

The Gospel Preceptor

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

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“I'm Saved But I'm Not a Member of a Church”

Jerry C. Brewer

It's common to hear people say, “I'm saved, but I'm not a member of any church.” Most folks believe salvation has nothing to do with the church—that it's one thing to be saved, but quite another to be a member of the church.

But does the Bible really make a distinction between being saved and being in the church? Does it really teach that such an option exists? The answer to both questions is, “No.” One **can** be saved without being in a denomination, but the Scriptures teach that **no one is saved** who isn't in Christ's church.

The Bible describes the church in various terms, all of which link salvation to the church of Christ. For instance, the church is described as the “body of Christ” in Ephesians 1:22-23 and Colossians 1:18, and Paul says Christians—those who are saved—are members of that body. “For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another” (Rom. 12:4-5). Therefore, our connection to Christ Who is the head of the body, is dependent upon our membership **in** that body. To say one can be saved without being in the body of Christ is like saying an arm severed from the body can still live.

The church is also called the kingdom. Jesus used the terms “church” and “kingdom” interchangeably in Matthew 16:18-19 when He said, “Upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven..” If one is not in the church, one is not in the kingdom but Jesus said one must be born again to enter the kingdom in John 3:3-5. It is impossible to be born again without also being in the church or kingdom.

The Bible also calls the church the “house of God,” (Tim. 3:15). That means the church is God's family. One rules his house by ruling his children, according to First Timothy 3:4. Therefore, the word “house” refers to one's family. Must one be a child of God in order to be saved? Certainly! But God's children are only in His family, so if one can be saved and not be in the church then one can be a child of God outside of God's family. Think about that! The person who claims salvation **outside** of God's family claims that God has **children** outside of His family and that makes God an adulterer! He has no children outside of His family. If one is saved, he is in God's family, which is the church.

The word “church” in the New Testament is translated from the Greek word *ekklesia* which means “the called out.” Those who are in the church have been **called out** of sin. One cannot remain in sin and be saved. To say one is saved and not in the church is to say one is saved and still in sin. In Acts 2:47 the Bible teaches that one who is saved is added to the church by the Lord. No one is saved who is outside of the church and no one is outside of the church who is saved. When one believes in Christ, repents of his sin, confesses his faith in Christ, and is baptized for the remission of sins, he is added to that saved body which is the church.

Remove Not the Ancient Landmark

Kent Bailey

In Proverbs 22:28 the divine record states, “Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set.” In consideration of this specific text we note that this verse had reference to boundaries that dealt with tribal allotments and individual family properties. In ancient times such landmarks were regarded with far more respect than they are in modern times. Among the Romans we find that landmarks were often deified. Ovid tells us that frequently the pagan priests would bring their sacrifices and offer them upon the landmarks as a testimony to the greatness and the seriousness of such.

In the Old Testament the Jews had a high regard for landmarks. In Deuteronomy 19:14 Moses commanded that the Jew remove not his neighbor's landmarks. In accordance with this divine requirement we read of a curse placed upon any who violate Old Testament teaching regarding such. This, of course, was during a time prior to fences as we know them. Such being the case, landmarks were often nothing more than loose stones placed upon the ground, yet these boundaries were to be respected. The same was true regarding God's spiritual boundaries (Deut. 4:2; Prov. 30:6). During the Old Testament period those who rejected God's spiritual landmarks were severely punished (Lev. 10:1-2). In Leviticus 10:1-2 we read of Nadab and Abihu introducing a strange fire into the Old Testament system of worship. In Leviticus 16:12 the fire introduced into the worship of God was to be taken from the altar. Nadab and Abihu introduced an unauthorized fire into worship and lost their lives as punishment due to their sin.

These men were the right men to offer up this incense. They brought the correct incense; they came to the correct place; however, they removed the ancient landmark in one area—they failed to respect divine authority in obtaining the fire that they introduced into worship from the wrong place! They were guilty of the sin of presumption. They presumed to do that which God had not authorized.

In the New Testament God has set spiritual landmarks that we dare not move. In 1 Peter 4:11 we note, “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever, amen.” We also note in Colossians 3:17, “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.”

In considering the above stated passages, we conclude that the New Testament authority of Christ is paramount. Please note the universal rule as set forth by Biblical inspiration—whatsoever we do in word (what we teach) or by deed (the practices in which we engage)—must be authorized by the authority of Christ as set forth in the New Testament. The vast majority of individuals within the religious world have not come to grips with this foundational Biblical truth. Thus, it is not uncommon at all to see individuals and collective religious groups of individuals remove ancient spiritual landmarks of God.

Spiritual landmarks of God have been moved relative to basic Biblical morality. In modern day society we constantly take note of how individuals violate the authority of Christ regarding the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21). We also take note of how a general attitude of worldliness is readily accepted even by brethren (1 John 2:15-17).

This willingness to remove God's spiritual landmarks has destroyed the very foundation of many homes, in that the masses (including some brethren) have even rejected what the Bible teaches about marriage, divorce, and remarriage (Matt. 19:1-9). Today, the abomination of sodomy and “same sex marriages” is officially sanctioned in our society (Matt. 19:4-9; Rom. 1:24-28, 32). All of the moral atrocities recorded in Romans chapter one is comparable to reading news reports of modern day society.

Spiritual landmarks of God have been removed relative to the New Testament church. Christ built only one church (Matt. 16:18-19; Acts 2:47; 1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4; 5:23). The church of Christ exists in only two extensions:

1. In the totality of all those who have obeyed the gospel of Christ, i.e, saved individuals, and

2. As a local collective functioning unit known as a local church (Phlp. 1:1; 1 Pet. 5:1-4). When local churches seek to assume a work larger than the local church inclusive of works of other local churches, the by product of such an endeavor results in a larger organization than a local church and brethren seek to activate the universal extension of the church. Such activity is unauthorized by the New Testament.

Spiritual landmarks of God have been removed relative to the gospel plan of salvation. Those who have attained accountability and are outside of Christ are in a lost condition (Rom. 3:23; 6:23). To be saved from past alien sins, one must believe the gospel of Christ (Mark 16:15-16), repent of sins (Acts 17:30), confess the Deity of Christ (Acts 8:37; Rom. 10:10), and be baptized for the remission of sins to enter the church (Acts 2:38,47). Regarding the simplicity of this plan, the denominational world rejects truth. The affirmation of the false doctrine of faith alone contradicts the very nature of Biblical faith (John 1:12). A Biblical faith necessitates actions of obedience (Jas. 2:24). When individuals or groups of individuals teach a false plan of salvation they remove spiritual landmarks which God set.

Spiritual landmarks of God have been removed relative to the New Testament worship, work, organization of the church and the nature of Biblical fellowship. Within the scriptures God has specified divine requirements essential for us to worship in spirit and truth (John 4:24). We are **authorized** to engage in the preaching of the apostles doctrine, the Lord's supper every first day of the week, contributing financially as God has prospered us, prayer, and the singing of Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. To make addition, subtraction, or alterations regarding these Biblical concepts is to remove God's ancient landmarks (2 John 9-11).

The same is true regarding the work of the local church and its organization. God has placed limitations on our activity both individually and collectively. That which is unauthorized is sinful (Col. 3:17; 2 John 9-11). The work of the church is limited to evangelism, edification, and benevolence. Such work must be accomplished by the local church with local oversight (1 Pet. 5:1-4). Again, any work and or oversight of a work that is larger than the local church produces a different arrangement authorized by the scriptures and is sinful (1 Pet. 5:1-4).

Biblical fellowship is also a crucial spiritual landmark of God. Such is limited by the scriptures to those who walk in the light of God's truth. When either individuals or collectives of individuals walk in the darkness of sin they do not have the fellowship of God. Such is the case with Roman Catholicism, Protestant denominationalism, all false religion as well as with all those within the Lord's church, who teach fatally false doctrines and practice error. We must respect God's laws of inclusion and exclusion regarding fellowship (2 John 9-11).

Let us have utmost concern and take heed not to remove God's ancient landmarks of the Faith.

A Dialogue on Sodomy, No. 1

Editor's Note: This is the first of two email dialogues that passed between a Christian and his friend who announced that he had embraced the sodomite lifestyle. The Christian is my son.

Initial Message From Friend

I hear you are quite "conservative" in your points of view. I only bring this up because quite honestly I hope to always consider you to be a friend. But I have always known you to be conservative and perhaps that is why I have never told you in person since my "coming out" process began four years ago. It is always scary and I still worry about how people in your life take the news.

If you don't find that who I am, as a gay person, offends your sensibilities then I would love to stop by sometime and catch up.

The Christian's Response

Though I am “quite conservative,” at least politically, I don't know that I'm any more conservative than I've always been. Candor forces me to admit that I'm not totally surprised by your “revelation” contained in your message. But I wouldn't be a very good friend if I didn't share my concern for you.

Though I could emphasize the physical danger of homosexuality—the average homosexual male only lives to be about 42 compared to 75 for married men, and only 1 percent of male homosexuals live to be 65 or older—I'm more concerned with your spiritual welfare. My views regarding homosexuality have nothing to do with being conservative; they're based on Biblical teaching.

If you accept the premise that God exists and revealed His will for man in the Bible, then you have to accept the teachings contained in it as absolute truth. The Bible explicitly and emphatically condemns homosexuality as a sin that will cause you to lose your soul. There's no ambiguity—it's called a spiritual death sentence if you die leading a homosexual lifestyle. I would be glad to share specific biblical teaching if you're interested. But just know that I'm not trying to hurt you or denigrate your character in any way. I still consider you a friend, and I hope you accept what I've written in the spirit in which it's intended—as someone doing what is in the best interest physically and, more important, spiritually, for his friend. I'd love to continue this dialogue, if you're so inclined. And you're always welcome in my home.

The Friend's Reply

That is true, I'm sure you are likely not any more conservative now as you were then and your candor is appreciated. I'm sure that my “revelation” was not a surprise in that anyone who ever really knew me had to have had some insight into my true self.

While I appreciate your concern and the use of statistics that have been purported in research funded by religious groups I would describe as “anti-gay,” the flawed statistics imply that it's somehow more dangerous or life threatening to be a gay person. To this I respond with the following thoughts:

1. If the statistic were true which it is not, the implication is that all homosexuals are promiscuous and I, being homosexual, am, by definition, a promiscuous person. I could take offense to the implication, but I will not simply because such statements are made in ignorance and quite frankly with an heir (sic) of judgment that all homosexuals are promiscuous and practice unsafe sex. I assure you that I have the same values that I was raised with and that I am not nor will I ever be a promiscuous person.
2. I concede that promiscuity does exist within the gay sub-culture. However, this stereotype has no more basis than any of the thousands of stereotypes that exist. (I will continue these thoughts in a moment.)

While I also very much appreciate your concern for my spiritual welfare, I take exception with the following statement: “If you accept the premise that God exists and revealed His will for man in the Bible, then you have to accept the teachings contained in it as absolute truth.”

I understand that life is a journey and believe that faith is also a journey and that I am but a pilgrim. I learned the same way you did that homosexuality was a sin and that to be a homosexual surely meant eternal damnation. So I began to reject religion—all religion—and reject God, because I couldn't understand how he (sic) could make me gay and then condemn me for it. So I began to research the history of the bible (sic) and religion as whole. Basically, I questioned faith and God. After years of this I reached a conclusion. One that I felt is well founded and based upon fact and faith. God loves me as I am for I, yes a gay person, was made in his image as well.

No offense to anyone else, but I feel closer to God now than I ever did growing up, because I had to get to know him (sic). I had a “troubled” relationship with him (sic). I learned on my own what it means to be a man of faith and what it means to be spiritual. Most people take what is taught them on Sundays as fact. Not many people read the Bible and reflect on its meaning. They hear the “preacher's” interpretation and accept

it as their own—the traditional shepherd and flock. I challenge the concept that that is how it should be. I also take offense to the idea that liberalism is a bad thing.

Jesus was a liberal himself (sic). If you have truly read the Bible then you yourself can't deny that Jesus Christ was "liberal." I believe that God was speaking through him (sic) and that God speaks continuously, even today. As a "liberal Christian" I do not believe that the Bible is infallible. I do however believe it is the truth—that truth being love. Love for all without judgment.

It is common for those who consider homosexuality an "abomination" to "prove" their cause by quoting every scripture they can find pertaining to sexual sin and promiscuity. By doing this it is important to understand that we Christians in the gay community also are a hundred percent against sexual sin. The difference lies in the fact that we do not believe God has singled out any particular community or nation of people as "evil" or "sinful," believing instead that God's edicts are applied without prejudice to all peoples and communities; homosexual and heterosexual alike.

Therefore before calling homosexuality a sin, one should interrogate Scripture to find if this premise is even true. Unfortunately, many well meaning Christians are just repeating what they have heard from the pulpit or attempting to frame God's will around their prejudices and fears.

The Christian's Response

Concerning your contention that "I could take offense to the implication [that you lead a promiscuous life]." I didn't mean to imply that you are promiscuous, only that your lifestyle is unhealthy. Any physical ramifications are less important than spiritual ones, so I'll only address your biblical arguments.

You write "So I began to reject religion and reject God, because I couldn't understand how he could make me gay and then condemn me for it. God loves me as I am for I, yes a gay person, was made in his image as well."

This assumes God made you a homosexual. Certainly God loves you. But the question is this: Does He condone homosexuality? God loved the sinful world so much that He sent Jesus to die for all of us (John 3:16). That doesn't mean He approves of all of our actions. Love and approval aren't synonyms, and the former doesn't necessarily imply the latter.

You write "I also take offense to the idea that liberalism is a bad thing. Jesus was a liberal himself. If you have truly read the bible then you yourself can't deny that Jesus Christ was 'liberal.'" Remember, you injected conservatism and liberalism into the discussion. I'm more concerned with the Bible's teaching. Since "conservative" and "liberal" are terms with political connotations, I would prefer to set them aside when discussing the Bible and focus on what it teaches.

You write I do not believe that the Bible is infallible. I do however believe it is the truth, that truth being love. Love for all without judgment."

If the Bible is fallible, how can it be true? Are some portions fallible and others infallible? Truth, by definition, precludes error. The Bible can't be truth and fallible at the same time—that's a contradiction.

You define truth as love, but that is your own definition, not the Bible's. It teaches that we know truth by abiding in Christ's word, which will make us free from sin (John 8:31-32). It is also the standard by which Jesus will judge our conduct at the last day (John 12:48-50). Jesus loves us, but His word says that certain activities are forbidden, and loving Him means obeying Him (John 14:15).

You write that truth is "Love for all without judgment." Does that mean accepting homosexuality and not condemning it? Once in your letter you write, regarding statistics that you believe are "anti-gay," that "such statements are made in ignorance and quite frankly with an heir (sic) of judgment." Then, twice you use the phrase "prejudices and fears"—though the second time is in the singular—describing Christians who condemn homosexuality.

You state that truth is loving you without judgment, yet you judge various opponents of your lifestyle to be ignorant, judgmental, prejudicial and fearful. Those are awfully judgmental descriptives.

Do you maintain that all opponents of homosexuality are characterized by at least one of those traits? If so, does that mean you've decided opponents of homosexuality can't possibly be correct? If that's the case, then you're being intellectually dishonest. (To be concluded next month).

Mormonism and Continuing Revelation

Nathan Brewer

The “basic beliefs” section at www.mormon.org has some of the teachings of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS). The following shows that Latter Day Saints depend on latter day revelation for their existence:

Following the death of Jesus Christ, wicked people killed the Apostles; as a result, priesthood authority to direct Christ's church and receive revelation from God was lost. Jesus Christ has restored his gospel to the earth, established a prophet and apostles with priesthood authority to receive revelation and perform saving ordinances such as baptism. Christ's restored church is called The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The Mormons believe it was always God's intent that direct revelation come to the church through a prophet and apostles, and that there would always be a succession of these positions in the church. The LDS Church has a “prophet” and men designated “apostles.”

But the Apostle Paul teaches that all miraculous gifts the church had in the first century were for a specific purpose—revealing the New Testament—and when that purpose was accomplished, the gifts were to cease.

First Corinthians Chapter 12 lists the nine miraculous gifts the church had, and Chapter 13 says these gifts—including “prophecies” (v. 8)—will cease. When? “For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away” (vv. 9-10).

“That which is perfect” does **not refer to Jesus**. *Perfect* in verse 10 literally means “complete.” Paul is talking about revelation. In the first century, knowledge and prophecy came in bits and pieces—“in part”—directly from heaven (1 Cor. 13:9). But when the New Testament of Jesus Christ was completely revealed, that which was “in part”—the miraculous gifts listed in Chapter 12—were done away.

Mormons cite Ephesians 4:11-13 as “proof” that God wanted a prophet to receive direct revelation to guide the church on earth. But these verses teach the same lesson as First Corinthians 13. Ephesians 4:7-8 say Jesus ascended and “gave gifts unto men.” These gifts were to equip the saints, to aid in ministry, and to edify the church, and were to last until “we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man” (Eph. 4:13). Many, including the Mormons, believe this means gifts were to last until Jesus comes again. But the immediate context, and First Corinthians 12-13, show that Paul has completed revelation in mind.

If revelation ceased when the New Testament was completed in the first century—and it **did**—then Mormon claims are false, and Mormon founder Joseph Smith was a false prophet. We don't need apostles and prophets on the earth today. Our prophet is Jesus Christ, and the authority to guide the church resides in His revealed, written and confirmed Word.

The Conversion of the Doomed Jailer

Ron Cosby

As gospel preachers, we are able to offer hope to a world filled with doom and despair. Study Acts 16:23-34 and see a man's despair turned to joy and hope.

The loss of money caused a greedy group of men to have Paul and Silas thrown into jail. As they endured “many stripes,” with their “feet fast in the stocks” in the inner prison, these two fearless men of God “were praying and singing hymns unto God, and the prisoners were listening to them.” Suddenly there was a great earthquake and immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bands were loosed. Listen to Luke tell the rest of the story. He said,

[T]he jailor, being roused out of sleep and seeing the prison doors open, drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here... he called for lights... sprang in... trembling for fear, fell down before Paul and Silas... and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house. And they spake the word of the Lord unto him, with all that were in his house... he took them the same hour of the night... and was baptized... immediately (Acts 16:26-33).

Before The Jailer Was Converted

Here was a man about to kill himself (Acts 16:27). His sword was drawn. He preferred to die by his own hand instead of suffering the imposed penalty for allowing his charges to escape. As a Roman soldier in charge of prisoners, he knew that when the captives escaped his life was not worth the stone slab upon which he stood. Zophar gives us the mindset of those like the jailer. He said, “But the eyes of the wicked shall fail, And they shall have no way to flee; And their hope shall be the giving up of the ghost” (Job 11:20 ASV). The jailer trembled at his hopeless situation (Acts 16:29).

I cannot imagine being in a life and death situation and being without hope. The jailer probably felt a lot like the news reporter who was caught in the Mount St. Helen's eruption in 1981. The man ran for his life. As he ran, his camera was rolling and his mike caught the vivid nightmare. In the midst of the spewing steam and miles of ash being thrown into the air, as he gulped some of the ash into his lungs, the panic-stricken reporter breathed laboriously, sobbing for God's help. Here are the desperate man's last words: “Oh, God, oh, my God, help! Help! Oh, Lord God, get me through. God, I need you, please help me; I don't know where I am.” More sobbing, more rapid breathing, spitting, gagging, coughing, panting, then, “It's so hot, so dark, help me, God! Please, please, please, please. . . oh, God!!” Where is his hope? Gone! Such was the jailer's doomed situation.

Job asked, “For what is the hope of the godless...When God taketh away his soul?” (Job 27:8 ASV). The jailer's spiritual predicament was as hopeless as his physical. He was, “at that time separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world” (Eph. 2:12 ASV). He had no idea who Jesus was. He did not know that Paul was going to have the chance to tell him of the wonderful Savior.

Without Christ, we are doomed to hopelessness. “But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that fall asleep; that ye sorrow not, even as the rest, who have no hope” (1 Thes. 4:13 ASV). Jesus said, “I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live” (John 11:25 ASV). If one does not believe in Jesus, he has no hope.

Recognizing something special about Paul, the jailer sought salvation. Was he asking for physical or spiritual salvation (Acts 16:30)? I am not sure it matters. The fact is, Paul gave him what he needed. Salvation is for those who seek it (Rom 2:4-9).

The Jailer's Conversion

In response to the jailer's question, Paul commanded him to believe (Acts 16:31). Errorists have seized on these words and pounded their faith only doctrine into the reading populace. However, the account does not stop with just this one answer.

Paul preached to them because they did not know Jesus. Faith comes by hearing the message of heaven (Rom. 10:17). Hearing and believing, the jailer and his house were baptized. The baptism of Christ is for believers and not infants, and it is essential unto salvation (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38).

After his obedience, the jailer rejoiced greatly (Acts 16:34). Years later, Paul wrote to these same brethren, exhorting them to be filled with the joy that is only in Christ: “Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say, Rejoice” (Phlp. 4:4 ASV). Take special note of the sphere of rejoicing: “In the Lord.” The jailer rejoiced after being baptized because baptism places one **in Christ** (Gal. 3:26-27; Rom. 6:3-4).

Conclusion

The jailer who, at the beginning, had a cloud of doom and despair encircling his soul, now, like Paul, has the promise of an eternal future of bliss. Paul said, “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if to live in the flesh,—if this shall bring fruit from my work, then what I shall choose I know not. But I am in a strait betwixt the two, having the desire to depart and be with Christ; for it is very far better” (Phlp. 1:21-23 ASV). Do you have this desire? If not, then something is wrong—terribly wrong.

Eternal salvation is the Christian's goal and prize. Paul reminded the jailer of these things, saying, “I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phlp. 3:14 ASV). If you fail to heed the gospel call, you are doomed to suffer eternal despair. If you trust and obey, then the jailer's hope is your hope.

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Indications Of Bible Inspiration: Its Own Inspiration

Jess Whitlock

The Bible is the verbally inspired Word of God. Hence, we have the verbal, plenary, and “God-breathed” Word of God. “Verbal” refers to the exact words of the Bible, i.e., that every word is revealed to us from God. “Plenary” indicates a message that is **full, complete** in every sense of the word. The Greek word for *inspiration* is a compound word; *theo* meaning “God” and *pneustos* which means “breathed.” The Bible is the product of the creative breath of God, Himself. The Word of God is literally “God-breathed.” “By the word of Jehovah were the heavens made, and all the host of them, by the breath of His mouth...for He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast” (Psa. 33:6,9). The *Geneva Bible* renders Second Timothy 3:16 in this manner: “The whole Scripture is given by inspiration of God...” Paul wrote by inspiration, “And my speech and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God” (1 Cor. 2:4-5). True inspiration involves the words of the Scripture (1 Cor. 2:9-12); inspiration involves the men used to reveal the Scripture (1 Cor. 2:1-4); and inspiration involves the finished product of God’s inspired Word, “which things also we speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth; combining spiritual things with spiritual words” (1 Cor. 2:13).

“For His lovingkindness is great toward us; and the truth of Jehovah endureth forever” (Psa. 117:2). “The sum of Thy word is truth; and every one of Thy righteous ordinances endureth forever” (Psa. 119:160).

Historically the Bible is unequalled. Herodotus, an ancient historian, denied that grapes were ever found in Egypt, as declared in Genesis 40:10. However, the spades of archaeology confirmed the Scripture. In the book of Acts, Luke records the names of 32 countries, 54 cities, and nine Mediterranean islands, plus the names of 95 people. Sir William Ramsay determined to prove that Luke was wrong in those areas. After years of research, Sir William finally admitted that Luke was “the very greatest of historians.”

A book may be historically accurate and not be inspired; but the inspired Volume **must** be historically accurate. At one time or another, 47 kings of the Old Testament record of the kings were disputed by the critics and enemies of the Bible. With the

passing of time and the discoveries by archaeologists and historians each and every one of those kings has been proven to have actually existed and reigned, just as the Scripture declared. W.F. Albright wrote, “Archaeology has set the Bible, the whole Bible, once again at the center of history...the narratives of the Patriarchs, Moses, the Exodus, the conquest of Canaan, the Judges, the monarchy, the exile, and the restoration, have all been confirmed...to an extent I would have thought impossible only forty years ago” (*Christian Century*, Vol. 75, Nov. 19, 1958).

The expression, “...the word of the LORD...” is found 3,808 times in the Bible, and the expression “...thus saith the LORD...” is found over 2,000 times in the pages of Holy Writ.

The late President Ronald Regan noted, “Within the covers of that single Book are all the answers to all the problems that face us today, if we would only read and believe...”

Let the skeptics, atheists, and agnostics produce a book better than the Bible if they can. Let them collect the best minds of the universities of the world, forty should be enough! Let them consult the finest libraries of the world. Let them glean from the internet through the fields of geology, botany, astronomy, biology, and all the “ologies” of their choosing. Let them take full advantage of art, literature, oratory, and history. When they have exhausted every avenue available, let them produce a book and offer that book to the world as a substitute for the Bible! Have they the confidence of the false prophets of Baal in their false god? Will they even put forth the effort? Will they even try? If not, what flimsy excuse will they offer? Has mankind fallen so low that he is unable to do what forty inspired men of God did in the long ago? “Every word of God is tried: He is a shield unto them that take refuge in Him. Add thou not unto His words, lest He reprove thee, and thou be found a liar” (Prov. 30:5-6).

Repentance and Restitution

Lester Kamp

Repentance means a change of mind. It is a change of mind that results in a change in behavior. Repentance is the result of godly sorrow (2 Cor. 7:10). Godly sorrow is the quality of being so grieved by the wrongs committed in the past that there is a determination to turn away from those kinds of actions, combined with a determination to do only that which is right in the eyes of God. Godly sorrow is not the sorrow of being caught, but sorrow that is characterized by a broken, contrite heart. Jude tells us that such a one hates even the garment spotted by the flesh (Jude 23). Repentance was described by Jonah when it was said that the Ninevites “turned from their evil way” (Jonah 3:10). When Jesus spoke of the same situation, He stated that they “repented at the preaching of Jonah” (Matt. 12:39-41).

All sin is against God and must be forgiven by God. King David recognized that though his sins involved others those sins were against God. He exclaimed, “Against thee, thee only, have I sinned” (Psa. 51:4). God is not obligated to forgive. Forgiveness is the result of God’s mercy and grace. Forgiveness is through the blood of Christ (Eph. 1:7). Paul in that passage also referred to the “riches” of God’s grace. God’s grace is sufficient to forgive all of the sins of all of mankind. There is no inadequacy in the blood of Christ. No matter how awful our sin is, no matter how many those sins are we can be forgiven by God. If we are alien sinners (not Christians), we must do those things that God requires in order to receive the remission (forgiveness) of our sins. We must obey the Gospel to be saved from our sins. That Gospel stipulates that we must believe in Jesus as the Son of God and Savior of man (John 8:24), repent of our sins (Luke 13:3, 5), confess our faith in Christ before men (Matt. 10:32), and be baptized by the authority of Christ for the forgiveness of our sins (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16). If we are already members of the church, we must follow God’s second plan of pardon to be forgiven. We must repent of our sins (Acts 8:22) and confess those sins to God in prayer (1 John 1:9; Acts 8:22). The blood of Jesus can thus cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

In either case—whether an alien sinner or fallen child of God—the common act required for forgiveness is repentance. It is, therefore, imperative that we understand

what is meant by repentance and all that is involved in this act.

Repentance involves restitution. Restitution is restoring to another that which we have unjustly taken in our sins. If we have deprived others of some material thing, then we must restore to that person the thing taken or the value of that thing. If that cannot be done then reasonable satisfaction must be given. If what is taken is intangible, then every effort must be made to remove the effects of the wrong. In simple terms this means that if we have stolen an automobile we must return it if we have repented. We cannot keep riding around in the car if we have genuinely repented. I believe we all have the ability to understand this. This illustration has been used effectively many times. It clearly illustrates the idea of restitution involved in repentance.

If emotions were not so heavily involved in other similar situations, I believe we could see the parallel and apply this idea of restitution consistently with success. But, when “marriage” is the sin, many do not see as clearly as they would otherwise. If a person is in an unscriptural marriage (a “marriage” not authorized by God), then many want to suggest that a person can repent without giving up that which is not rightfully his. Repentance requires restitution where possible. Baptism, in the case of the alien sinner becoming a Christian, does not sanctify an unscriptural relationship. The sin of adultery can be forgiven, but only when repentance occurs which means turning away from the practice of adultery. A person cannot continue in the sinful practice and have God’s approval or forgiveness. A person must stop the practice of whatever sin in order to be forgiven.

Perhaps this additional illustration will help. Suppose a practicing homosexual learned the Truth and wanted forgiveness. It is impossible to have that forgiveness and have a right relationship with God while continuing to practice homosexuality. That sinful practice must stop if forgiveness is to be obtained! Baptism will not sanctify such a relationship that is sinful no more than baptism will sanctify an adulterous relationship. If forgiveness is to be obtained, then the sinful practice must stop. That is part of what repentance requires!

Biblical Faith

Dub McClish

Faith and *belief* (in their various cognates) are among the most frequently found words and concepts in the Bible. They are also among the most misunderstood and abused Biblical words. Without controversy, the Bible requires that all who would be saved from the condemnation of sin must possess faith in God and His Son:

And without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him (Heb. 11:6).

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life (John 3:16).

For except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins (John 8:24).

Biblical faith involves belief, trust, and conviction. The nearest thing in the Bible to a definition of faith is the following: “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1, KJV). *Substance* and *evidence* are powerful words of certainty regarding our faith in God and His son, although we cannot now experience them empirically (i.e., by one of our physical senses).

Nevertheless, sufficient evidence exists to prove that the hoped-for things are real. God does not ask us to “believe” in eternal and spiritual verities merely because we want them to exist. God never asks anyone to believe anything He has said without providing adequate evidence to warrant the investment of our faith. In light of these thoughts, consider the following:

- Biblical faith is **not** mere wishful thinking, wherein one wishes for something so much he convinces himself it exists. This concept is one of “pie-in-the-sky,” “leap-in-

the-dark” desire with no reason or evidence for it.

- Biblical faith is **not** merely suggesting the **probability** that God exists, that Christ is the Son of God, or that the Bible is the Word of God. This approach is sheer agnosticism.
- Biblical faith is **not** belief in something (or someone) **in spite of contrary** evidence. Rather it rests upon credible evidence.
- Biblical faith is **not** distinct from knowledge, as if “faith” begins where “knowledge” ends and proceeds into an unknowable “twilight zone.” Rather, Biblical faith is another **avenue** of knowledge.
- Biblical faith, in relation to salvation, is not mere intellectual acceptance of one or more Biblical doctrines (e.g., the Deity of Jesus). Such conviction is the **beginning** point of salvation—not its end. **Saving** faith is always **obedient** faith. Jesus said: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned” (Mark 16:16).

The source of evidence for Biblical faith is the Bible: “So belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ (Rom. 10:17). John specifically pinpointed the evidence for our faith in the Christ:

Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name (John 20:30–31).

The Bible: God's Divine Revelation

Foy E. Wallace, Jr.

The present trend toward modernism is discernible in the emphasis that our school men are putting on philosophy. But philosophy is the product of human reasoning and therefore is no more infallible than the minds of men. Yet philosophy is being accepted as final and regarded more authoritative than revelation. When men will not accept the record of divine revelation unless it can be confirmed by philosophy, they are not men of faith—they are modernists.

Proof that the Bible is divine revelation and therefore infallible is not meager and scant—it is manifold and sufficient, both intrinsic and extrinsic in genius. The first exists in the character of the content of the Bible, and the second in the demands of man's nature.

The Need Of Revelation

The very nature of man requires it. First, as a dying creature, unlike the animal, he possesses a love of life and dread of death. He is dissatisfied with the thought of being born to die—with being brought into the world to begin to die the moment that he begins to live. In his nature, there is a longing for a destiny beyond the limits of life here, a yearning for the revelation of his origin and destiny. His nature demands a destiny. The Bible is the only book that answers his longing and reveals his destiny. It is therefore the only book that meets the demands of man's nature.

Second, as a worshipping being, his desire to worship demands an object of worship, which of necessity must be a superhuman object. But the inability of man to create renders it impossible for him to make or imagine such an ideal. The true object of his worship must therefore be revealed. The Bible is the only book that reveals the object of man's worship.

Third, as a rational being, all but destitute of instinct, he is unable to supply his own wants. His reason, affection, and conscience, lifting him above the creature of automatic instinct, demand a revealed religion in acquired language. Being a universal creature, to obviate prejudice, this revealed religion must be non-sectional and international, overcoming sectional distinctions, and such is the revealed religion of the Bible.

The Character Of The Bible

Further proof that the Bible is direct divine revelation is discoverable in the character of its contents. First, in unique composition its pronouncements are profound, yet in the whole of its presentation its style is simple, and its lessons and duties are understandable. It is the longest line of thought woven in the loom of time, yet expressed in clear and easy words which translation does not weaken, proving it to be unlike other books, and certifying that it is superhuman, and demonstrating it to be the book from above.

Second, in its divine impartiality, unlike human books, it exposes the weaknesses in the lives of its characters and records the mistakes and misdeeds of its heroes. Adam sinned and was expelled from his primeval home. Noah's intoxication is related with all of its repulsion. David's transgression was revealed as an orgy of lust, and Peter's denial is mentioned as a trait of cowardice. Where is there a book of man like it? Let infidels account for the truthful impartiality of the Bible on mere human grounds of authorship.

Third, in its proffered rewards and threatened punishments revelation is written in every line, for man could not propose blessings or punishments higher than his imagination, nor write of the future longer than he himself could see enforced. The duration of rewards and punishments being eternal, man could not have conceived such. The teaching of the Bible concerning eternity projects man farther and deeper into the future than his imagination could invent or his mind could conceive.

Fourth, in the vast quantity of its varied contents there are no conflicts. With no apparent effort on the part of its authors to avoid contradictions, there are none; but it does not propose to harmonize those which man fancies to discover; there being none in it, the discrepancies vanish in the light of all the facts. The fact that its authors were separated by time, clime, and language, with no knowledge of each other, yet were agreed in all that is written, proves that the Bible is not the work of men.

Fifth, in its demands on the individual, the Bible claims the hearts, lives, and reverence of all men of all generations, with no apology for the demand. The most inspiring of all human philosophers could never have dreamed of such a thing. Man did not write the Bible. It is the book of a universal and an eternal God.

The Value Of Testimony

The character of witnesses, in evidence on questions involving integrity and veracity, determines the value of testimony. Of first consideration on this point is the life of Jesus. He lived in toil and sacrifice and taught His disciples to do the same. Note the passages: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth"; and, "Labour not for the meat which perisheth"; and, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself." Could a mere man hope for such from his followers? Could any human teacher expect ready recruits from such appeals, offering only affliction and reproach? The history of the world does not record such. But the honesty of such demands was absolute and cannot be discredited.

As a second consideration, there is the test of purity. The purity of life required of the followers of Jesus is a basic evidence. **Miracles** attest the fact of Christianity, but **morals** are the profession of it. Mohammed cared nothing for the appraisal of his subjects as to his moral character and made no demands as to their own. That alone marks him as a pretender. Christ demands purity to the point that there can be no fellowship with Him without it. The like of it cannot be found in history.

A third consideration is yet found in the test of veracity. Some who acknowledge the purity of Jesus, deny His claims of divinity and Deity. They are inconsistent. If He was not divine, He was an imposter. There is no such thing as Jesus being a good man if His claims were false. But His life and teaching are the credentials of His divinity. Take His teaching on eternity—the promise of happiness after a life of toil, and glory after suffering—where is there a sane man who would spend his life, all of his days, in toil and privation for the **vain** hope of glory after he died?

A fourth and final test in the sincerity of His witnesses is their inflexible zeal, coupled with their virtues, and their willingness to die. This could not have been founded on

fraud and deception. They could have renounced it all and lived. What they taught was true, affirmed by life and confirmed by death. Imposter Joe Smith and his brother Hiram fought to live when the mob came and died fighting with pistols to escape assassination. Compare theirs with the death of Jesus and the martyrdom of Christians. Man did not write the Bible, and its religion is of God.

The Bible Is Not A Fable

Christianity is a myth, Jesus a fake, and the Bible a fable? Its first writer, Moses himself, begins the Bible, not with the story of his own life, but of creation; and instead of taking the glory for his own age of time, he ascribed it to 2,500 years before, and passes over the 1,500 years of his own generations to the future and everlasting age to come. That is not a human spirit.

As for Jesus, the influence of His life and teaching have increased with the passing of the centuries. The birth of Jesus reversed the calendar of the world, and the time of it is imprinted on every letter that men write, on every deed and abstract and legal document that men record in every government on earth, and is inscribed on the monument that marks the head of every man's grave.

Why all this if there's nothing to it, if Christ is a fraud and the Bible is a fable? If the Bible is a mere fable, why do infidels single it out and seek its destruction? There are thousands of fables in the land, and they let them pass. Why not let the Bible pass, if it is just another fable? Why do they oppose it? Ah, the Book will not let them alone! It condemns them at every turn. Their spirits cannot rest. It follows them by day and haunts them by night. It is before them when they rise up, and it is there when they lie down. They rant and they rave, they scoff and they scowl, but they **feel afraid**.

The system of religion revealed in the Bible is the only reliable religion. No other will answer the demand for the knowledge of the origin and the history and the destiny of man.

It is not reasonable that God—even if He were called **Nature**—could overlook the revelation of things of such stupendous importance, but expose matters of far less moment. There is but one conclusion: The Bible is the revelation of the Eternal God of the universe.

The Simplicity of the Gospel

H. Leo Boles

No book written by man has so many simple words as the New Testament. There is an air of simplicity about the biographies of Jesus which, like the breezes from the Galilean hills, blows upon our sophisticated minds. The gospel has not been recorded in philosophical phraseology, scientific terms, complicated sentences, or the dialects of angels; but it has been expressed in the simplest terms so that children can understand.

Man has muddled the stream of divine thought by theological and ecclesiastical terms and phrases until it is much more difficult to understand the doctrines of men than the simple teachings of the New Testament. The gospel of Jesus contains the truths of God's will so plain and clear that the untrained minds of innocent children can catch and follow them.

Teachers often confuse by their explanation, when, if they would just let the New Testament speak, the simplicity of thought would be gained. While on earth, Jesus replaced the traditions of men with respect to the law by his simple teachings. The instructions given to Christians as to how to live the Christian life can be understood. No one has a just complaint to make against the requirements of the New Testament toward a simple life.

The Gospel Was Understood When It Was First Heard

The proof of the simplicity of the gospel is seen in the record of the conversions. When the multitude came together on the day of Pentecost and heard the miraculous manifestations of the apostles speaking in tongues, they were astonished and accused

the apostles of being drunken. Peter stood up with the eleven and gave a simple explanation of what had occurred.

He calmly pointed to the prophecy of Joel and recited that prophecy to the people. He then called attention to what they had observed. In a simple way, he pointed out the facts and showed that what they were observing was a fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel. With that out of the way, he then proceeded to unfold to them the claims of Jesus of Nazareth, and by the quotation from David showed that should have expected just what had transpired. Since the prophecies were fulfilled in Jesus, he must be what he claimed to be—the Son of God, the promised Messiah. Step by step, argument and conclusion closely following each other, Peter convinced many that Jesus was the Saviour of the world.

These astonished and confused Jews soon became believers in the Christ. About 3,000 heard this profound, yet simple, sermon that Peter preached, and were convinced. This was the first time that a gospel sermon had been preached in its fullness. Of course, Peter spoke as the Spirit gave him utterance; hence, he spoke in such simple terms as the people could hear and understand the first gospel sermon that they had ever heard. Surely Peter must have spoken simply for so many of the common people to understand and accept what he presented.

Those who did not accept the gospel on Pentecost refused it not because they did not understand it, but because they refused to believe it. Their unconverted state was a result, not of a misunderstanding, neither of their inability to understand, but a failure on their part to believe what they did understand. Prejudice and other things may have had a bearing upon them, but the chief thing was that they refused to believe what they heard.

The Ethiopian eunuch had been to Jerusalem to worship (Acts 8). He was returning and riding in his chariot. He had presumably worshipped according to the law of Moses at Jerusalem. He had never heard of the Christ or, if he had heard of him, it was an unfavorable report. Philip joined the chariot and, as he rode along, preached to him Jesus. (Acts 8:35).

This was the first gospel sermon the eunuch ever heard, and probably the first time he had ever heard of the Christ. But Philip preached the simple gospel in simple terms so that the eunuch understood him. He believed the gospel and was baptized and went on his way rejoicing in the new-found salvation. Many others like the eunuch heard and understood the terms of salvation, and obeyed the gospel the same hour of the night. In fact, the people in the long list of conversions recorded in the Acts of the Apostles obeyed the gospel the first time they heard it. There was no delay, but prompt obedience to all the commands of the gospel marked their belief in the simple gospel.

Its Simplicity Brings Heavier Condemnation

Since the gospel is simple enough for all to understand the terms of salvation and the requirements of Christian living, all are condemned who do not accept the terms of salvation and live as the simple gospel of Christ requires them to live. The condemnation of the ignorant and illiterate would not be just if the gospel was not presented in such a simple way that they could understand it.

Every Spirit guided speaker and writer in New Testament times expected the hearer to understand, and passed condemnation on him if he did not believe. In giving the commission, Jesus said, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature,” but he also added, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” (Mark 16:15-16). The condemnation of the disbeliever is just, because he **can** understand the simple requirements of the gospel.

The gospel was given to be understood. It was preached in simple language and the Holy Spirit has recorded it in simple terms. Hence, our condemnation is just if we do not believe it.

The Christian life is a simple life and all of its requirements are simple. “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon

you, and learn of me; For I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” (Matt. 11:28-30).

“I Am The Captain Of My Soul”

Jerry C. Brewer

Unremorseful, unrepentant, and unprepared, Timothy McVeigh slipped into eternity at Terre Haute, Indiana’s Federal Prison on June 11, 2001. Those of us who lived in Oklahoma City and witnessed the unspeakable horror of April 19, 1995 will always have McVeigh’s picture etched into our memories. He shed innocent blood and wrought misery in thousands of hearts in his absolutely evil act of murder. In his final gesture of defiance, McVeigh made his last statement with the poem *Invictus*, the final line of which reads, “I am the master of my fate. I am the captain of my soul.” In his defiance, this wretched, evil man, who considered the lives of innocent children he killed as “collateral damage,” spit in the face of God. And like the rich man who “lifted up his eyes, being in torments” (Luke 16:23), McVeigh now awaits God’s righteous judgment. His fate **was** in his own hands while he lived on earth, but he is **not** the master of his soul. “Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it” (Eccl. 12:7).

Like Timothy McVeigh, each of us is the captain of his own fate while he lives in this world, but we are **not** the **masters** of our souls. The final disposition of the soul—whether eternal punishment or eternal life—will be made by God Who shall judge all the earth through Jesus Christ (Matt. 25:31-46; Acts 17:30-31).

You and I are making choices each day which will determine where we spend eternity—life and death choices. As creatures of free will, we may choose to travel the broad way that leads to eternal loss and destruction, or the narrow way that leads to life eternal (Matt. 7:13-14).

The profoundly tragic thing about men’s religion in our society is its teaching of egalitarian grace, wherein no soul will be lost because of his conduct. One religious leader said that, Timothy McVeigh, “was not an evil person.” That sums up the thinking of modern religion in America; that evil is not a reality and men may live as they please and still go to heaven. Those who preach that kind of “grace” will have a shocking, eternal awakening when they, too, slip into eternity unrepentant, unremorseful, and unprepared.

The life lived here is not the end of our existence. It is a period of preparation for eternity. God has not only warned of judgment to come, but has amply illustrated His wrath on the ungodly throughout history. He destroyed the ancient wicked world with a flood, saving Noah and his family (Gen. 6-8). He destroyed wicked Sodom with fire and brimstone, saving Lot’s family (Gen. 19). He destroyed the Israelite nation with Roman legions in AD 70, delivering the faithful from it and, in His own good time, He will destroy this present wicked world (2 Pet. 3:10-13).

When was the last time you heard a preacher speak on the judgment of God, or the eternal punishment of the wicked in hell? You may have to think back a long time. That subject is off-limits and passé to modern expounders of the “here and now” religion of universal salvation.

However, be warned. God’s judgment is coming and each day you live you are choosing where you will spend eternity. The only way to escape God’s wrath is through His plan of salvation, revealed by His grace in the New Testament. It is not through a “sinner’s prayer” that the devil and his servants tell you to recite. Nor is it through “grace only” without any obedience on your part. Those are the devil’s lies that he has been telling since he said to Eve “Ye shall not surely die” (Gen. 3:4).

Satan calls good evil and evil good and his ministers parrot his line every time they tell you to, “Just pray the sinner’s prayer” or “Just believe and God’s grace will never let you fall.” To choose those lies is to choose eternal death.

The way of Christ is narrow (Mat. 7:13-14). It involves effort on your part in turning from a life of unrighteousness and spiritual death to one of godliness and spiritual life (Rom. 6:17-18). That is done when one believes that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (Mat. 16:16; John 8:24), repents of his sin (Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30-31), confesses his faith in Christ (Rom. 10:10; Acts 8:37), and is immersed into Christ for the remission of sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Gal. 3:27).

The choice is ours while we live. We are the captain of our own fate—on this side of eternity. However, we are not the ultimate masters of our own souls. The soul will return to God Who gave it, and it is He who shall judge according to His righteous standard (John 12:48).

Obey the Gospel and escape the wrath to come. Timothy McVeigh did not.

Three Salvations

J.D. Tant

In the word of God we find at least three salvations promised to man, located at different points and given to man under different conditions.

First, there is what we might term a temporal salvation, located in the kingdom of nature, and coming alike to all men.

Second, there is a salvation from sin, or spiritual salvation, located in the kingdom of grace or the kingdom of God's dear Son.

Third, there is an eternal salvation of the soul, located in the everlasting kingdom of God and given to the faithful who die in the Lord. It is to each of these salvations that we now call special attention.

Temporal Salvation

Paul says, "We trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men" (1 Tim. 4:10). In what sense is God the Saviour of all men? In the temporal sense only can it be said that He is the Saviour of all men. God sends His rain upon the unjust as well as the just. The wicked can raise just as much to eat upon the same area of land as the righteous can. Paul taught that in God we live, move and have our being (Acts 17:28). In this sense **only** is God the Saviour of **all** men. We enter this life by a birth. This is the natural law. God has ordained that where there is no birth there can be no life. Into this world we are all naturally born and enjoy the universal, temporal salvation God has promised to man.

Salvation From Sin

But we have another salvation which is located in the kingdom of God's dear Son (Col. 1:13) and is given to all by birth who are born into that kingdom by water and the Spirit (John 3:5). But how does one get into that kingdom where salvation from his past sins is offered?

Calling attention to Matthew 7:13-14, you will find that Jesus recognized two ways—the "broad" and "narrow" ways. When man reaches the years of accountability he is certainly travelling one of these roads. One he walks by faith and the other by sight or feelings.

If you will notice, there are five steps in the narrow way, leading into the kingdom of God's dear Son:

1. Hearing the sayings of Christ and doing them (Matt. 7:21).
2. Faith in Christ that we might not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16). Yet many people become forgetful hearers of the word and not doers, and deceive themselves. Others stop at the second step, claiming justification by faith only. But if you notice you will find that on the same way,
3. Repentance unto life is required of those who would walk in the narrow way (Acts 11:18). No one can expect to enter into the holy place, or church of God, who has not repented of his sins.

4. The next step is to confess with the mouth that Jesus is the Christ the, Son of God, for Christ taught that we must confess him before men that He may confess us before the Father and the angels (Matt. 10:32; Rom. 10:10; Acts 8:37).

5. The final step in that narrow way is to be born of water and the Spirit (John 3:5)—baptism into Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:3-5).

Thus we are delivered from Satan's kingdom into the kingdom of God's dear Son. In this kingdom, we are the children of God because we have been baptized into Christ and had our sins remitted (Acts 2:38; Gal. 3:26-27). In this kingdom, we are called unto the liberty of sons of God, servants of righteousness and freed from sin. So this second salvation is a special one, given only to the obedient believer (1 Tim. 4:10).

Eternal Salvation

Then, beyond this special salvation, there is an eternal salvation which Christ has promised to all who obey Him (Heb. 5:8-9). This is called the salvation of our souls and is the salvation to which our obedient faith leads (1 Pet. 1:9).

This is the everlasting life which God has promised to give to His sheep, His children, where they shall never perish (John 10:28). It is that life eternal unto which the righteous go at judgment (Matt. 25:46). It is that life everlasting that Christ taught Peter he would receive in the world to come (Luke 18:30).

Certainly, the language of Christ is true in John 10:29, that His children should never perish when they get that eternal life, for we learn that in the paradise of God—in that eternal glorified kingdom—there is the river of life and the tree of life where those who go into this life eternal can drink and eat and live forever.

But how do I get into this life eternal? There is only one road leading there. Isaiah calls it a way of holiness—says no unclean thing shall pass over it, nor be found thereupon (Isa. 35:8). The road passes through the spiritual kingdom, through the kingdom of God's dear Son. It is the road along which Jesus has promised to lead us, but along no other way do we find the hand of God directing. Are you walking in that way, or trying to climb up some other way? (John 10:1-7).

In this way of holiness, you will observe seven steps the child of God must take, which are well described by Peter (2 Pet. 1:5-9). If we add these graces, Peter says we shall never fall. I must add to my faith virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity or love.

But suppose I fail to do these things. Where will I fall? I have been born into the kingdom and cannot be “unborn.” When once you get into the kingdom, you can only die out, for there is only one way of getting in and one way of getting out.

I was born into the kingdom (John 3:5). But suppose I become wicked in the kingdom, and live and die that way. What will become of me? Christ said the Father would send and gather out of His kingdom all who offend and do iniquity, and would cast them into a furnace of fire (Matt. 13:41, 42).

But can a man get back if he falls off the way of holiness at any step along the way? Yes. He returns by 1) repentance, 2) confession, and 3) prayer. Paul taught that man is a compound being of body, soul and spirit (1 Thess. 5:23) and he taught that we wait for the redemption of our bodies (Rom. 8:23). This is to be a triumph from the grave, when great and small shall hear the trump of God and shall come to judgment; when all the sleeping nations of the earth shall hear and obey. When the sea gives up her dead and the two congregations walking in the narrow and broad ways shall come to judgment, where shall you and I be?

I ask you, dear reader, on which side will you stand? There are only two roads. One leads to life and the other to death. You are making your choice between the two every day that you live.

Will you not accept a home in the paradise of God—heaven? There you will have access to the tree of life and live forever. There you can meet with obedient loved ones of earth after the battle is fought, after the work is done, and after the victory is won. Will

you not be there to obtain the crown and forever rest in the city of God. You can, by walking in the narrow way in this life.

Ye Have Heard

Gayle Oler

In the great sermon on the mount, Jesus said, “Ye have heard that it was said to them of old times...but I say unto you...” It was there that he was showing the distinction between the new law of the gospel of Christ, and the old law of Moses. This is a distinction that many people have never grasped.

Those people had not gone to the source of their information to find out with what authority their informant had spoken. People often make the same mistake today, but it is a wise thing to “Believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits, whether they are of God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). Paul warns us to “Prove all things, hold fast that which is good” (1 Thess. 5:21).

Ye have heard that it was said, “One church is as good as another.” But what does Jesus say about that? He said that exactly the contrary is true. He said, “Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up” (Matt. 15:13). Did you ever ask a person where he got his information when he said one church is as good as another, and that it didn't make any difference which church you were in? The next time you hear a fellow make a statement like that, ask him for the source of his information, and watch him get embarrassed.

Ye have heard that it was said, “Baptism is not essential to salvation, and it has no connection with the remission of one's sins.” But Jesus said, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). Ananias, an inspired minister of the gospel, said, “Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). So while you have heard to the contrary, the Lord and his disciples state that baptism does have a connection with salvation, and that it is essential.

You have heard it said, “The church was established with John in the wilderness, or during the personal ministry of Jesus.” But after John was already dead and buried, Jesus said, “Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 16:18). He gave rules and regulations for the government of the church, but Paul said in Hebrews 9:17 that these did not go into effect while Jesus lived—that there had to be a death on Christ's part before they were effective. If the church had been established during the personal ministry of Christ, it could not have been governed by the word of Christ in his Testament.

Ye have heard it said, “A sinner can pray for salvation and get it.” And it is a common thing for sectarian preachers to tell sinners to pray for salvation. But the Bible says in John 9:31, “Now we know that God heareth not sinners.” And Jesus said in John 14:6, “I am the way, the truth and the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by me.” But if a man be in Christ he is a new creature. (2 Cor. 5:17).

Instead of a sinner being told to pray for salvation, the Bible tells him, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). It matters not how much a sinner may pray for salvation, until he is born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. In this law or rule, there is no change, and beyond it there is no appeal.

Ye have heard it said, “Men can go to heaven outside the church.” But the Bible says in Acts 2:47, “The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”

Ye have heard it said, “God has more than one church, and more than one flock today.” But Jesus said, in John 10:16, “Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also must I bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold and one shepherd.” Jesus said there would be only one. There is only one church or fold in the world today by divine authority.

In Ephesians 1:22-23, Paul said the church is the body of Christ. And in 1 Corinthians

12:20, he said, But now they are many members, but one body. Since this true, then it is certainly true that there cannot be two acceptable churches in the world. Only one can be right.

When you hear people say anything about religion—and so much is said—remember the divine admonition, “Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they be of God, for many false prophets are gone out into the world.” The majority of religious teachers are wrong. The fields are white unto the harvest, and the labourers are few, but there are many false teachers. Be careful, lest you walk in the wrong way.

The IQ Test

Charles Pogue

I took an IQ test yesterday. I made a really low score on it. So, what does that prove? Among other things:

- It proves one does not have to be a genius to understand that Jesus built His church (Matt. 16:18; Acts 20:28; Eph. 5:22-27).
- It proves one does not have to be a genius to understand there is only one body which is the church, thus only one church (Eph. 1:22,23; 4:4).
- It proves one does not have to be a genius to understand that if one is a member of a man made church, he is not a member of the church of the New Testament (Acts 2:47; Col. 1:24).
- It proves one does not have to be a genius to understand that it is in baptism where one is washed from sin, and is the point at which he contacts the blood of Christ for salvation (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Rom. 6:3,4; 1 Pet. 3:21)
- It proves one does not have to be a genius to understand that if one has not been baptized for the remission of sins he is not in Christ (Gal. 3:27).
- It proves one does not have to be a genius to understand that just because God commands baptism for salvation, that does not mean it is the water that saves. It is the blood of Christ that saves (Eph. 1:7; Gal. 1:14; Heb. 9:13,14; 1 Pet. 1:2; 1 John 1:7).
- It proves one does not have to be a genius to understand that one can fall from grace (Gal. 5:4; 2 Pet. 2:20).
- It proves one does not have to be a genius to understand crying out, “Lord save me” will not get one into the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 7:21-23).
- It proves one does not have to be a genius to understand that the overwhelming majority of the world, including the masses who believe they are on the narrow way leading to life, are actually on the broad way leading to destruction (Matt. 7:13,14).
- It proves one does not have to be a genius to realize there is a huge number of false teachers who deny the above truths and contribute to the loss of millions of souls (Matt. 7:15; 2 Pet. 2:1-3).
- It proves I do not have to be a genius to understand I have family, friends, and acquaintances who believe they are on their way to heaven, but they are not (Matt. 10:34-36).

The above truths, in the accompanying scriptures, and my low IQ test score prove that if I can understand what the Bible teaches regarding salvation, so can you. What did I make on that test? Let’s just say that if 100 were the standard of perfection like it was in high school, I had a very low B. What does that prove? It proves that if I can understand that if one single scripture teaches one is **not** saved by faith only as the religious word claims, then **faith only is a false doctrine**. Is there such a scripture? Indeed there is! “Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only” (Jas. 2:24). This verse is the reason one will not find a single scripture that says one is saved by faith only.

My low IQ score proves that if I can understand and obey the will of God for my salvation, so can you!

Reverence for the Word of God

J.I. Lowell

The man who respects not his own word, respects not himself; and he who respects not himself, no one will respect. He Who in the beginning **spake** and it was done—Whose **word** is like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces—Whose word shall judge the world and never pass away, but stand, like its immutable Author, when the heavens and the earth are no more—will surely respect and honor His own word.

Of the **name** of the Lord, is said it is a strong tower into which the righteous run and are safe; but of His own **word** it is said, “Thou hast magnified thy **word** above all thy name” (Psa. 138:2). The man who can cavil or trifle with the word of the great Jehovah to avoid a duty it commands, or to defend a doctrine of his own denomination, is a presumptuous and thoughtless man. Little does he realize that he will be confronted by the fearful and insulted Author of that word when the dead, small and great, shall stand before God and the books be opened. “To this man will I look, even to him that is of poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word” (Isa. 66:2, 5).

A lack of reverence for the word of God is the one great sin of the world. A certain tyrant of Rome used to wish the Roman people had but one neck, that he might dispatch them at a blow. Your sins, reader, have but one neck, namely, disrespect for God's word. If a man have just reverence for His word, he will commit none of the sins it forbids. Please consider the following scriptures:

“The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul...” (Psa. 19:7). “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). “Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you” (John 15:3). “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth” (Jas. 1:18). “For in Christ Jesus, I have begotten you through the gospel” (1 Cor. 4:15).

Reader, if you do not believe what these texts assert, namely, that men are begotten through the truth, are clean through the word, are **converted** by the law of the Lord, you have good reason to doubt whether you have any reverence for the word of God.

The only moral power ordained of God for the conversion of sinners is His word, and the man who has no reverence for that word is beyond recovery. When any people arrive at that kind of extreme wickedness, they may prepare for destruction. When the antediluvians had lost all respect for God's word, as preached by Noah, he destroyed them with a terrible catastrophe. Again, when the Jews would not regard the word of the Lord spoken by Jesus and His apostles, but made void the law of God by their sectarian doctrines and traditions, they met a similar fate.

Denominationalists reverence many things which the Bible teaches, not because God **says** so, but because the sectarian party to which they have attached themselves teach and practice so. Indeed, every observing man must have noticed that it is of no more use to quote to a party man the plainest declaration of God's word against a tradition of his church, than it would be to cite a heathen fable.

A man rejects the doctrine of purgatory (as he thinks) because it is not in the Bible, and at the same time practices infant sprinkling, although that is not in the Bible either! Another rejects infant sprinkling because it is not in the Bible, and still practices “experience telling,” although that is no more to be found in the Bible than infant sprinkling. Another rejects the office of the Pope because it is not found in the Good Book, and yet contends for the office of “Area Bishop,” although the office of Pope can as easily be found in the Bible as the “Area Bishop.”

Thus, these men deceive themselves. They **think** they respect the Book of God when, in fact, they only respect the doctrines of their own parties. The truth is, they reject these things, not because they are not in God's word, but because they are not in the creeds of their own churches. It is manifest that the revelation of God is of no more use

to such men than it is to the pagan who never heard it. The pagan follows his own feelings, and so do they. Both profess to be taught by the same spirit—the one, idolatry and the other, sectarianism.

If men revered the word of God properly, they would not be giving their support to confessions of faith, articles of faith, books of discipline and other human traditions. They would be content with God's discipline if they had confidence in the sufficiency of that blessed volume. They would give the inquiring sinner the instructions of the Bible instead of the instructions of their denominations. They would not contemptuously say of the Lord's commandment, "That is only a commandment of God." Jesus says, "I know that his commandment is life everlasting," but they say, "We know His commandment is not a saving ordinance. His commandment is non-essential."

While the Book asserts that his word, "liveth and abideth forever," you would not hear men declaring it to be a "dead letter" if they respected the word of the living God. Remember, reader, you are to be judged by that word, whether it be dead or alive. Paul says the gospel is God's power to save men (Rom. 1:16) and it should be remembered that His word is always adequate to every end for which it was appointed by the Creator, and the following are purposes for which He has appointed it:

1. **Faith comes by the word.** "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17).
2. **The sinner is begotten by the word.** "For in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel" (1 Cor. 4:15).
3. **The sinner is born of the word.** "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever" (1 Pet. 1:23).
4. **One is converted by the word.** "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul" (Psa. 19:7).
5. **One is made spiritually clean by the word.** "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you" (John 15:3).
6. **The word frees from sin.** "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32).
7. **The word of God sanctifies men.** "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth" (John 17:17).
8. **The word shall judge us.** "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).

But the word of God doesn't work as a "charm." No one must flatter himself that the word will convert, sanctify, and save him, unless he **believes and obeys** it. Remember, it is a capital doctrine of the Living Oracles that, "...his servants ye are to whom ye obey..." (Rom. 6:16). Though a man may be in error, if he reveres the word of his Maker there is hope for his salvation. But if he has no regard for God's word, he is beyond the reach of the converting power of it.

While I write, I am surrounded by religionists who have so little reverence for the word of God, that if I read a truth from it that contradicts a doctrine of theirs, they will reluctantly admit that it **says so**, but contend that God doesn't **mean** what He says! They know it is not as God says, because they have "felt it." Having rejected the light of God's word, they are in the dark "feeling after God."

He who has implicit faith in the word has no necessity for feeling his way in the dark, for he walks "by faith," not by feeling (2 Cor. 5:7). Neither does he have any occasion to appeal to his own feelings for anything which he believes, for the word of God is the entire rule of his faith. He is too well instructed to attempt to interpret the pure word of God by his impure and erring feelings. Rather, he strives to correct his feelings and bring them into entire subjection to the word of Him who upholds all things by the word of His power.

The Quaker's "light within" has spread its baneful influence over nearly all religious parties. God says His **word** is light (Psa. 119:105, 130), but why should the man who believes he has a superior "light within" heed the light of God's word from without? He consequently learns to despise the light of God's word. This doctrine has no support in revelation or analogy in nature. The light that enlightens the understanding of fallen man **must always** come from **without**. The literal light must always enter through the organ of sight; and he who so far despises God's arrangements as to turn that organ inside-out to discover the light within, will always go "feeling" his way through the world in spiritual blindness. He will never see the twinkling star, the full moon, or the morning dawn, much less the splendor of the noon day sun.

"Woe unto them that put darkness for light, and light for darkness" (Isa. 5:20). This doctrine of ultra spiritualism is hanging like an incubus upon the vitals of the public. Multitudes are waiting to be "made fit" to obey the word of the Lord by the discovery of the spirit within. Many, who never doubted the truth of the Gospel, have died in their sins wrapped in this destructive delusion.

The Holy Spirit communicates all His teachings through the word of God. God's word is the light of the moral universe, and where its benign rays have not penetrated the pagan world, there ignorance sways her dark sceptre. Yet, many are here under the lustre of the glowing luminary of heaven, who close their eyes to the light and feel their ways back into the region and shadow of death! Jesus says, "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12) and it should be especially noted that **the Holy Ghost is never said to be the light of the world**.

Men contend for popular error with great warmth, but if you demand Bible proof for their teaching they will take shelter behind their own ignorance, saying, "If I knew as much of the Bible as you, I could put you down." And so they glory in their own shame! The common sense conclusion that says if they are ignorant of the Bible, they are probably ignorant of the truth it teaches, never seems to have entered their bewildered brains.

The case would be far different if they studied their Bibles as they do temporal interests. If they loved God supremely, they would love His word and treasure it up in their hearts. But the Bible funds of most men are but mere scraps gathered by accident from the pulpit or the fireside, and they are often garbled and generally incorrectly quoted.

No man can say with any confidence what any passage of scripture means unless he knows enough of the connection to get the leading idea in the mind of the sacred Author, and this often requires an acquaintance with an entire letter or book. As the printer tells any story—true or false—by rearranging the same type, so the different sects "prove" any ism they choose by the same scripture scraps, arranged according to the fancy or education of the compositor. Thus they employ the Bible as the printer does his type. I bear my solemn protest against such injustice. Knowledge of, and reverence for, the word of the living God is the only remedy for man's sins, and his only hope of salvation.

The Controversial Nature of Baptism

Nana Yaw Aidoo

Having done a little survey of the religious world, I have become convinced that one of the most—if not **the** most—controversial issues in so-called "Christendom" is the issue of baptism. Concerning this great Biblical theme, many sermons have been preached, lectures have been delivered and debates have been organized. The whole controversy on this issue surrounds such things as the "mode" of baptism, the "subject" of baptism, the "kind" of baptism and the "design" of baptism. What could possibly be the cause of this controversy? Did God fail to communicate His will on this issue properly to men? That cannot be for God inspired the writers of the Bible to write nothing but that which we can read or understand (2 Cor. 1:13). I suggest therefore that a lack of regard for the authority of God's word and a preference for the dictates of men is the cause of the whole controversy surrounding the issue of baptism. The one who is serious about

making it to heaven, ought to ask the question—**what does the Bible say about baptism?**

Baptism—Its Mode

Friends, there really is nothing like a “**mode**” of baptism. The word baptism in the English Bible is not a translation but a transliteration of a word that means “to dip.” If the translators of the Authorized Version had translated the Greek word *baptisma* rather than merely transliterate it, then *immersion* would have been found wherever the word baptism is found in the Bible. Even if this isn’t so—although it is—we still can know the “mode” of baptism by carefully and honestly looking at what those who baptized and were baptized in the Bible did.

It is written that John the Baptizer baptized people in the Jordan River (Matt. 3:6) and “in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there.” (John 3:23). That is too much water just to pour or to sprinkle on people. No one needs that much water to do those things. Just a cup of water is enough. Whatever sophistry might be conjured by “pourers” and/or “sprinklers,” is dealt with by the use of the word “because” in John 3:23. Why did John baptize people in Aenon near Salim? **Because** there was much water there. Much water was and is necessary in order to baptize an individual.

We also see that the Ethiopian’s baptism was one in which both he and Philip “went down into the water” (Acts 8:38) and when they were done, “they came up out of the water” (Acts 8:39). No one goes “into” and “out of” water when “pouring” or “sprinkling” water on others. Friends, it is not baptism unless it is an immersion. Little wonder the apostle Paul called baptism a “burial.” (Rom. 6:3; Col. 2:12).

Baptism—Its Subject

Jesus Christ our Lord teaches that before a person can be baptized, he must have first heard the gospel preached and procured faith as a result of the preaching (Mark 16:15-16). This necessarily rules out babies for they do not have mental faculties developed enough to understand the gospel, believe its facts, trust its promises and obey its precepts. The one who can be baptized must be old enough to **understand** and **believe** the gospel preached. The idea that “household baptisms” in the Bible means babies were baptized is borne of fallacious reasoning and contradicts the rest of the scriptures. Paul baptized “the household of Stephanas” (1 Cor. 1:16) and this “household” is said to “...have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints” (1 Cor. 16:15). Did this include babies?

Baptism—Its Kind

By the time the apostle Paul penned his epistle to the Ephesians, there was only “one baptism.” (Eph. 4:5). Some maintain this one baptism is Holy Spirit baptism. Others maintain it is water baptism. However, since **there is only one baptism**, it follows then that if it is Holy Spirit baptism, then it **cannot** be water baptism and vice versa. Whichever one it is would of necessity render the other obsolete. That being the case, it is incomprehensible how some who earnestly contend that the “one baptism” is Holy Spirit baptism, still administer “water baptism” to their converts.

If you are wondering why, in Acts the eighth chapter, the Holy Spirit sent an evangelist to a potential convert and why the evangelist after preaching Christ to this prospect, went with him into a pool of water rather than administer Holy Spirit baptism, it is because Holy Spirit baptism is **not** the “one baptism” of Ephesians 4:5 and also because **no human** on earth has the ability to administer Holy Spirit baptism. (see Mark 1:7-8; Acts 1:4-8; 2:33).

Notice if you would that right after the apostle said there is “one baptism,” he went on to say in the very next chapter that the church is sanctified and cleansed “with the washing of water by the word.” (Eph. 5:26). The word of God is the agent of cleansing and sanctification—**by** the word—whereas water is the element of cleansing and sanctification—**with** the washing of water. There is only one baptism and it is immersion in water.

Baptism—Its Design

Why should a person be baptized? Please consider what the Bible says in this regard;

He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned (Mark 16:16).

Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for (**unto** ASV 1901) the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:38).

And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord (Acts 22:16).

The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 3:21).

If you were reading the Bible for the first time, how would you have understood these passages? Would you have understood them the way your “pastor” taught you to understand them?

Conclusion

If we would regard God’s word as the final authority for our faith and our practice and if we would reject the teachings of men, then the controversy on the issue of baptism would become a thing of the past. The truth on this very important issue can be arrived at as our Lord said, “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32).

Editor's Travels

On the Lord's Day morning, Aug. 18, we preached at Willow, Okla. where Jim Foster has faithfully preached for 23 years and on Sunday, Aug. 25 we preached at Chillicothe, Texas where we labored a half century ago. We will be with the London and Macomb church in El Reno, Okla. on Oct. 6 for a Gospel meeting. Gary Henson, author of *The Ivory Domino*, is the faithful preacher there.

We ended our Wednesday evening study of the book of Galatians with the church in Yukon, Okla. on Aug. 28. One of our staff writers, David Ray, is the preacher there. Yukon is a sound church with dedicated members who love the Lord and His truth.

Not All “Believers” Are Christians

Jerry C. Brewer

Merely believing in Jesus Christ doesn't make one a Christian. If that were the case, the devils would be Christians. “Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble” (Jas. 2:19).

Truly, in order to be a Christian one **must** believe in Jesus Christ, but mere belief doesn't make one a Christian. As one must be a man to be a husband, but not all men are husbands, so one must believe in Jesus Christ, but not all who believe in Him are Christians.

As surely as the Bible is the word of God, there are millions of people who **think** they are Christians when they are not. There are multiplied millions who believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, but they aren't saved because they have not obeyed Him. “Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him” (Heb. 5:8-9). Just believing that Christ is the Saviour does not make one a Christian.

On the day of Pentecost, the Jews asked the apostles, “Men and brethren what shall we do?” (Acts 2:36). They believed Christ was God's Son, but they were not saved until they **did** what Christ commanded them through the Holy Spirit-inspired apostle Peter. He told them to, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38). They were added to the church of Christ only **after** they obeyed the gospel.

One cannot be a Christian without believing that Jesus Christ is God's Son who came

down from the Father (John 8:19-25). To be a Christian, one must believe that Christ is the only begotten Son of God (John 8:24), repent of his sins (Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30), confess his faith in Christ as God's Son (Matt. 10:32; Acts 8:37), and be baptized for the remission of sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38).

Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the only begotten Son of God? If you do, "thou art not far from the kingdom." You need only to repent of your sins, confess your faith, and be baptized in order to become a Christian.

"What Saith The Scriptures?"

Harrell Davidson

Our question this month comes from interested individuals in the matter of leadership in the church, namely elders and deacons. Specifically asking "May a congregation where the eldership has been dissolved continue to have deacons?"

As usual we are thankful for this question and all questions.

In considering this question those who take this position may find some solace in Acts 6: 1-7 which reads thusly:

And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them. And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

It is interesting that these were not called "deacons." Many believe that they were the first deacons in the church but they are not called that per se. One may say there here is apostolic authority for there to be deacons where there are no elders. If this is that then we must have "seven" deacons. Look at the text. Compare this with 1 Tim. 3: 8-13 which reads,

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

There is striking difference between those in Acts 6 and those in Paul's letter to Timothy. Notice a couple of these with the writer. (1) Those in Acts 6 were not commanded to have children and thus be married. (2) Those were to be full with the Holy Spirit while those in 1 Timothy 3 were not given this charge. At least some of the seven chosen were inspired such as Stephen and Philip undoubtedly this is what part of the laying on of hands included and through the laying on of apostle's hands, the only way that spiritual gifts could be bestowed on others was through the laying on of apostles hands. This ceased when the Scriptures had become complete, But this is a different study regarding the Holy Spirit and that is not the specific question here and maybe for another time.

Inspiration was not a qualification for deacons in 1 Timothy 3 so we are back where we started.

Let's take a look at Acts 20:28 and think about elders for a moment as we study. Doctor Luke was the author of the book of Acts as he was moved by the Holy Spirit (cf. 2 Pet. 2:21). He wrote, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." One of the original words for elder means one some age or very experienced—one older. You are encouraged to read their qualifications in 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1: 5-11. Paul denotes in the record to Titus that the elders were to "hold fast" the word which by their qualifications were to stop the mouths of the false teachers (vs. 11). Jamieson, Faussett & Brown write about the meaning of the word elder thusly,

Elder is the term of dignity in relation to the college of presbyters; bishop points to the duties of his office in relation to the flock. From the unsound state of the Cretan Christians described here, we see the danger of the want of Church government. The appointment of presbyters was designed to check idle talk and speculation, by setting forth the "faithful word."

Deacons, nowhere in the Sacred Scriptures, had this qualification pointed out or commanded to them or of them. With that said, every Christian should be of age to refute error but we are looking at the qualifications given in the Scriptures not "ought to be's" here.

Paul wrote in Colossians 3: 17 these words, "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." *In the name of* is by His authority (cf. Acts 22:16 calling of the name of the Lord) that is by His authority and not our authority. Moreover, in Paul's initial address to the church in Philippi he said, "Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons" (Phil. 1:1). He did not say deacon without elders, but **both**.

If elders are overseers—and they are—and if there are no elders, who will oversee the deacons? From all the evidence that the writer finds in the Scriptures, deacons are lacking the authority for there to be deacons without elders. No examples and no commands equal to this scribe that this is without divine precedent.

Thanks for your questions.

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

Baptism And Israel's Deliverance

Jerry C. Brewer

The deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage illustrates how we pass from sin's dominion to that of Jesus Christ. They had heard Moses, believed him, and changed their minds (repented) and followed him to the banks of the Red Sea. In like manner, we must hear Christ, believe Him and repent of our sins.

But although the Israelites had believed and followed Moses, they remained under Pharaoh's dominion so long as they remained on the Egyptian side of the Red Sea. If a Baptist preacher had been leading them instead of Moses, he would have said, "Now, you folks don't have to cross over this Red Sea. You've already believed, so you're safe from Pharaoh's army Just sit down here on the banks of the sea, because there's no way you can be harmed. Being baptized in the cloud and in the sea isn't necessary."

But Israel's deliverance was not complete until they had passed through the sea and were "baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea" (1 Cor. 10:1-2). The waters of the sea stood on either side of them and the cloud overshadowed them. That was their immersion (baptism) "unto Moses." Their baptism in the cloud and the sea separated them from their old life of slavery and placed them under Moses' leadership, free from

Pharoah's dominion.

So it is with us. Paul said God "hath delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son" (Col. 1:13). So long as we believe and repent, but remain unbaptized, we are under Satan's dominion and citizens of the kingdom of darkness. Peter said, "...baptism doth also now save us" (1 Pet. 3:21), just as Israel's baptism, "unto Moses" saved them. When we are baptized into Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38), we leave Satan's kingdom and enter into Christ's.

A Couple of Quotes From the NIV's Preface

David Ray

Have you ever read the Preface to the *New International Version* (NIV) of the Bible? Recently I picked it up and reread it. There are two quotes that always concern me, and should concern anyone who is honestly seeking the Truth.

The first quote says that the translators of the NIV "were from many **denominations**—including Anglican, Assemblies of God, Baptist, Brethren, Christian Reformed, **Church of Christ**, Evangelical Free, Lutheran, Mennonite, Methodist, Nazarene, Presbyterian, Wesleyan and other churches" (bold mine, DR), and that this "helped to safeguard the translation from sectarian bias"!

Anyone outside the Lord's church may wonder why I emphasized what I did from this quote. This wouldn't surprise me, since those outside the church usually do not understand the nature of Jesus' one church and the sin of denominationalism. Those **inside** the church who wonder about the emphases are the ones who concern me.

The church of Christ is **not** a denomination (cf. 1 Cor. 1:10-13). One might reply that the writers of the NIV's preface don't understand this; but apparently the translators from the church of Christ to whom they refer didn't either! Those men and/or women were supposed to be "distinguished scholars"! Surely **they** knew that the church of Christ is not a denomination. So why would they allow it to be called one? I have my guesses as to why, but the point is that they did, and that should be enough to cause us to question their scholarship and how they supposedly helped to safeguard this "translation" from sectarian bias!

A second quote that should pique our interest, if not alarm, says, "The first concern of the translators has been the accuracy of the translation and its fidelity to the **thought** of the biblical writers. They have striven for more than a word-for-word translation" (bold mine, DR). Were these translators claiming to be inspired? Because it seems that this would be required in order to know the "thought of the biblical writers." How can anyone know the thoughts of another person outside of that person revealing his thoughts in **words** of speech or writing? And since the biblical writers have been gone for hundreds of years and all we have is their writings, how else can we know their thoughts but by those writings and **only** by those writings? Is it possible for their thoughts to have been any different than their writing? And does their writing fall short of what they supposedly thought? Let's not forget the fact that their thoughts should be of no concern to us because the Holy Spirit of God Himself inspired and moved the biblical writers to **write** (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:20-21).

By claiming this pursuit of the writers' thoughts, these "translators" admit that they really were giving **commentary** more than actual translation, and would've done much better to simply use their scholarship to translate the writers' words from one language to another than to guess at the thought behind the words. This is the best way to "safeguard from sectarian bias."

And truth-seeking readers today would do much better to **avoid** the NIV "translation".

"But the Bible Doesn't Say Not To"

Lee Moses

"But the Bible doesn't say **not** to!" This is the defense many make when asked why

they engage in the religious practices they do.

“Why do you have mammoth theatrical productions in worship?” “The Bible doesn’t say not to!”

“Why do you worship God with mechanical instruments of music?” “The Bible doesn’t say not to!”

“Why do you have a birthday celebration for Jesus?” “The Bible doesn’t say not to!”

“Why do you sprinkle babies and call it baptism?” “The Bible doesn’t say not to!”

Since God does not specifically say **not** to do something, the reasoning goes, it must be permitted. But is this reasoning **reasonable**? Does the Bible permit that which it does not expressly forbid?

A Universal Principle?

The reason many feel that **Bible** silence permits is because they believe that **all** silence permits. “The court system will not imprison someone for breaking a law that isn’t on the books—how could God condemn a practice He has never directly addressed?” Certainly, there are times in our society when silence permits—but is this universally true? Can one always do what is not specifically forbidden?

If an employer sends an employee to purchase paper towels for the restroom, what will the employer’s response be if the employee returns with paper towels **and** new paper towel dispensers? The employee might respond, “You didn’t tell me **not** to get paper towel dispensers.” However, this would be immaterial—the employer said nothing about getting paper towel dispensers; therefore, the employee was not authorized at that time to purchase them.

Picture a mother telling her children, “You may go outside to play in the yard.” What if those children proceed to play in the yard for a few minutes, and then go across the street to play at the park? One can imagine the ensuing conversation:

“I said you could play in the **yard**.”

“We **did** play in the yard!”

“But I **only** said you could play in the yard—not in the yard **and** at the park.”

Clearly, the children were not allowed to play at the park, but why? The mother never specifically stated that the children could **not** play at the park. The mother was silent about the park, and thus permission was not granted to play at the park.

If a teacher sends a disorderly student to the principal’s office, is it acceptable if that student makes a quick detour over to the Coke machine? “But you didn’t say **not** to!”

Can anyone in any situation really say that authorization has been **granted** if no one in authority has said anything on the matter one way or the other? Evidently, silence cannot always be equated with permission; it quite often equates to prohibition. So why would so many make the leap to say that the silence of the Scriptures permits?

God Tells Us How to View His Silence

Obviously, the Bible does not **directly** address every issue that mankind faces today; yet we are assured, “[God’s] divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness” (2 Pet. 1:3). Sometimes the Bible teaches by implication—for example, the Bible does not directly address drug use; but because of its exhortation to “be sober” while it condemns drunkenness (cf. 1 Thess. 5:6-8; 1 Cor. 6:10; Gal. 5:23), one must infer that recreational intoxication of any type is displeasing to God. But even when the Bible is completely silent on an issue, the Bible somehow teaches how we should respond to that issue. There are only two possibilities with regard to the silence of the Scriptures: (1) The silence of the Scriptures permits, or (2) The silence of the Scriptures forbids.

The Holy Spirit instructs us that we are to have authority for all we do: “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, **do all in the name of the Lord Jesus**, giving thanks to God and the Father by him” (Col. 3:17, emphasis LM). If one were to hear banging at his door accompanied by a gruff, “Open up **in the name of the law**”; he would know exactly what his visitor meant—the law gave the police officer **authority** to compel the homeowner to open his door. The officer could not compel anyone to

open his door **in the name of** the law until he first obtained **authority** of the law. Before we can do anything “in the name of the Lord Jesus,” we must obtain authority of the Lord Jesus (see also Acts 4:7), which authority can only be found in His testament (the New Testament) in the Bible. The Bible gives us everything we need for Christian doctrine and practice, completely furnishing the Christian for “every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17; compare with 2 Pet. 1:3). If there is a good work, the Bible instructs us in it. If the Bible does not instruct us in it, it is not a good work. Since we are commanded to “Prove (‘Test,’ *New King James Version*) all things; hold fast that which is good” while we must “Abstain from all appearance of evil” (1 Thess. 5:21-22; compare with Psalm 119:104), anything the Bible does not authorize explicitly or implicitly must be rejected.

The Israelites were given a general principle—“Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you” (Deut. 4:2). For one to “add” to God’s word, one would have to foray into areas where He is silent. The principle of “not adding” to God’s word continues throughout the Scriptures:

Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar (Prov. 30:6).

For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book (Rev. 22:18-19).

God has given us boundaries within which we must remain. **These boundaries are defined by His word.** Paul wrote several things to the Corinthians “that in us ye might learn not to go beyond the things which are written” (1 Cor. 4:6, American Standard Version). The apostle John wrote, “Whosoever transgresseth (‘goeth onward,’ ASV), and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son” (2 John 9). One must remain within the confines of Christ’s doctrine, the New Testament, or that person has fellowship with neither God nor Christ. When one acts where the New Testament is silent, he has gone onward from the doctrine of Christ.

The Bible teaches us how to view its silence—and emphatically declares that its silence prohibits. Of Jesus Christ the inspired writer penned, “For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law” (Heb. 8:4). Notice that it does not say He could not be a priest on earth because the law said **He couldn’t**—it says He could not be a priest on earth because the law only authorized certain others (descendants of Aaron, of the tribe of Levi) to serve as priests. “For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses **spake nothing** concerning priesthood” (7:14, emphasis LM). Moses’ **silence** concerning the tribe of Judah serving as priests **forbade** those of the tribe of Judah serving as priests—even Jesus. Friend, if even our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ was constrained from acting where the word of God was silent, how much more should we be constrained by the silence of the Scriptures?

God will not condemn anyone for breaking a law that “isn’t on the books.” However, God has given us a general law regarding His silence which **is** “on the books.” There may be numerous religious practices the world can conjure which are neither authorized nor expressly forbidden in the Bible. However, when the Bible teaches us that we are not to add (religious practices or otherwise) to God’s word, we are forbidden from practicing them, and condemned when we do.

CONCLUSION

Probably no one who would profess to be a Christian would say that **anything** not specifically forbidden would be an acceptable religious practice. However, no doubt many will continue to defend their desired religious practices with the excuse, “But the Bible doesn’t say **not** to!” However, the idea that silence permits is neither universal

nor Biblical. As we consider what religious practices to continue, let us not make the excuse, “The Bible doesn’t say **not** to”—let us each rather say, “I will just do what the Bible says **to** do.”

The Eternal Purpose of the Church in the Plan of Human Redemption

Doug Post

And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. (Gen. 3:15)

...To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly *places* might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord (Eph. 3:10-11).

The Plan of human redemption is the Great Theme of the Bible. After mankind had fallen from his exalted estate, God gave a promise of salvation as noted above (Gen.3:15). This is called the *protoevangelium* or *first gospel*, i.e., the first good news—the first ray of hope given in the Bible for the remedy for sin.

The Patriarchal Period

The Age of the Fathers—the Age God spoke to the Fathers. There are at least seven identifying distinctions of the Patriarchal Period:

1. No written law
2. No designated day of worship
3. No specified place of worship
4. Animal Sacrifices offered
5. Fathers served as priest for the family
6. Nomadic people building altars wherever they went
7. Saved by grace, faith, and law

There were ten generations from Adam to Noah as found in Genesis 5: (1) Adam (2) Seth (3) Enosh (4) Cainan (5) Mahalalel (6) Jared (7) Enoch (8) Methuselah (9) Lamech (10) Noah.

Mankind lived much longer during this period, but also became very corrupt and God was “sorry” for having made man (Gen. 6:6) and decided to destroy all life upon the earth by a great flood. However, Noah found favor (grace) in the eyes of the Lord. God commissioned Noah to build an ark which saved Noah and his family, the only eight souls on the earth. Noah and his wife and his three sons and their wives.

After the flood waters receded and the earth had been purified, those eight souls came out of the ark. They began to replenish the earth. Every person on earth is a descendent of Noah through one of his three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

Japheth had seven sons: Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras. They became known as the “Coastland People” or “Isles of the Gentiles” (Gen. 10:5). Essentially, they settled in Europe, but especially in western Europe as they began to migrate and settle. Most of the white skinned people in the world come from this group.

Ham had four sons: Cush, Mizraim, Put, and Canaan. Cush is another name for Ethiopia. Mizraim is another name for Egypt. Put is synonymous with Lybia. Canaan is associated with the land of Canaan. Most of the darker skinned people in the world come from this group.

Shem had five sons: Elam, Asshur, Arphaxad, Lud, and Aram. Elam became known as Persia or Iran. There were Elamites in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. Asshur became Assyria. Arphaxad became the Chaldeans. Lud became the Lydians in Asia Minor. Aram became the Arameans know as Syria today.

Here we see how world geography and the races of mankind originated and unfolded,

which is certainly corroborated by world history. Actually, the **Bible** corroborates **world** history.

The focus of the Bible is now placed upon the family of Shem and his descendants. The genealogies of all the peoples of the world is not necessary because emphasis is now directed to a certain lineage of people from which our Lord Jesus Christ came.

There are ten generations from Adam to Noah and ten generations from Noah to Abraham: Shem, Arphaxad, Shelah, Eber, Peleg, Selug, Reu, Nahor, Terah, Abram. Abraham then bore a son, Isaac, who was the “son of promise.” Isaac bore a son named Jacob, whose name was later changed to Israel. And he had twelve sons: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, and Benjamin.

The Mosaic Period

Those 12 sons were the progenitors of the twelve tribes of Israel. They went down into Egypt because there was a famine in the land. Joseph had been, previously, sold into slavery. This is how the Jacob or Israel’s family got into the land of Egypt. At this time Joseph was close to Pharaoh, rising to great stature and prestige among the people of Egypt. However, the Bible tells us there arose another Pharaoh who did not know Joseph (Exo. 1:8).

The twelve sons (tribes) of Jacob (Israel) had gone from honored guests of one Pharaoh and of Egypt, into slavery and captivity with another Pharaoh and of Egypt. Then Moses was born, later identifying as a Hebrew, and led the Israelites out of bondage from Egypt. They crossed the Red Sea and came to Mt. Sinai, where God gave them the Law, which began by the giving of the Ten Commandments: (1) You shall have no other gods before Me (2) You shall make no idols (3) You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain (4) Keep the Sabbath day holy (5) Honor your father and your mother (6) You shall not murder (7) You shall not commit adultery (8) You shall not steal (9) You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor (10) You shall not covet. This was followed by 40 years of wilderness wandering.

The Law was not given universally but was only for the Israelites (Exo. 20:2). Whom did God bring out of Egypt? Those who went down into Egypt. There were no Japhetites or Hamites, only descendants of Shem or the Shemites, known as Semites. They came from Noah, Shem, and in particular Arphaxad. This shows the Law of Moses, and in particular the Ten Commandments, was given to the descendants of Shem.

In Deuteronomy 5:6, Moses repeats the Ten Commandments. The word *Deuteronomy* means “the law repeated” or “second law.” Moses writes: “And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the **Lord** your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the **Lord** your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day” (Deut. 6:15). Yes, God said to make the Sabbath holy in Genesis, but it does not say when or to whom. However, when we come to the giving of the Ten Commandments, we find out when and to whom. This was when it was made sacred and for the remembrance of the Semites being in Egyptian bondage.

Christ’s Personal Ministry

The Patriarchal Period lasted about 2,500 years until the Law of Moses was given at Mt. Sinai. The Law was in effect for 1,500 years until the coming of the Christ. Jesus came to remove the Law whereby all men, both Jew and Gentile, could be saved. He came to fulfill the Law, not destroy it (Matt: 5:17-18). Once Christ accomplished that which He came to fulfill, literally “fill out,” namely His death, burial, and resurrection. Since the Law lasted **until** Christ (Gal.3:19), making Him the end of the law (Rom. 10:4; Gal. 3:19-28; Heb. 10:9-10; 2 Cor. 3:4-15; Eph. 2:14-15; Col. 2:14; Rom. 7:1-6).

Doing what He came to do, by doing what He did—dying for our sins on the cross—the Law was fulfilled, and its authority removed from existence. Not one jot or title passed away till this was accomplished (Matt. 5:17-18; Gal. 3:19). During His ministry, Jesus promised to build His church/kingdom (Matt. 16:18). After He ascended to heaven, and when the day of Pentecost had fully come the church/kingdom came into being.

Christian Period The New Covenant—The Gospel—The Faith

No person was forgiven of sin by animal sacrifices under both the Patriarchal and Mosaic Periods or, quite simply, under the Old Covenant. Sin was forgiven when the blood of Christ was shed for the remission of sins, that the obedience of the faithful under both the Patriarchal and Mosaic systems in the Old Covenant (Rom. 2) were forgiven (Heb. 9:15). The arms of the Lord on the cross reached back in time and forward into the future. Upon His resurrection Christ was declared the Son of God (Rom. 1:5). Christ was glorified upon His ascension and sitting at the Father's right hand (Acts 1:9-11).

Under the New Covenant Period, those seeking and finding salvation entered the kingdom, which is synonymous with being added to the church (Acts 2:47). Anyone not in Christ is not in the church. Called to salvation by the gospel (2 Thess. 2:14), the first century Christians were God's people by virtue of being "in Christ" (1 Thess. 2:14). Their new identity was the result of obeying the gospel (1 Pet. 4:17; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; cf. Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38, etc.). They were "baptized into one body" (1 Cor. 12:13), which is the one church (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4).

Anyone not in the church is not in Christ, because that is where the saved are (Acts 20:28; Eph. 5:23) and where salvation is (2 Tim. 2:10; 3:15). To be in the church means to be in Christ, and to be in Christ means to be in His church. What is ascribed to one (Christ) is ascribed to the other (body/church). Quite simply, Luke's inspired "added to the church" (Acts 2:47), is defined by Paul's inspired, "baptized into one body" (1 Cor. 12:13). Different expressions meaning the same thing. Moreover, the previous verse must be considered: "For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ" (1 Cor. 12:12). In contrasting the physical body and the spiritual body. Just as the physical body has many members yet "are one body, so also Christ"—the spiritual body. This is an example of metonymy, meaning within the context "the body" and "Christ," are one and the same—synonymous.

Comparing the Patriarchal, Mosaic, and Christian Periods

Under Patriarchal Period

1. No written law
2. No set day of worship
3. No specific place of worship
4. Nomadic
5. Fathers were priests
6. Animal sacrifices
7. Saved by grace, faith, and law

Under Mosaic Period

1. A written law
2. The Sabbath (7th day)
3. Tabernacle and later the temple
4. Given the Land of Promise
5. Levites were the priests
6. Animal sacrifices (always a necessity for the shedding of blood, see Cain and Abel). Hebrews 9:22 is a Divine principle given. Law in effect for 1500 years until the time of Christ
7. Saved by grace, faith, and law

Under Christian Period

1. A written law—The New Covenant/Gospel/The Faith/The Word/The Scriptures
2. First Day of the week (Sunday)
3. Church assembling together in various localities across the globe
4. Worship where they live—typically permanent

5. Every Christian is a priest
6. One Blood sacrifice for all time
7. Saved by grace, faith, and law

The Kingdom/Church Concept

Under the New Covenant period, the kingdom/church serves as the sphere where all the saved reside. In one sense the kingdom or church has always existed. It existed in purpose in the mind of God. It existed in Promise. It existed in prophecy and it existed in preparation. Once the New Covenant went into effect (Heb. 9:15-17). *Kingdom* is associated with authority and dominion as ruled by its king. There is no such thing as a king without a kingdom. In fact, the primary meaning of “kingdom” is “kingship.” It is royal power of kingly rule. Kingdom more often refers to “reign” than to “realm,” or to “dominion” rather than the “domain” (See Dan. 4:30-31; Luke 17:20-21). God’s kingdom involves the individual’s heart, wherein His law or Word rules the heart (Heb. 8:10, 10:16; Jer. 31:33). This refers to submitting to His Word (John 6:44-45; cf. Luke 8:11-15; Rom. 10:14-17; cf. Rom. 1:16-17).

The words *church* and *kingdom* do not have the same lexical meaning, but when it comes to word usage, they are synonymous. Because they do not mean the same thing does not, therefore, mean they are not the same thing. Words may have vastly different meanings yet refer to the same. The words *church* and *body* have different meanings, yet the church is called “the body” of Christ (Eph. 1:22). The church is also called the “house of God” (1 Tim. 3:15), a “temple” (1 Cor. 3:17), “building” (Eph. 2:21), and “household” (Eph. 2:19). These various terms emphasize different features of the church—its family, worship, fellowship features, etc. Likewise, when the church is called a kingdom its governmental feature is brought into prominence.

A study of the above passages reveals the church and the kingdom are identical in the Chief Executive, His laws, His subjects, and His territory or realm of influence. It is impossible for one to be in the kingdom and not be in the church and equally impossible for one to be in the church and out of the kingdom. Members of the church are citizens of the kingdom and vice versa. Christ does not have one institution on earth called the “kingdom” and another called the “church.” The law of admission into both is the same and the laws governing conduct of subjects are identical. Both are confined to earth while their Chief Executive is in heaven and the heart of the subject is the realm of influence in this world. *Church* and *kingdom* are found to agree in the following particulars: 1) The source of authority or the Head, 2) the laws, 3) the subjects, and 4) the territory. Each of these are essential elements to the kingdom's existence.

When Jesus said He would build His church (Matt. 16:18) He immediately said He would also give the keys of the kingdom to Peter and the apostles. Keys are used to lock or unlock doors. The specific doors Jesus has in mind in this passage are the doors to the kingdom of heaven. Jesus is laying the foundation of His church (Eph. 2:20). The disciples will be the leaders of this new institution, and Jesus is giving them the authority to, as it were, open the doors to heaven and invite the world to enter. Jesus said, unless one is born again, he will not see the Kingdom of Heaven (John 3:3-5). Preaching the message of the gospel, providing the terms of entrance and the demands of its citizenship, are the keys of/to the kingdom.

In Matthew 16:19 Jesus wanted to know from His disciples/apostles who the people thought He was. After various answers, He then asked them, “But who do you all say that I, the Son of Man, am?” Peter stood answering for the group saying, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus then specifically addresses Peter concerning the giving of the keys of the kingdom, so it is significant that, in the book of Acts, Peter figures prominently in the “opening of doors” for both Jews and Gentiles. It is Peter’s preaching that is captured in Scripture, in Acts 2, on the Day of Pentecost as well as in Acts 10 in the conversion of the first Gentiles. The same key (preaching the Word) unlocked the door to the kingdom for both Jews and Gentiles.

Again, the identity of church/kingdom is revealed in Matthew 16:18, 19 where the Lord declares, “I will build My church” and saying to Peter, “I will give unto thee

the keys of the kingdom of heaven.” In one breath He calls it “My church” and in the next “the kingdom of heaven.”

Confine the reign of Christ to the abode of men and it is impossible to distinguish between the kingdom of Christ and the church of Christ except as to the feature emphasized in each term. To further emphasize, the duration of both should be considered. No one argues the church will continue beyond the second coming of Christ and judgment, for men will cease to be “called out” from the world “by the gospel” with that event (2 Thess. 1:7-10), but at that point shall Christ deliver up the kingdom to God the Father (1 Cor. 15:24-26); thus the church ceases on this earth at the same time the kingdom comes to an end on this earth.

It is objected that Peter speaks of “the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 1:11). True enough, but that is not the “kingdom” under consideration here for the context shows that kingdom is one that shall be entered as a result of adding the so-called “Christian graces” (2 Pet. 1:3-10). That kingdom will not have the same laws nor the same territory nor men in the flesh as subjects, nor will Christ reign in that kingdom in the same relationship to the Father as He reigns now (1 Cor. 15:24-26).

Definitive Proof for Kingdom/Church Being the Same

In order to help establish that the church and the kingdom are the same, attention is called to various prophecies of the kingdom/church. The first such prophecy is 2 Sam. 7:12-14. Nathan informs David:

And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men.

God would establish a kingdom using the seed of David (verse 12). It would be after David’s death (verse 12). This person, (David’s seed), would also “build an house for my name,” and God would “establish the throne of his kingdom forever” (verse 13). The word of God informs us that the “house of God” is “the church of the living God” (1 Tim.3:15). The person who would build a house for God’s name, would have a kingdom (verses 12 and 13). Scripture affirms the person in whom all these things were accomplished is God’s Son, Jesus Christ. The Hebrew writer quotes 2 Samuel and applies it to the Christ (compare 2 Sam. 7:14 and Heb. 1:5). These passages prove that the church and the kingdom are the one and the same, and that such was established by Jesus Christ.

Isaiah, likewise, prophesied that God’s house (the church) would be established. Some 750 years before Christ came to the earth, he wrote:

And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem (Isa. 2:2-4).

Notice Isaiah says that “the mountain of the Lord’s house” would be established in “the last days.” Again, the Lord’s house is the church (1 Tim. 3:15). Yet the “Lord’s house” is also the kingdom (2 Sam. 7:13). Therefore, Isaiah foretells of the establishment of the kingdom/church.

The prophet Daniel, whose life spanned the whole seventy years Babylonian captivity, received a vision of Christ's ascension and His receiving the kingdom. He wrote:

I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him

near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed (Dan. 7:13-14).

Daniel foresees the ascension of Christ and Him (the Christ) being brought before the ancient of days (the Father). When He was brought before the Ancient of days there was given to Him “a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages, should serve Him.” His dominion is described as “an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.” This is scriptural proof that Christ became king when He ascended into heaven! Yet, this is the same time He became the head of the church. Paul wrote:

Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all (Eph. 1:20-23).

Christ became king of His kingdom when he ascended back into heaven. Yet, He became the head of the church at the same time. He did not become authority over two separate institutions. He is the head of the church and king of the kingdom.

Not only do the prophets show the church and the kingdom as the same institution, but so do the New Testament writers. Paul says that the Lord’s supper is in the church (1 Cor. 11:17-22). However, the Lord’s supper is in the kingdom (Luke 22:18). Thus, the church and the kingdom are the one and the same.

Jesus says that the word of God is “seed.” “Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God” (Luke 8:11). God has decreed that every seed produces “after his kind” (Gen. 1:11). Observe, however, that the seed, the word of the kingdom, was planted in the first century, it produced the church. Again, this establishes the fact that the kingdom and the church are the same. The word of the kingdom produced the church!

Our Lord promised Peter that He (Christ) would build His church and that He would give unto Peter “the keys of the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 16:18). Peter used these keys of the kingdom to open the doors of the church (Acts 2:36-47). Here again is evidence that the church and the kingdom are the same.

When Jesus returns, He is going to carry the church into heaven (Eph. 5:23, 25-27). It is also stated that He is going to deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father (1 Cor. 15:24). He will not deliver two separate organizations. The church and the kingdom are the same and will be carried up into heaven when Jesus returns (2 Pet. 1:11).

The church and the kingdom are seen to be the same in that one cannot enter into the church without entering into the kingdom. When one is scripturally baptized into Christ, he is baptized into the body (church). Paul wrote, “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body. . .” (1 Cor. 12:13). This is a person whom has been “born again.” Yet, Jesus says when one is born again, he enters into the kingdom, “Jesus answered and said unto him, verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). When a person is born of water and Spirit, he enters the kingdom of God (John 3:5). The water in this passage refers to baptism. So when one is scripturally baptized, he enters the kingdom (John 3:5), or the church (1 Cor. 12:13). The church and the kingdom are the same institution.

The following comparisons also aid in establishing that the church and the kingdom are the same.

| Church | Kingdom |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| Christ is its Head (Eph. 1:22) | Christ is its King (1 Tim. 6:15) |
| Baptized into the church (1 Cor. 12:13) | Baptized into the kingdom (John 3:5) |
| Everlasting (Eph. 3:4) | Everlasting (Dan. 2:44) |
| Apostles (Eph. 2:20) | Apostles (Matt. 19:28) |

Washing of Regeneration (Titus 3:5)

Lord's table (1 Cor. 11:26)

Word of faith (Rom. 10:8)

The Israel of God (Gal. 6:16)

Time of Regeneration (Matt. 19:28)

Lord's table (Luke 22:29-30)

Word of kingdom (Matt. 13:19)

Spiritual Israel (Matt. 19:28)

The Kingdom/Church Established on Pentecost

Although the church was in the eternal purpose of God, that is not when the church was established. The account of John's death is recorded in Matthew 14. Two chapters later one reads that Christ promised to build His church yet in the future (Matt. 16). Therefore, John the Baptist could not have built the church, as some declare, nor could it have been established during His lifetime. Jesus did not establish His church (kingdom) during His personal ministry.

Relative to the time of the establishment of the church, Isaiah prophesied that "the mountain of the Lord's house" would be established in "the last days" (Isa. 2:2-3). The phrase, "the last days," refers to the last dispensation of time—the Christian Period. As noted previously, there was the Patriarchal Period, the Mosaic Period, and now "the Christian Period." There will not be another "age" or "period" on earth after "The Christian Period." It will terminate at the second coming of Jesus Christ (Heb. 9:27-28). Hence, the Christian age is "the last days." Peter identifies the day of Pentecost as in "the last days." In explaining the events of that day, he stated:

But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; and it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams (Acts 2:16-17).

Peter said, "this is that." The "that" has reference to what Joel said would happen in "the last days." Thus, Peter (an inspired apostle) identifies the day of Pentecost being in the "last days." But, remember Isaiah said the "Lord's house" (the church, 1 Tim. 3:15), would be established in the "last days" (Isa. 2:2-3).

Not only does Isaiah identify the time of the church's establishment, but he also identifies the place of its establishment. He wrote, "For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Isa. 2:3). This is exactly what happened on the day of Pentecost! Christ, of course, knew that this was to be accomplished, as foretold by Isaiah, and He commanded the apostles to wait in the city of Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high (Luke 24:49). They waited in Jerusalem, as commanded and the word of the Lord went forth from Zion, as prophesied.

Daniel, likewise, foretold the time of the establishment of the kingdom. King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream which chronicled the events leading up to God establishing His kingdom (Daniel 2). God had Daniel to interpret the dream. In it, four world empires were discussed. Nebuchadnezzar was the head of the Babylonian kingdom, but after him there would be three other kingdoms. These kingdoms were the Medo-Persian kingdom, the Grecian kingdom and the Roman kingdom. It would be during the days of the Roman kingdom that God's kingdom would be established. Daniel wrote:

And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever (Dan. 2:44).

The day of Pentecost was during the days of the Roman kingdom. Notice Daniel wrote the kingdom "shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever." This same kingdom is discussed by the Hebrews' writer. "Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear" (Heb. 12:28). Note he said the Christians were receiving a kingdom "which cannot be moved." Daniel said that the kingdom would stand forever. This is the kingdom (church) that was established on the day of Pentecost, following the resurrection of

Jesus Christ.

As time drew near for the establishment of the kingdom on Pentecost, God sent various ones preaching, that the kingdom was “at hand.” Among those was John the Baptist (Matt. 3:1-2), Jesus Christ (Matt. 4:17), the twelve apostles (Matt. 10:7), and the seventy disciples sent out by Jesus (Luke 10:9). The time of its establishment was nearby. Jesus, however, taught that the kingdom was still future during His personal ministry. He said, “I will build my church” (Matt. 16:18). Earlier, He had taught His disciples to pray “Thy kingdom come...” (Matt. 6:10). Jesus said some of His disciples would still be alive when the kingdom of God came “with power” (Mark 9:1). Here is another identifying mark to the establishment of the kingdom. Jesus said that the kingdom of God would come “with power.” If one can determine when the power came, he will know when the kingdom came. Jesus told the apostles that they would “receive power after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you” (Acts 1:8). The kingdom was to come with power. The power was to come after the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles. Therefore, when the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles, the power came, and the kingdom came! But when did the Holy Spirit come upon the apostles and clothe them with power?

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance (Acts 2:1-4).

This is proof positive that the kingdom (church) was established upon the day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2. Before Pentecost, the kingdom/church is spoken of as yet in the future. After Pentecost, the kingdom/church is spoken of as already established. Writing to the “saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse,” Paul stated that God “hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear son” (Col. 1:13).

The faithful Jewish Christians in the first century knew they were in the kingdom. The Hebrews writer stated; “wherefore we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear” (Heb. 12:28). The apostle John affirmed he was “in the kingdom” (Rev. 1:9). He obviously could not have been “in the kingdom” if it had not been established. Before Pentecost, the kingdom/church was in the future. After Pentecost, the kingdom/church was in existence. In Acts 11:15, Peter refers to Pentecost as “the beginning.” He explained the reason for going to the Gentiles, saying, “And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them, as on us at the beginning” (Acts 11:15). “The beginning” refers to when the Holy Spirit fell upon the apostles on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14). Therefore, the day of Pentecost (by inspiration), is termed “the beginning.” The day of Pentecost was when the kingdom/church of Christ was established.

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To Obey is Better Than Sacrifice

B.L. Douthitt

“Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams” (1 Sam. 15:22).

It is proper to present ourselves living sacrifices to God (Rom. 12:1). There is real joy to the child of God when the sacrifice is made for the good of others. The Saviour experienced real joy as He went about doing good for others. There is a time to obey God that is better than to substitute sacrifice.

When God calls upon us to obey, we should be willing to do His divine will, as He

instructs us to do, with the assurance that our service is acceptable to Him. Peter says, "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). God's will must be supreme and there should be a burning desire to reflect the will of God in an obedient life. All who do God's will have the promise of abiding forever. "And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever" (1 John 2:17).

According to the Bible, God has required obedience to His law in every dispensation. "What thing soever I command you, that shall ye observe to do: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it" (Deut. 12:32 ASV). God also called upon Israel to obey Him through the prophet Isaiah. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith Jehovah: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword..." (Isa. 1:18-20).

In order to "eat of the good of the land," Israel had to be "willing and obedient." There are many other examples from the Old Testament stressing the lesson of obedience. The example of Saul in First Samuel 15 illustrates the solemn fact that it is safe to promptly do what God commands. This is better than sacrifice.

Turning to the New Testament, we find Christ living a life of implicit obedience to His Father's will. "Though he was a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered" (Heb. 5:8). Paul says, "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:8 ASV). Now our perfect Saviour offers salvation only to those who obey Him. "And having been made perfect, he became unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation" (Heb. 5:9 ASV). Christ says, "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21 ASV). Man's duty is made perfectly plain in the Bible, and there is no excuse for disobedience because of inability to understand our Father's will. Let us give proper heed to the teaching of Christ.

Why God Requires Obedience

Obedience is a test of faith. Justification is by faith. "Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1 ASV). In every age, God has blessed men on the condition of their faith. God has ever commanded acts of obedience that serve as tests of faith. Such things as God commands must be obeyed, if for no other reason than that He has commanded them. In this, prompt obedience from the heart becomes a test of faith. In every recorded case where God blessed a man on the condition of that man's faith, his faith found expression in an overt act.

Take, for instance, the case of Abel. "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he had witness borne to him that he was righteous, God bearing witness in respect of his gifts..." (Heb. 11:4 ASV). Abel obeyed in faith. God tested his faith in the offering commanded. Consider also the example of Abraham. "By faith Abraham, being tried, offered up Isaac: yea, he that had gladly received the promises was offering up his only begotten son" (Heb. 11:17 ASV). The offering of Isaac was an acid test of Abraham's faith in God. The "father of the faithful" did not let opinion or human reason stand in the way of obedience. It was "the obedience of faith" in the case of Abraham that brought the divine blessing to him. God tested Abraham's faith through this act of obedience.

One is to believe in the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord. These are the basic facts of the gospel. Faith in these basic facts is tested in the command to be baptized. (Read Romans 6:1-5). Why be baptized? To claim the blessing of faith in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, one must obey the command to be baptized. Baptism is a test of faith. This is why God requires obedience in order to be saved.

Obedience is a test of love. We have every assurance in the Bible that God has ever loved our race. God manifested His great and exceeding love to man through the gift of

His Son. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16). God calls upon man to prove his love for Him by obeying His commandments. “If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments” (John 14:15 ASV). “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous” (1 John 5:3 ASV). “Love” is a great word by which we are saved and it is connected with keeping God's commandments. Obedience is a divine test of our love.

Obedience is a test of friendship. One of the great words of the Bible is *friend*. Solomon says, “A friend loveth at all times” and Abraham was called “the friend of God.” We are saved by divine friendship. There is no substitute for this great word and obedience is a test of our friendship with God.

Jesus says, “Ye are my friends, if ye do the things which I command you” (John 15:14). We cannot claim to be friends with Jesus while refusing to do the things He commands. Doing the commandments, we have this blessing. “What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear,” when we lovingly obey His will.

Bible Baptism Vs. Baptist Baptism

Frank L. Cox

And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper country came to Ephesus, and found certain disciples: and he said unto them, Did you receive the Holy Spirit when ye believed? And they said unto him, Nay, we did not so much as hear the Holy Spirit was given. And he said, Into what then were ye baptized? And they said, Into John's baptism. And Paul said, John baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying that the people should believe on him that should come after him, that is, on Jesus. And when they heard this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied. And they were in all about twelve men (Acts 19:1-7).

The purpose of this article is to present two baptisms in contrast: not the baptism of John and the baptism of the Great Commission, though they are not identical as we can see from Acts 19. Nor will we contrast the baptism of John and the baptism of the Baptist Church, though they are not parallel. Our contrast in this study will be between the baptism of the Baptist Church and the baptism of the New Testament. These two baptisms, which are not identical, differ in a number of points.

Based On Different Doctrines

The candidates for each baptism are taught different doctrines. The candidate for Baptist baptism is taught the tenets of Baptist doctrine—the impossibility of apostasy, hereditary total depravity, salvation by faith only, unconditional election, and the non-essentiality of obedience to Christ. Unless he is taught these distinctive features of the Baptist faith, he cannot be called a real Baptist.

On the other hand, the candidate for New Testament baptism is taught the fundamental facts of the gospel—the life of Christ, his death, burial, resurrection, ascension to David's throne and his plan of salvation—faith (John 8:24; Acts 16:30-31), repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30-31), and baptism for the remission of sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16).

Based On Different Confessions

Baptist baptism and New Testament baptism are preceded by different confessions. The candidate for Baptist baptism confesses that “God has, for Christ's sake” pardoned his sins. In all the New Testament there is neither precept nor example for such a confession.

The candidate for New Testament baptism confesses faith in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God. He does not confess his faith in a religious party or dogma, but in a person (Matt. 10:32-33; Acts 8:36-38; Rom. 10:10).

Based On Different Requirements

Before a person can be baptized into the Baptist Church, he must have a vote of sanction or approval of the Baptist Church. Without the consent of the Baptists, no man can become a Baptist. The Baptist Church itself is the door of the Baptist Church!

The church of the New Testament does not vote on the acceptance or rejection of a candidate for baptism. Neither a majority vote nor a minority vote can prevent a believing penitent from becoming a member of the church of Christ.

Imagine, if you can, the New Testament saying, "No man can become a Christian without the sanction of Christians," or "no man can become a child of God without the consent of God's children." As the head of the church, Jesus alone has the divine authority to accept or reject. He is the door (John 10:9). He opens and no man can shut and he shuts and no man can open (Rev. 3:8).

For Different Designs

According to Baptist doctrine, a person is saved by faith only, and his obedience in baptism is not necessary to salvation. He is not baptized in order to be saved, but because he is already saved.

The New Testament teaching on this important point is crystal clear. Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16), placing baptism between the believer and salvation. And the apostle Peter said, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). Peter further said, "The like figure whereunto baptism doth also now save us" (1 Pet. 3:21).

These Baptisms Induct Into Different Institutions

Baptist baptism inducts a person into the Baptist Church—a man made religious body which is not mentioned in the New Testament.

New Testament baptism inducts one into the New Testament church, the spiritual body of Christ (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:26; Eph. 1:22-23).

These Baptisms Differ In Ultimate Results

The Baptist Church is a party, a division, a denomination. The moment a man is immersed into the Baptist Church, he becomes a denominationalist, a partisan, a sectarian, and separated from other professed followers of Christ.

Because Baptist baptism divides the professed followers of Christ, it opposes the purpose of God who wants his people to be one.

New Testament baptism, on the other hand, unites the followers of Christ. Said Paul to the Corinthians, "For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free" (1 Cor. 12:13). To the Galatians, he wrote, "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ. There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female; for ye are all one man in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:27-28).

Baptist baptism divides by putting one into a sectarian party. New Testament baptism unites all believers in Christ by baptizing them into Christ's spiritual body.

Additional Thoughts

The twelve at Ephesus (Acts 19) had been baptized—buried, immersed. Doubtless, they had been moved in this act of obedience by the right motive—the desire to please God. The action of their baptism was right—immersion—and the motive was right, but we know from Luke's account that their baptism was null and void in the sight of God and the apostle Paul baptized them with his own hands.

Why was their first baptism invalid? Because they had not been sufficiently taught. There were some vital things they had not learned. We conclude, therefore, that improper instruction or lack of instruction in the right way of the Lord invalidates a person's baptism. Instruction in the fundamentals of the gospel must precede the baptism of Christ's Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20).

1. If the baptism of men whose minds are filled with religious error is valid, what is the point of teaching them the pure doctrine of Christ?

2. If the baptism of a man who confesses that “God, for Christ's sake, has pardoned my sins” is valid, what is the point of teaching a man to confess his faith in Christ as the Son of God?
3. If the baptism of a man is valid who believes that obedience to the Lord in baptism is not essential, what is the necessity of teaching him the Bible doctrine that “baptism doth also now save us” (1 Pet. 3:21)? If the belief of error does not invalidate a person's baptism, why should it be thought necessary to teach him the truth as it is found in Jesus?
4. If the baptism of a man is valid who has been baptized “because of the remission of sins” why the necessity of teaching him that baptism is “for (unto) the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38)?
5. If the baptism of a man is valid that makes him a partisan or a sectarian in the eyes of the Lord, what is the necessity of baptizing men into the body of Christ, which is his church (Col. 1:18)?

The state or condition of the candidate's mind—not the administrator's—is the important thing in baptism. The administration of baptism at the hands of a denominational preacher or of an unfaithful gospel preacher does not invalidate the baptism of a person who has been enlightened by the word, who believes with all his heart that Christ is the Son of God, and who has repented of his sins.

On the other hand, the administration of baptism by a faithful gospel preacher does not validate the baptism of a person who has not been properly taught, who does not believe with all his heart, or who has not repented of his sins.

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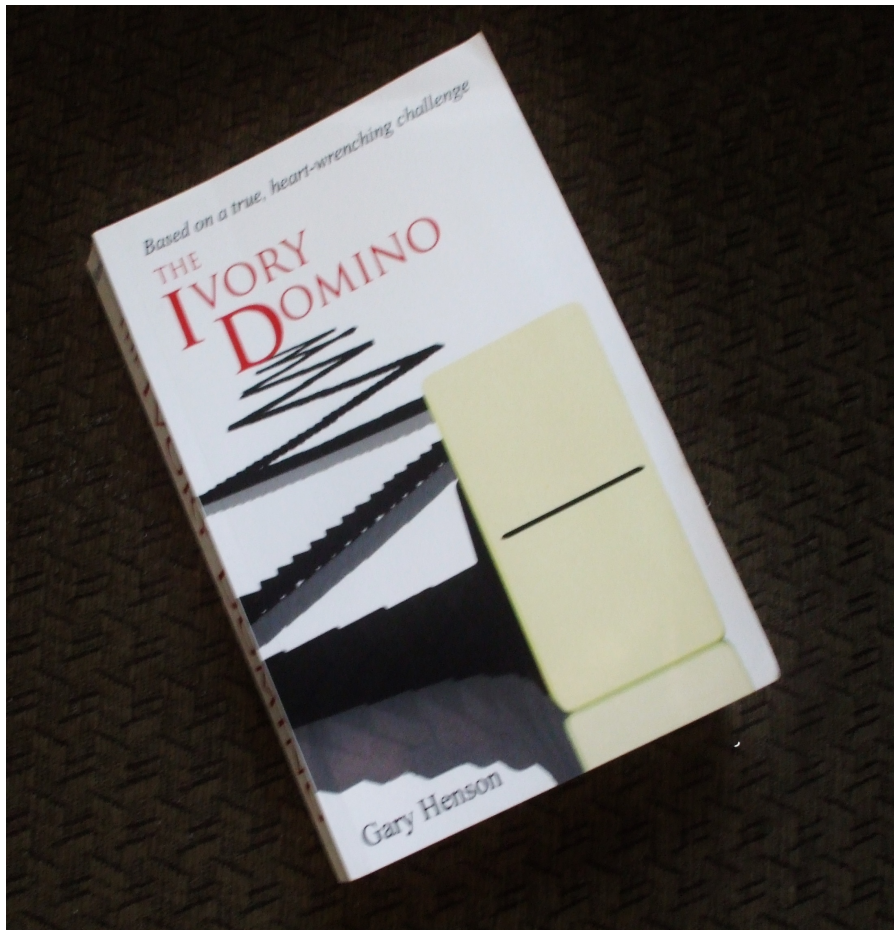
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Having known Gary for many years as a sound gospel preacher, I **recommend** *The Ivory Domino* to our readers, without reservation.

Jerry C. Brewer
Editor & Publisher
The Gospel Preceptor

Christ Will Return

Bobby Key

As the Jews in the Old Testament looked for the coming of the Messiah, so the Christian now looks for the return of Christ. There is no truth more clearly taught in God's word, no fact more firmly established, no warning more emphatic than the second coming of Christ. "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night" (2 Pet. 3:10). "Therefore be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh" (Matt. 24:44).

No man knows when the Lord will return, and it is foolish for any man to pretend that he does know. "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only...Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come" (Matt. 24:36, 42). We must not pretend to be wiser than the angels and attempt to set a date for the Lord's return.

At the same time, every believer should be deeply interested in His return. The thought of His return should quicken the heart of every Christian. Many are being deceived in regard to things which will take place when He comes. Theories that are very harmful have been woven around the return of Christ, and many sincere people have been led astray regarding these things.

There was purpose in His first coming, and there is a purpose in His second coming. Christ came the first time to save man. "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). To accomplish this task it was necessary that Christ offer Himself a sacrifice for our sins. It was also necessary that He set up His kingdom, which is the church. While on earth all that Christ did was to carry out the will of the Father. "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" (John 6:38). In the very shadow of the cross, Christ prayed to the Father, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (John 17:4).

Christ will not come a second time to offer Himself a sacrifice for man's sins, but to judge the world.

But now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die...so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation (Heb. 9:26-28).

Every person who ever lived will appear before Him in judgment. "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:12). After the reign of mercy comes the reign of justice; after the gospel that grants pardon and peace, the law that inflicts punishment and sorrow. There is no doubt about it. Christ will come the second time to judge the world.

Our Lord is coming the second time to raise the dead. "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth: they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:28-29). Christ did not teach two resurrections, one for the good, and one for the wicked a thousand years later. All will be raised on the same day and at the same hour. This will take place on the last day. Jesus said, "And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day...And I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:39-40).

When Christ returns it will be the last day. It is called "the day of the Lord" (2 Pet. 3:10). On this day Christ will not set up His kingdom, but will return the kingdom to the Father.

But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power. For he must reign, til he hath put all enemies

under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death (1 Cor. 15:23-26).

This passage forever disputes the theory of a future kingdom and a 1,000 year reign on earth. At His coming, “the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (2 Pet. 3:10).

Christ's return will not be a secret appearance. “Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen” (Rev. 1:7).

Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God...Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless (2 Pet. 3:11-14).