye think not, the Son of Man cometh” (Matt. 24:44). The rich fool *thought* within himself that he had many years left. But God said, “Thou fool. This night shall thy soul be required of thee” (Luke 12:20).

Don't trust in your own thoughts or the thoughts of any man concerning your salvation. History is filled with doomed men who *thought wrong*. Study God's word and seek the right way. Christ save us—not as we *think*, but as He commands. Salvation from sin is granted only to those who obey the gospel by believing on Christ (John 8:24), repenting of their sins (Acts 17:30-31), confessing their faith in Christ (Matt. 10:32-33; Acts 8:37), and by being baptized (Acts 2:38).

Ignorance, Or Dishonesty?

Jerry C. Brewer

When those who claim to be God's preachers teach things contrary to His word, they are either ignorant of His word or dishonest in their teaching. There is no middle ground—no third alternative.

When a preacher tells you that, “One church is as good as another,” he is either ignorant of what the Bible teaches about the church, or he is deliberately dishonest in what he says. He is either ignorant of the consequences of his statement or he is deliberately deceiving you. The church of Christ is Christ's bride (Eph. 5:22-23). To say, “One church is as good as another” is to say “one bride is as good as another” and that makes Christ a spiritual adulterer! He has only one bride or church—not many.

Your preacher may as well tell you that “One *God* is as good as another.” The same passage which states that there is only one body, or church, also says there is “One God” (Eph. 4:4-6). The man who teaches that “one church is as good as another” needs to be consistent and teach that “one God is as good as another.” If not, why not?

It is either ignorance of the Bible or blatant dishonesty that prompts preachers to say, “God accepts all faiths.” The Bible teaches there is only one faith. That is also found in Ephesians 4:4-6. There is no more damnable doctrine taught than the one which says, “It makes no difference what you believe, just so you are honest,” and the man who teaches that is either ignorant of the Bible or is, himself, dishonest.

Can that concept be safely applied to eating? Does it make no difference what one eats, “so long as he is honest?” Can one eat rat poison and live, “just so he is honest?” Those who preach that kind of eternally fatal falsehood are ignorant or just plain dishonest—and they are one or the other. It isn't eating that nourishes.

It's what one eats, and it isn't believing that makes one right with God, it's what one believes. Believing the truth saves (Heb. 11:6) but believing a lie will bring eternal loss (2 Thess. 2:8-12).

It was either ignorance or dishonesty when Max Lucado said, "I want to encourage you to be baptized... But I don't want you to do any of that so you will be saved. I want you to do all of that *because* you are saved." (Radio Sermon, KJAK Radio, Lubbock, Texas, Dec. 1996). Like other denominational preachers, Lucado teaches that baptism is *because of* salvation, rather than what the Bible teaches. The inspired Peter said that baptism is "for," or, "in order to" the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). Lucado and others are either ignorant of what the Bible teaches, or they are deliberately dishonest in leading people into damnation. The Bible says, "...baptism doth also now save us..." (1 Pet. 3:21), but false teachers have changed the "now" of that verse to "not." In so doing, they are either ignorant of Bible teaching or deliberately dishonest. But whether they are ignorant or dishonest, they are absolutely wrong and are leading men to perdition.

Where The Devil Makes His Last Stand

Jerry C. Brewer

The first thing Jesus did to inaugurate His public ministry was to be baptized (Matt. 3:13-17). When His public ministry was ended, and just before He ascended back to heaven, the last thing He did was to command His apostles to go into all the world, preach the gospel, and baptize those who believed it (Mark 16:15-16). That indicates the importance that Jesus Christ places on baptism.

That baptism is necessary to salvation is without dispute to those who love and believe the New Testament, but Satan has a reason for opposing baptism as essential to salvation. He knows its importance and design and it's at baptism where he makes his last stand against obedience to the Lord.

The devil has never objected to a person believing that Jesus Christ is the Son of God---even "the devils believe and tremble" (Jas. 2:19). Nor is he concerned about one who repents of his sin and lives an upright, moral life. Cornelius did that, but he was still lost (Acts 10:1-2; 11:13-14). Nor is Satan concerned about one confessing Christ. Even the demons made that confession (Matt. 8:28-19). But Satan despises baptism—and for good reason. Baptism is the consummating act of obedience to God. It is *in baptism* that the one who believes (John 8:24), repents of his sins (Acts 2:38; 17:30-31), and confesses Christ as God's Son (Rom. 10:10; Acts 8:37), *leaves* the "kingdom of darkness" and *enters* the kingdom of God's Son (Col. 1:13; Rom. 6:3-5).

Satan knows that as long as one refuses to be baptized for the remission of sins, that one is still in his kingdom and remains a servant of the devil. It makes no difference how loudly one proclaims his belief in Jesus Christ as God's Son, so long as one refuses to be baptized, he remains a subject of the devil's kingdom.

Baptism is the dividing line between the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of God. That's why Satan's servants tell their hearers that baptism isn't necessary to salvation. Baptism is the redoubt where Satan makes his last stand against obedience to God.

What Baptism Is

The action of baptism is described by Paul: "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:3-4). According to this passage, baptism is a burial in water. That explains the statement that, John "was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there" (John 3:23). "Much water" is needed to baptize one, but very little is needed to sprinkle or pour on a person. But Satan is, "a liar and the father of it" (John 8:44). He will tell you that pouring or sprinkling water on a person and calling it "baptism" is as good as immersion, and he has lots of servants preaching that false doctrine. Among those are the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Church, and the Methodist Church. But the word of God still says, "buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead" (Col. 2:12).

The New Testament does not merely say what baptism is, but illustrates it in the account of Philip and the Ethiopian whom he baptized on the road to Gaza: "And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they both went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing" (Acts 8:38-39).

Baptism requires a "going down into the water" by, both, the one who is baptized and the one doing the baptizing. There's no need for either one to go "down into the water" if baptism is mere sprinkling or pouring water over someone. If that's all Philip did, then they both got wet for nothing. He could have stood on the bank, dipped his fingers into the water and splashed it on the eunuch. Bible baptism is immersion in water.

What Baptism Does

There is one single design of baptism, and that is stated in Acts 2:38. Baptism is, "for the remission of sins." That means one must be baptized in order to have his sins forgiven. Satan's servants will tell you, "Pray The Sinners' Prayer," "Just Believe Only," "Ask Jesus Into Your Heart," and dozens of other things absent from the Bible, in order to be saved. These, of course, are the devil's lies. Clearly and unequivocally, the Bible says that baptism is, "for the remission of sins." It is ironic that the Baptist Church, which takes its very name from the act of baptism, denies that baptism is necessary to salvation. Despite what God's word teaches, Satan's servants who preach Baptist doctrine tell us that baptism is necessary to be a Baptist, but not to be saved. That lie makes it easier to be saved than to get into the Baptist Church.

But the devil is always willing to compromise. He knows that a half-truth is the same as a lie, so, to those who insist on being baptized, he says baptism is, “to obey God,” or, “to follow Christ’s example,” or, “is an outward sign of an inward grace,” or, “to demonstrate to the world that you have been saved.” There’s not a single syllable of truth in any of those “reasons” for baptism, and not one of them can be found on any page of the New Testament.

Continuing his resistance to baptism for the remission of sins, Satan tells the world that one is first saved by faith only, then he can be baptized. That is the doctrine proclaimed by his Baptist preacher servants. Jesus said no one can be saved without baptism: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). It’s not belief, then salvation, then baptism. Jesus says it’s belief *plus* baptism, then salvation. Neither Satan nor his Baptist toadies can get around that plain statement of our Lord.

If one is saved without baptism, then he is saved outside of Christ. Baptism for the remission of sins puts one into Christ (Rom. 6:3-5), and Paul says that every spiritual blessing is in Christ (Eph. 1:3). If one is saved without baptism, then he is saved without the benefit of any spiritual blessing. Paul further says that redemption is *in Christ* through His blood. If one is saved without baptism, then he is saved outside of Christ and without the benefit of Christ’s blood. If that is the case, then Christ shed His blood in vain, and God was a fool to allow His Son to die on the cross. That is precisely what those who oppose baptism imply, and that is blasphemy!

Satan has plenty of help in his opposition to baptism for the remission of sins, and he will continue to oppose the Lord’s command because he knows that baptism puts men into Christ. As long as the devil, through his denominational servants, can convince people that baptism is not necessary to salvation, he will keep them in his kingdom, under his dominion, outside the sphere of salvation, and send their souls to hell.

What Justification By Faith Includes

G. K. Wallace

The Bible teaches justification by faith. It does not teach we are saved by faith only. “Ye see that by works a man is justified and not by faith only” (Jas. 2:24). There is a vast difference between justification by faith and justification by faith only. The degree of faith that saves is the obedient faith (Rom. 1:5; 16:26). It takes perfect faith to save and faith is perfected in obedience (Jas. 2:22).

It is a plain contradiction of the word of God to say that a man can be saved by faith only. Obedience is taught all through the New Testament. The following scriptures will illustrate this point:

1. One must obey to enter the kingdom (Matt. 7:21).

2. The only way to be the servant of Christ is to obey Him (Rom. 6 : 16).
3. The foundation of a Christian life will not meet God's approval unless obedience is included in it (Matt. 7: 24-27).
4. Christ is the author of eternal salvation only to those who obey Him (Heb. 5:9).

Whatever justification by faith might mean it is certain that it includes obedience. "Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1). When faith justifies, the believer has peace. However, Paul had faith several days before he had peace. If faith only saves, Paul would have had peace the moment he believed. Since he did not have peace the moment he believed it is proof conclusive that he was not at that moment justified. Faith was engendered in the heart of Paul while he was on the road to Damascus (Acts 9). When the Lord appeared to Paul (Saul) on the Damascus highway he believed but did not have peace until three days later. Peace came into his life when, in obedience to the will of God, he arose and was baptized (Acts 22:16). Jesus says, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Therefore, when Paul was baptized he was saved.

It is contended by sectarian preachers that Paul was saved on the Damascus road the moment he believed. Paul was not saved on the way to Damascus as may be seen from the following:

If Paul were saved on the Damascus highway, he did not know it. After Paul had believed he cried out, "What shall I do, Lord?" Is it not strange, in view of denominational teaching, that the Lord did *not* say, "Do nothing, Saul, you are a believer now, therefore you are saved." Sectarian preachers say, "When you are saved you will know it." Their strongest argument is, "I am saved because I know it." If he were saved the moment he believed he did not know it. According to the teaching of the sects Paul could not have been saved on the Damascus road or he would have known it.

If Saul were saved at the point of faith the Lord did not know it. The Lord says to Paul, a penitent believer, "Arise, enter into the city and it shall be told thee what thou must do." The very fact that the Lord did not recognize Paul as a saved man the moment he believed is proof beyond a doubt that he was not saved. If Saul were a saved man, surely the Lord would have known it. And if the Lord knew Paul was saved why did He tell him to go to the city where it would be told him what to do?

If Saul were saved on the Damascus highway the Lord told a falsehood. Jesus said, "Arise, and go into Damascus and there it shall be told thee all things which are appointed for thee to do" (Acts 22:10). The Lord was very specific as to where Saul was to be told what he must do. "Arise and go," says He, "into Damascus and "there," not here, but "there," in Damascus, it shall be told thee what to do. It was therefore in Damascus where Paul learned what to do to be saved and did it.

If Saul were saved on the Damascus highway Ananias did not know it. When Ananias came to Saul, he said: "And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and

be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name” (Acts 22:16). Paul was yet in his sins if Ananias told the truth. Ananias did tell the truth, Baptist preachers to the contrary, notwithstanding.

If Saul were saved on the Damascus highway he was the most miserable saved man I ever read about. Saul was led by the hand to Damascus, “and he was three days without sight, neither did he eat nor drink” (Acts 9:9). Note the change in Paul after he obeys the will of the Lord. While yet in his sins, even though a penitent believer, he did not have peace. After he arose and was baptized to wash away his sins he took food and was strengthened. (Acts 9:18; 22:16). Paul had peace after he obeyed in baptism. Therefore, justification by faith includes baptism. When Paul believed and was baptized he had peace—was justified.

Since Saul, the Lord and Ananias did not know that Saul was saved on the Damascus highway, pray tell me how sectarian preachers found it out.

The Identity Of The Church

Foy E. Wallace, Jr.

"Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18).

The world hears so much of the denominational in religion, both in pulpit and press, such as Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Catholic, Protestant, Evangelical, etc., that it must be wondering if Christ himself ever had a church, and if he has one today, where is it? How could one find it? Out of the many churches that are in the world today, which church is right—which church did Jesus build?

There is no arbitrary manner or method of settling such questions. It is a matter of identity, and can be determined only by marks, or characteristics. If an automobile is lost, it can be identified by make, model, and number. If the church is lost, it may be found only by identification based on New Testament description. The church is a New Testament institution, and hence a perfect description of it is therein set forth.

Being a question of identity, similarity will not do. A thing may be similar, yet not identical. In order to establish identity with the New Testament church, the church today must be Scriptural in every essential feature.

1. It must be Scriptural in origin. Everything began in miracle, but continues through law. First creation, then procreation. God created the first man and woman, and then placed within them the potentiality of procreation. Likewise, God created the church (Eph. 2:14-16), and then provided for its perpetuity through the potentiality of the seed of the kingdom, “which is the word of God” (Luke 8:11). So long as the seed exists, the power of reproduction is present. Therefore an unbroken line of church succession is unnecessary to be argued.

The church today is produced by the word of God, and exists wherever men and women have obeyed it.

2. It must be Scriptural in doctrine. The great commission represents the constitution of the church. The law of pardon, or terms of admission into it, are clearly and unmistakably set forth. Matthew says “teach and baptize”—not baptize and teach. Mark says “preach, believe, baptized, saved”—not believed, saved, and baptized. Luke says “repentance and remission of sins.” The order of these items, both Scripturally and psychologically, then, is preaching faith, repentance, baptism, salvation. On Pentecost, Peter first executed this commission. He preached. The hearers believed, repented, and were baptized “for the remission of sins.” The Lord added them to the church. There is no other way to get into it. The same thing it took to make Christians then, it takes to make Christians now. All who teach or practice to the contrary are unscriptural in doctrine, and that destroys identity.

3. It must be Scriptural in worship. Paul reminds us to keep the ordinances as he delivered them unto us and warns against “will worship,” or self-devised worship, “after the commandments and doctrines of men.” (Col. 2:22, 23). Scriptural doctrine is no more important than Scriptural worship. A rigid adherence to correct doctrine and an “expediency” policy in worship is inconsistent. A “Thus saith the Lord” is no more imperative in one than in the other, and the New Testament requires it in both. Therefore, in the worship, the teaching of the apostles and the practice of the New Testament church must be our teaching and practice. The limit of their teaching must be the limit of our practice. And to introduce innovations, such as instrumental music, “which the Catholics foolishly borrowed from the Jews,” is but to destroy identity in worship with the New Testament church. That the Jews used it is a fact, but that Christian Jews did not use it is another fact; and why they ceased to use it, as they did other Jewish observances, has a significant bearing on the issue, and is reason enough for its nonuse by Christians today. As well add to the doctrine of the New Testament as to its worship, and as well affiliate with those who do one as with those who do the other.

4. It must be Scriptural in work. Christians are commanded to “work out their own salvation.” For this purpose we have set forth in the New Testament a divine arrangement, the local church. Its organization is simple, not complex. As a perfectly framed, living, working organism, with elders, deacons, and members, it provides all the organization required to do the work that God has commanded the church to do. “Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages.” (Eph. 3:21).

5. It must be Scriptural in name. The church of Christ is not a name; it is a thing; and since that is what it is, why call it something else? We are willing to call the church by any Scriptural name or title, but by no name or title not found in the Bible. The Bible is latitude and longitude enough on both names and things in religion—Bible things by Bible names. Reverting to the question of identity, when you find a body of people today who are Scriptural in origin, doctrine, worship, organization, work and name, you have by identification found the Bible church.

What The Bible Says About Who The Lord Adds To His Church

Jess Whitlock

"For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body" (Eph. 5:23). Christ ought to know who is in his church, since He is the Saviour of the body, the church (Col. 1:18-24). Have you ever wondered how many bodies there belonging to Christ? The Bible gives the answer in clarion tone: "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Eph. 4:4-6). Just as a husband is to have but one wife, a body has only one head. The church of Christ has only one Saviour, Who is Jesus Christ.

There are just as many churches (bodies) as there are Gods, or as there are Lords. There is one God. There is one Lord. Hence, there is one body. If there is one body—and there is—then there is only one church.

Have you ever wanted to to be a part of the church that you can read about in the pages of your New Testament? You need to know that you cannot "join" the church of the Bible. You ought to know that you cannot be "voted" into the church that Christ built. You need to be aware that you cannot "buy" your entrance into the church of the New Testament. There is only one way that any man has been granted admittance into the church of God. Note carefully: "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47). Did you notice that the Lord is the One Who does the adding to His body, which is His church? If it is the Lord Who does the adding—and it is—then only the Lord can do the subtracting. Therefore, you cannot be "voted out" of the Lord's church either!

Would you like to know what the Bible teaches that one must do to be added to the church of the Lord? The Word of God teaches God's plan of salvation thus: Hear the Word of God, which means understanding it (Rom. 10:17), believe the gospel (Mark 16:16; Heb. 11:6), repent of past sins (Acts 2:38; Luke 23:3-5), confess Christ as God's Son (Matt. 10:32; Rom. 10:9-10), be baptized (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:1-6). When you do these things, you are saved from sin and the Lord adds you to His church (Acts 2:47).

There are thousands of man-made church in our nation, most of them claiming to be the body of Christ. How can that be? Compare God's plan of salvation with what they teach. Has the Lord added *you* to His church?

Sin Is Not Inherited From Adam

R. L. Whiteside

In the Bible, sin is never described as an inheritance. In the very nature of the case, sin or guilt cannot be inherited. As a matter of fact, it is impossible to

inherit sin. Sin is an *act*. We cannot inherit an act. We may sin in thought, word, or deed, but no one inherits a thought, word, or deed.

The creeds of men tell us that we are guilty of Adam's first sin. Suffering from the *consequences* of another's guilt is a very common experience, but there is a vast difference between the sin and its consequences. A wife or husband may suffer much from the sins of the other. Children may suffer much on account of the wickedness of the father or mother. It is in this way that the sins of the fathers are visited upon their children. The robber may bruise your head and take your money. You suffer the consequences of his guilt but certainly you do not share his guilt. And we suffer as a result of Adam's sin without inheriting his guilt.

God made man in His own likeness and image. He was not then partaker of any sin. God made man upright, clean, and pure. And man then had all the human nature that anyone ever had. It is a mistake, therefore, to think that sin is an essential part of human nature. Adam's sin was no more part of human nature than are your sins.

"Sitteth In The Temple Of God"

Glenn L. Wallace

"That the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God..." (2 Thess. 2:3-4).

These words of the apostle Paul are a flaming warning to the world today. Paul also wrote, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth" (1 Tim. 4:1-3).

The Holy Spirit foretold the desire of men to be as God. But even Peter was not worthy of such honor. He had to be condemned to his face (Gal. 2:12), and was married (Matt. 8:14; 1 Cor. 9:5). He was not the Chief Shepherd (1 Pet. 5:4), nor was he ever in Rome. Exaltation of some man, commanding to abstain from meats, forbidding to marry, and suppressing the Bible were all foretold long ago. Who fulfills this prophecy in our day? The Pope of Rome who demands worship from his Catholic subjects.

Calling Names

Fred E. Dennis

Some people today believe that is an almost "unpardonable sin" for a preacher or writer to call the names of false teachers and hypocrites, but there are good

precedents in the New Testament for this. Of course, our motives for this must be pure. To call names to simply ridicule would be sin, but if we are trying to save souls, false teachings and false teachers must be identified.

Some say that, “just preaching the truth” will be sufficient, and we should leave others alone. But the preachers and writers of the New Testament did not act in that manner. They preached the truth and contrasted it with the errors of men.

John the Baptist was very personal in his preaching. King Herod was living with another man's wife—living in adultery. John knew this and knew that it was not lawful for the king to live that way. I suppose John could have preached the truth on lots of other things and not offended Herod and the woman with whom he was living. But why preach on other things and avoid preaching on the very thing the king needed?

So John just “approached” a bad situation and told the king in plain words he was living in sin. Of course, for this plain preaching, John lost his head (Matt. 14:1-12). Sin is sin and should be condemned in the severest terms. If we know of members of the church living in open adultery, defying the laws of God, we ought to tell them and let them know that such characters cannot enter the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9).

Jesus called names. Two of the most bigoted sects of His day were the Pharisees and Sadducees. They were religious hypocrites. Time after time, Jesus told them this, calling their names. Read His scathing denunciation of them in Matthew 23. Would Jesus have been true to His trust if He had refused to have so spoken? Did the Lord do wrong in calling their names? By calling names, the Lord pointed out error and all knew of whom He spoke

On the birthday of the church, Peter preached to the betrayers and murderers of God's Son, and told them they were such (Acts 2:22-23). He did not preach a “soft” sermon on sin and tell them there were some murderers in the world and that it was not becoming to live that way. Listen to his words! “Therefore let all the house of Israel know that assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36).

That kind of preaching brought results. They knew that the innocent blood of God's Son was upon their souls. It was dripping from their hands. What were the results? “Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). What brought them to a sense of their lost condition? The truth had been preached and the application made. Peter let them know that he was preaching to *them*.

Paul talked about some who had made shipwreck of the faith, and wrote of them. “Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme” (1 Tim. 1:20). Is that not plain? They had been delivered to Satan that they would learn not to blaspheme and Paul wrote it in the New Testament for all the world to read.

Conversion Confusion

Dub McClish

Conversion is the theme of the New Testament. It embraces redemption, forgiveness, and salvation—the purpose of Jesus’ coming. To “convert” means to change/turn from one’s present course. One’s salvation depends upon his conversion (Mat. 18:3; Acts 3:19), so we **must** understand the New Testament’s teaching concerning it. Few subjects, however, involve more confusion than this one does.

Conversion brings one from sinner to saint, from lost to saved, from non-Christian to Christian, and it involves three distinct and necessary changes.

- **Conviction change:** Picture a “casual” unbeliever in God and Jesus—one who has just not thought seriously about the subject. He drives a car, consults a GPS unit, depends on a smart phone, and operates a computer. He knows such articles required intelligence, design, and manufacturing. He applies this reasoning to the universe and to his own body; he cannot attribute them to blind accident. He reads the Bible’s statement that an omniscient, omnipotent, eternal God created all things (Gen. 1:1)—the **rational** explanation of origins. He reads of Jesus in the Gospel, and moved by His miracles and His love for mankind, he believes in Him as God’s Son. His convictions have changed; the unbeliever now believes. Jesus said, “Except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins” (John 8:24). To millions, belief alone equals conversion. What does the Bible teach?
- **Mind-life change:** The Bible word for this change is *repentance*. The basic meaning of this word is a change of mind—the decision to turn **from** a life of sin and self **to** one that follows wherever Jesus leads through His New Testament. One may believe that Jesus is the Christ without deciding to abandon sin and serve Him. Repentance is the point at which he “makes up his mind” to do so, and then he does so (Mat. 3:8). Jesus said that one will perish if he does not repent (Luke 13:3). Does repentance complete conversion? The Bible answers, “No.”
- **Relationship-to-God change:** While faith and repentance move one **toward** God and His Son, these do not bring one **into fellowship** with Them. This relationship change is accomplished in baptism, wherein one’s sins are forgiven, “washed away” in the blood of Christ (Acts 2:38; 22:16; Rev. 1:5). At this point—and not before—one is added to the church of Christ because he is saved (Acts 2:47). In baptism (i.e., immersion in water)—and not before—one enters “into Christ” (Rom. 6:3–4; Gal. 3:27). Thus **believers** on Pentecost were commanded to “repent and be baptized” to receive forgiveness of sins/salvation (Acts 2:38).

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What Church Was Paul A Member Of?

Roelf L. Ruffner

I don’t believe any honest Bible believing person would doubt that the apostle

Paul was a Christian--perhaps the foremost Christian of the First Century A. D. The New Testament records how Saul of Tarsus was once the premiere persecutor of Christianity. On his way to arrest Christians in the far away city of Damascus, he met the Risen Saviour and was left bewildered and blind by the encounter. For three days and nights a remorseful Saul fasted and prayed in contemplation of his life as an enemy of the Messiah. But Jesus Christ sent one of His disciples, Ananias, to heal Saul of his physical and spiritual blindness. Saul was baptized for the forgiveness of his sins (Acts 22:16) and became an integral part of the Lord's church in Damascus (Acts 9:19-22). Later called "Paul," Saul of Tarsus was a disciple of Jesus Christ. But—using the modern vernacular—"what church was Paul a member of?" He had been a Pharisee. Today he would be called an "Ultra-Orthodox Jew." But he left all that when he became a Christian. The Christians in Judea, whom Paul had once persecuted, knew that he was one of them—a proclaimer of "the faith," or system of faith, of which they were a part (Gal. 1:23). So, Paul and the Christians in Judea must have been members of the same "church."

We can deduce that since the Judean Christians and Paul were in spiritual fellowship, they must have believed and practiced the same things. From the Scriptures, we can learn what the church in Judea— which included Jerusalem— believed and practiced.

1. The church in Jerusalem was founded on the Day of Pentecost, according to the promise of Jesus Christ (Matt. 16:16-19; Acts 1:6-8; 2:1-47).
2. On that day, 3,000 people obeyed the command of the apostle Peter and were baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38-41) as Paul had done. The Lord added them to the church (Acts 2:47).
3. Thereafter, they continued to worship according to the teachings of the apostles (Acts 2:42).
4. They met together to worship on the first day of the week, as did Paul (Acts 20:7).
5. On the first day of the week, they partook of the Lord's Supper as Jesus had commanded. So did Paul (Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:23-29).
6. They had elders who oversaw the work of the local congregation and they had deacons (Acts 6:1-5; 11:29-30; 15:6). Paul appointed elders in all of the congregations which he helped establish (Acts 14:23).

The evidence from the New Testament is conclusive. Paul and the Judean Christians were "brethren"—members of "churches of Christ" (Rom. 16:16).

Was Paul A Member Of A Denomination? Many religious people believe Christianity is a polyglot affair with each "sect" being a part of some mysterious "church." Yet Paul deplored sects and religious division (1 Cor. 1:10). He taught that the church is Christ's body (Eph. 1:22-23) and that there is only one body, or church (Eph. 4:4).

Was Paul A Catholic? The Roman Catholic Church claims the pope as its head.

But Paul taught that Jesus Christ is the head of the church (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18). There was no such thing as a “pope” until 606 A. D.

Was Paul A Baptist? The Baptist Church does not teach baptism for the remission of sins as essential to salvation (1 Pet. 3:21). But Paul did (Gal. 3:26-27). Paul even had some followers of John the Baptist baptized again (Acts 19:1-5). The Baptist Church did not exist until about 1607 A. D.

Was Paul A Methodist? The Methodist Church practices sprinkling of infants, instead of immersion of adult believers. But Paul taught that baptism is a “burial” in water (Rom. 6:3-5) for those who understand what they are doing (Acts 17:29-33). The Methodist Church was founded by John Wesley in 1739 A. D.—1,700 years too late for Paul to have been a Methodist.

Was Paul A Member Of The Assembly Of God? This denomination teaches that the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, practiced by the first century church, are for today as well. But Paul said these gifts would “fail,” “cease,” and “vanish away” (1 Cor. 13:8-10). There was no Assembly Of God Church until 1914 A. D.

It is readily apparent that Paul was not a member of any denomination. Neither were Peter, James, John, Barnabas, nor any Christians of the First Century A. D. Paul taught the unity of all Christians in Christ (1 Cor. 1:10; cf. John 17:20-21). What the religious world calls “the church” is not what the New Testament means by this phrase. These religious sects do not follow the teachings of the New Testament of Christ concerning salvation, worship, church government, or Christian living. Denominationalism is not New Testament Christianity. I want to be a member of the church Paul was a member of. Don't you?

The Gospel Preceptor

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Putting the Campbell Myth to Rest

Jim Miller

Those who actually believe Alexander Campbell was the founder of the church of Christ do not know the truth or else they would not make such charge. Those who contend that Campbell established the church of Christ do so for one of the following reasons: (1) they do not know any better and are ignorant of the truth, (2) they do so to poke fun at and to reflect upon the Lord's church in a bad way, or (3) they are afraid to admit that the church of Christ is the church the New Testament authorizes (Mat. 16:18; Acts 2:47).

We read in Matthew 16:18, that the Lord said He was going to build His church. At the time this was spoken the church was yet in the future. We then read where people were being added to the church (Acts 2:47). Earlier, in Acts 2, the gospel was preached to the Jews on the day of Pentecost. Those Jews who believed in Jesus were instructed to repent of their sins and be baptized (2:37-38). About 3,000 did obey and were added to the church (2:41, 47).

We observe that there is no mention of a man by the name of Campbell. The apostles were the ones who stood up with Peter, as Peter preached this first gospel sermon. Campbell was not born until 1786, or some 1753 years after the events of Acts 2 occurred.

Campbell was born in Northern Ireland in the year 1786. He came to this country on September 29, 1809. Campbell was at one time a member of the Presbyterian and Baptist Churches. He found that neither of these Churches followed the teachings of Christ, so he withdrew from them. Taking his New Testament, he read his way to an understanding of truth.

Here are some facts for our consideration. (1) Christ established His church in AD 33 (Acts 2); Campbell was not born until 1786 or some 1753 years later. (2) Christ purchased the church with His blood (20:28); Campbell never died to purchase any church. (3) Paul stated in the year AD 64 that the Colossians had been delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of His dear Son (Col. 1:13); this was written several hundred years before Campbell was born.

The church of Christ was established not by Campbell but by the Lord Jesus Christ (Mat. 16:18; Acts 2; 20:28). Campbell did not introduce a single doctrine or practice for the church of Christ. In fact, every doctrine and practice of the church of Christ dates back to the first century AD, and is recorded in the New Testament.

Along with a number of others, Campbell *did* determine to leave man-made churches and turn to the New Testament. This indeed, we commend him for doing. We also urge all people who are concerned about their souls to do the same today.

Those who read this short article must now understand that Mr. Campbell had nothing whatsoever to do with the establishment of the church of Christ. There is only one church mentioned in the New Testament and every person is urged to obey the Gospel of Christ and be added to that church (Rom. 16:16; Acts 2:47). Churches of men offer no hope beyond the grave, for they all shall be rooted up (Mat. 15:13). Christ is going to deliver up His church to the Father following the

day of Judgment (Heb. 9:27; Eph. 5:27).

Why be a party in a church in which the Lord has no part? You still have time to become a member of the Lord's church and secure your salvation in Christ Jesus (Acts 4:12).

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Coming In October

Harrell Davidson, of Obion, Tenn., will begin a monthly column in our October issue, entitled, *What Saith The Scriptures?*, in which he will answer Bible questions that readers submit. Brother Davidson had such a column in the print edition of this paper several years ago, and it proved to be a popular and profitable discussion of sincere Bible questions submitted by readers. If you have a Bible question you would like to have him answer and discuss, you may send it to him by email at, harrelld@charter.net.

God's Changeless And Immutable Word

Franklin Camp

The word of God has the power to convict and convert, to sanctify and to edify. But it has another power and province. The Bible is the mirror of its Author, intended to reveal, unveil, magnify, and glorify Him from whom it originally came.

One of the main uses of the word of God is to supply us with a standard of both doctrine and duty. Therefore, there is no substitute for God's written word. Men may turn in every direction seeking for something to take the place of the word of God, but when their search is ended they remain empty-handed.

In every department of life, the need for a standard as exact and unvarying as those which measure weight, length and time compels one to resort to the word of God for guidance. Here alone, one finds perfect forms and changeless models. Man's best timepieces must be set according to those of God, who has appointed the sun, moon, and stars for time and seasons.

So, from all human oracles, however self-confident, we must turn at last to the inspired Word, where, instead of untrustworthy utterances, we find distinct, definite, authoritative, and infallible teaching.

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They Lost Jesus!

Al Brown

Jesus was lost! They had supposed He was with some of their relatives, but after much intense searching throughout the entire company of travelers, no trace of Him could be found! Thoroughly alarmed, they retraced their steps to Jerusalem. and searched the city. We can imagine their relief when they finally located Him in the temple.

Jesus was not lost because Mary did not love Him; but because, at least on this occasion, she was negligent. She relied on supposition (Luke 2:44). All parents know that what she did was a “no-no” which can, and often does, end with disastrous consequences.

There is a lesson in this event that every person, not just parents, needs to learn: *relying on supposition can be very dangerous when something really valuable is at stake.* Of course, most people realize this and refuse to take such chances. The business world always relies on written contracts and documents in which the limits of liability and performance are spelled out in detail and not left to supposition. The various fields of science also insist on documentation rather than mere supposition, as does every other area of human activity.

Yet, when it comes to the most valuable thing a person has—his immortal soul—he nearly always relies on supposition. To make matters worse, based on every reliable bit of evidence we have available to us by which we can make a judgment, his supposition is wrong more often than not. Why do people show such sound wisdom in things having to do with this world, and, at the same time, be so utterly foolish in things which are infinitely more important?

It is not as though God has left man without any guidelines, so that he is forced to rely on supposition. The very opposite is true. This is why God revealed His word to us. It tells us what pleases and displeases our Maker, and what He wants and does not want us to do (cf. 2 Tim. 3:16ff).

Yet, people still suppose it is all right to do something else, and often the very opposite of what God tells us to do. For instance, God clearly tells us that homosexuals who continue to practice this sin “shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 6:9ff), but many who claim to be believers in Christ suppose God will still accept them although they adamantly refuse to do His will.

Christ declared that just professing to believe in Him is not enough; people must obey God’s will: “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven” (Mat. 7:21; cf. also Luke 6:46). However, most religious people suppose it is all right to ignore any part of God’s revealed will they do not want to obey. They not only ignore God’s will; in their arrogant pride, they twist, pervert, and replace that precious word with the worthless opinions of men (Mat. 15:6-9).

These are but two examples of how people not only rely on mere supposition in religion, but stubbornly cling to these opinions even when they directly contradict God’s clearly revealed will. What will you do on that last great day when the Lord comes again if you are among those who base their hope of eternal life on nothing more than supposition? If Jesus was telling the truth, you will find that all your efforts were in vain (Mat. 7:22ff). The risks are just too great to rely on supposition when our eternal destiny hangs in the balance.

“God's Grace Will Cover It”

David Ray

God’s grace is an amazing thing. Never has anyone forgiven more than what God has forgiven, and continues to forgive, in spite of the continued sinning of each person whom He’s forgiven. Millions of people on a daily basis break God’s law, sinning against their Creator and the one who loves them more than anyone ever could. Yet His forgiveness still awaits each one of us.

“God’s grace will cover it” (or something similar) is a phrase I’ve heard many times in my life from people in and out of the church. This phrase actually reflects a promise from God. But like all of God’s promises, it comes with conditions. One must first be a Christian in order to taste the fruit of this promise. If a person has never obeyed the gospel plan of salvation, his sins are still with him and God’s grace will not cover it. Sadly, many today apply this phrase, “God’s grace will cover it,” to the plan of salvation itself. When presented the truth from God’s Word about how to become a Christian and have their sins forgiven, they recognize a clear difference between this Biblical plan and the actions they took in order to “be saved.” When encouraged, in love, to repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of their sins, being added to Christ’s one church, they balk. They claim that it doesn’t matter—that “God’s grace will cover it.”

Friends, God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son for it (John 3:16). That same Son is the only way, truth, and life, and in order to come to the Father, it must be by Him (John 14:6). It must be on *His* terms. A part of those terms is that we must believe and be baptized (immersed, Mark 16:16) for the forgiveness of our sins (Acts 2:38). If any part of this plan is altered, then it is

not God's plan and therefore cannot save. If a person believes his sins were forgiven at any time other than at baptism, then what was the reason for his baptism? It could not have been for forgiveness of sins, and therefore was not the "one baptism" of the New Testament (Eph. 4:5). So he is still in his sins.

God has provided a plan for us to follow in order to receive His grace. We didn't earn it, but we must follow it. If we reject it, add to it, or subtract from it, we cannot receive grace. Make no mistake about it: God's grace does not cover rejection of His grace. If you alter his plan of salvation, His grace will not cover you. Jesus will return with His angels, "taking vengeance on them that...obey not the gospel" (2 Thess. 1:8). We earnestly plead with everyone to accept Jesus Christ on *His* terms, thereby allowing His grace to save you.

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What Baptism Cannot Do

Ron Cosby

Within Holy Writ, God has said many things about water baptism. The Bible teaches that the penitent sinner who believes in Jesus is baptized into Christ (Gal. 3:26-27). Sinners are baptized into His death (Rom. 6:4). Peter said, "...baptism doth also now save us" (1 Pet. 3:21). But we must not entertain the idea that water baptism is a magic formula for all of life's ills. Though God has

declared spiritual enrichment through obedience, there are still *some* things baptism will *not* do.

Baptism *cannot change the will*. The good news of salvation in Christ which reveals God's goodness changes the will; "...not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" (Rom. 2:4). God has commanded all men to repent—to change the will (Acts 17:30).

Baptism *cannot change your life*. True, at the point of baptism, one's spiritual life is changed; however, this physical life will be the same. The one baptized will still have the same debts, the same job, the same paycheck, the same family, and the same physical health. Because of a new lifestyle after baptism, one's social and political life may change.

Baptism *cannot remove temptations*. The Lord Himself did not escape the solicitation to sin, though He had no sin (Heb. 4:15). Each one is tempted when he is, "drawn away by his own lust, and enticed" (Jas. 1:13-14). We *do* have God's promise that the nature of all temptations will be human in nature. None will be supernatural (1 Cor. 10:13).

Baptism *cannot give life to the living*—the saved. Sinners are dead in sins and not saved.

And you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) (Eph. 2:1-5).

Sinners—not the saved—are baptized to reach salvation. Sinners are baptized unto forgiveness, or remission of sins (Acts 2:38). Sinners are baptized once, but the saved are never baptized. In each example of conversion, recorded for us in the Bible, three basic truths are repeated: 1) They heard the gospel. 2) They believed the gospel. 3) They obeyed the gospel, being baptized into Christ.

Your physical life may improve as a Christian. If it does, it will not be because you became a Christian, but because you are following the principles set forth by the Creator.

Since the Bible teaches that baptism places one in Christ where salvation is (2 Tim. 2:10), and it places one into Christ's death where His saving blood was shed (John 19:33-34; Rom. 6:4), and it sets free from sin (Rom. 6:17-18), "why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16).

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