

The Gospel Preceptor

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

Volume 3, Number 2

Published Monthly

February, 2020

What do You Think of This Man?

Jerry C. Brewer

If I were to describe a religious man to you, I wonder what you would think of him. Let me do that, then you tell me what his condition is. Is he lost or saved? This man was called *devout*. That word means, “Earnestly religious; pious; reverent. Warmly devoted; heartfelt; sincere. Containing or expressing devotion, especially religious devotion” (*Britannica World Language Dictionary*). Wouldn't you like to know a man like that? Many of us have had parents who were devout and who were morally upright people and we are thankful for that.

It was also said of this man that he “feared God.” Solomon wrote that, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge” (Prov. 1:7). That means that without reverence for God, one has no desire to know of Him and His will. One who fears the Lord will desire to know more about His will for man. Jesus described such a man as hungering and thirsting after righteousness (Matt. 5:6). That describes the man I'm talking about. He hungered for the word of God. Wouldn't you like to associate with a man who feared God and sought to do God's will? I would. That kind of man would surely be a kind friend.

This man was also described as a charitable person. Not only was he described as charitable, but it was said that he gave “much alms” to those in need. He did not give a mere pittance of his possessions, but gave **much**. He must have been a kind, compassionate man who was esteemed by all who knew him. He had a big heart that was willing to share what he had with those less fortunate and it could surely be said that this pleased God.

This man was also described as a man of prayer. The Bible tells us to, “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17). Prayer is the means by which we make our wants and wishes known to God and through which we offer the praise and thanksgiving of our hearts to Him. James said, “The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (Jas. 5:16). Prayer should be offered each day for the blessings which we receive from God, and this man did just that. In fact, it was said that he, “prayed to God **always**.”

Now, from the above description perhaps you have arrived at a conclusion about this man. What do you think of his spiritual condition? You say, “Well, he was devout so he must have been sincerely devoted to God.” You would be correct. He was. You say, “He feared God and wanted to know of God's will for him. He was a seeker of Truth.” You're correct. He was that kind of person. Then you say, “He was generous and gave a lot of money to charity to help others, so he must have had a kind and compassionate disposition.” You would be correct. That's exactly the kind of man that he was. Finally, you say, “Well, he prayed always to God, and a man of prayer has to be a good man.” Again, you are correct. Now, tell me what you think of his spiritual condition. Was he saved or lost? I can imagine you grinning as though I've asked a dumb question. “**Of course**, he was saved,” you say. “Any man who is devout, fears God, gives to those less fortunate, and is in daily prayer **has to be** a saved man.”

That is the general assessment of the world regarding salvation from sin. Moral goodness, uprightness of life, kindness to others, and prayer are the things that make one

right in God's sight, according to the world's standard. But this man of whom I am speaking was lost in sin. You see, one is not saved because he is a “good man.” If that were the case, Christ would not have had to die for our sins. We could have just “been good.” The name of this man of whom I am speaking was Cornelius and you can read about him in Acts 10. It is the blood of Jesus Christ that saves from sin, not our goodness or morality.

Cornelius, was told to, “Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; Who shall tell thee words whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved” (Acts 11:13-14). Cornelius did not object to these instructions. He did not say, “Listen! I am devout, pray every day, and give much money to the less fortunate. Don't tell me I have to be saved!” You see, Cornelius “feared God” and had a desire to know how he could please Him. He did not trust in his own goodness or feelings, so he sent for Peter who came to his house and preached Christ. As a result of his desire to know God's will, Cornelius and his kinsmen were baptized into Christ where they received the benefit of His saving blood (Acts 10:48; Rom. 6:3-5).

A great tragedy of our time is that the denominational industry has convinced people that obedience to the gospel in baptism is unnecessary—that all one has to do to be saved is to pray, or live a good life, or give money to charitable causes. Yet, I challenge anyone on earth to point to a better moral man than Cornelius—a good moral man who **needed to obey the Gospel** in order to be saved.

What about you? Are you a good moral person? That's wonderful. Do you pray? Are you generous with your blessings in helping others? Those are all good things, but they do not bring forgiveness of sin or put you into Christ where salvation through His blood is located (Eph. 1:7). Only baptism does that (Rom. 6:3). Repent and be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38) as that good man Cornelius did, and you will be saved from sin as he was, by obeying “words whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.”

“Strange Fire”

Nathan Brewer

No matter how unpleasant it may be to accept, or how difficult it is for some to admit, there is one Bible fact that is “un-get-aroundable.” No where in the New Testament is the use of mechanical instruments of music authorized in Christian worship. Because of a lack of Bible knowledge, many who use these instruments in worship don't realize they are doing so without God's permission. Yet, there are those who know full well that using a piano or organ in worship is not specifically sanctioned by the New Testament, but continue to do so.

One popular notion is that, “they used them in the Old Testament” so it must be okay now. It's strange that people never try to justify animal sacrifices today by going back to the Law of Moses, but they do so for the organ. But we don't live under the Jewish Law now. All men today are answerable to the Law of Christ. He is our great Lawgiver (Heb. 1:1-2; Matt. 17:5; John 12:48). We are responsible for keeping Christ's Law—The New Testament.

One of the most popular responses when confronted with this fact is, “But the Bible doesn't say we can't.” That was the argument given to me by a denominational preacher when I brought the New Testament's silence on the subject to his attention. Is this popular argument a valid one? Does God's silence on a matter authorize it? Allow me to introduce you to a couple of fellows who used the same logic in their worship to God. Meet Nadab and Abihu:

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

Apparently, Nadab and Abihu were operating under the same assumption that most of

the religious world employs—if God doesn't specifically forbid a thing, then it is authorized. These two sons of Aaron were fulfilling their duties by burning incense to God. Unfortunately for them, they decided to ignore God's command regarding which kind of fire to use. They substituted what **they** wanted for what God had commanded. But notice the emphasis in the above scripture: There is no record of God telling them which kind of fire not to use. The text simply states that they offered fire, "which he commanded them not." Those boys were devoured by holy fire sent down from heaven, **not** because they they did what God said **not to do**, or had specifically forbidden, but because they **didn't do** what God specifically **told** them to do. They didn't live long enough to argue that, "God didn't say we can't." They had to learn the hard way. God no longer requires burnt offerings by His followers.

We are under a better covenant today, sealed with Christ's blood (Heb. 8:6; 9:11-14). But Christians today are a "holy priesthood" and we are to, "offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 2:5). We are commanded to sing when we worship God (Col. 3:16). When a mechanical instrument of music is added to this command, then "strange fire" is offered to God which, He "**commanded not.**" This is so because God has told us to sing. Although the specific commands have changed from the Old Testament to the New Testament, God still expects strict obedience from the followers of Christ. That's a principle which hasn't changed. Jesus said if we love Him, we will keep His commandments (John 14:15). Christians are commanded to sing—not sing and play. Man has added mechanical instruments to worship because that's what man wants. If God wanted it, he would have said so. Worship according to man's doctrines produces vain worship (Matt. 15:9). God has told us how to worship. When we use mechanical instruments in worship, then something is used which, "God commanded them not."

Maybe you think that while God punished Nadab and Abihu years ago, He will surely overlook something as "insignificant" as mechanical instruments in worship today. But those who discount the New Testament—the covenant of Christ which was sealed with His blood (Heb. 9:14-16)—will be punished as surely as Nadab and Abihu for rejecting the commands of God.

The two sons of Aaron had to learn the hard way that God's silence does not authorize. They learned the hard way that offering "strange fire" which God never told them to use was not pleasing to Him. Let's not be like them. Let us learn from their tragic example not to go beyond what God has authorized in His word. The loss of our souls is too great a price to pay for our failure to learn this lesson.

The Bible

C.R. Nichol and R.L. Whiteside

"Bible" is from the Greek word *biblos*, meaning a book. Since the Bible is a revelation from Jehovah to man, it may well be called "**The Book.**"

Names Found in the Bible by Which it is Called

Word of God (Heb. 4:11, 12; Eph. 6:17), The Book (Heb. 10:7), The Scriptures (John 5:39; 2 Tim. 3:16), Oracles of God (Rom. 3:2; Heb. 5:12; 1 Pet. 4:11), Living Oracles (Acts 7:38).

Symbolic Names Applied to the Word of God

Lamp and Light (Psa. 119:105; Prov. 6:23). Ignorance is darkness; sin is darkness. The sinner is represented a being under the "power of darkness" (Col. 1:13), and the world could not create its own spiritual light. "We have the word of prophecy made more sure; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a lamp shining in a dark place" (2 Pet. 1:19).

Mirror (2 Cor. 3:18; Jas. 1:23-25). The Bible is a mirror, in that it reveals man to himself. By reading it thoughtfully and prayerfully you will see yourself just as you are with all your spiritual and moral imperfections and blemishes as plainly as you can see your natural face in a mirror.

Fire (Jer. 23:29). Fire is the greatest purifying agency known. “Seeing ye have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth” (1 Pet. 1:22). Fire is also an energizing agent. When one becomes full of the word of God it is like fire within him so that he cannot hold his peace; he must speak. David said: “The fire burned; then spake I with my tongue” (Psa. 39:3). Also Jeremiah said “And if I say, I will not make mention of him, or speak any more in his name, then there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with fore-bearing, and I cannot contain” (Jer. 20:9). When we all become filled with the word of God there will be no complaint about a scarcity of preachers. A man must speak what is in his heart. When the church at Jerusalem had been scattered by bitter persecution, they went everywhere preaching the word, because they had been filled with the word by the preaching of the apostles, and were unable to hold their peace (Acts 8:4).

Hammer (Jer. 23:29). The heart is sometimes represented as hard and stony. Inasmuch as God's word subdues the hard and rebellious heart, it is called “a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces.”

Sword (Eph. 6:17). Sword is a symbol of war. Christians are soldiers, and their weapon of warfare is the word of God. It is called the “sword of the spirit.” This does not mean that the word is the sword which the Spirit uses, any more than “armor of God” means the armor which God wears. “Armor of God” means the armor which God furnishes his soldiers to wear, and “sword of the Spirit” means the word which the Spirit furnishes. We are to take the sword as a part of our equipment. Certainly then we are to use it. It is sharper than any two edged sword (Heb. 4:12).

Seed (Luke 8:11). The heart is the soil into which the word of God, as the seed of the kingdom, is sown. As there can be no life in the natural soil till seed is planted, so there can be no spiritual life in the heart till the word of God, the seed of the kingdom, is sown.

Divisions in the Bible

The Bible contains 66 books, and is divided into two great sections, namely, the Old Testament and New Testament. The Old Testament contains 39 books. The New Testament contains 27 books.

Classifying Books of the Old Testament

The books of the Old Testament may be classed as follows:

Law. The first five books of the Old Testament, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, are generally called law, because in them the law of Moses is found; yet much of the space is taken with a concise history of God's dealing with man, from creation to the death of Moses.

History. The next twelve books—Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther—are history.

Poetry. There are six poetical books—Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, and the Lamentations of Jeremiah.

Major Prophets. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel are major prophets. Minor Prophets.

The minor prophets are: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obediah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.

Classifying Books of the New Testament

The books of the New Testament may be classed as follows:

Life of Christ. The first four books—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

History. The fifth book—Acts of the Apostles—is history. This book contains the history of the first preaching under the Great Commission, as well as the history of the conversion of many thousands in the apostolic age.

Special Letters. Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philip-pians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, 2 John, and 3 John.

General Letters. Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, Jude, and Revelation.

The Pentateuch

Moses wrote the first five books of the Old Testament. These books are called The Pentateuch, from *pente*, five, and *teuchos*, a volume, and means the five-fold volume. These five books are referred to as the “Book of the Law of Moses” (Neh. 8:1), “The Book of the Law of Jehovah” (Neh. 9:3).

The Dispensations

The Old Testament gives the history of the Patriarchal and Jewish dispensations, while the New Testament gives the history of the Christian dispensation.

Patriarchal Dispensation. Patriarchal means the rule of the father. In this system of worship the father was the priest or ruler of the family or tribe. This seems to have been the only system of worship till the giving of the law of Moses. The Patriarchal dispensation covered about 2,500 years. Among the Gentiles this dispensation, or system of worship, evidently continued till the inauguration of the Christian dispensation.

The Jewish Dispensation covered about 1,500 years—from the giving of the law from Mount Sinai (Ex. 20) to the death of Christ. It was the national religion of the Jews, and with them superseded the Patriarchal system.

The Christian Dispensation began on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ (Acts), and will continue till the end of time. Its laws and regulations are found in the New Testament.

Collecting the Books of the Old Testament

The books of the Old Testament were collected by Ezra, nearly 500 years before the birth of Christ, with the exception of Nehemiah and Malachi. These two books were written after the death of Ezra. The books of the New Testament were collected and their names published in A.D. 397, if not before that date.

Original Manuscripts

So far as we know there is not in existence any of the original manuscripts; that is, manuscripts written by the hands of inspired men.

Present Manuscripts

The fact that we do not have the manuscripts written by the hands of the inspired men does not give ground for alarm, for there are in existence, many thousands of Hebrew and Greek manuscripts which were copied from earlier manuscripts. These are the documents now referred to as “original manuscripts.” We have a Greek translation of the Old Testament, which was made from the Hebrew about 100 years after the close of the Old Testament canon. It is known as the *Septuagint*. This version of the Old Testament was well known in the days of Josephus, and was used extensively in the days of the apostles. The New Testament began to be written about A. D. 50, and was completed about A.D. 68-96. We have a complete copy of the New Testament which was translated into the Syriac in A.D. 373.

Quotations by Early Writers

The early church fathers, beginning immediately after the close of the New Testament canon, wrote extensively, and were so profuse in their quotations from the original manuscripts that it is claimed the entire New Testament can be compiled from their writings. Some of them in their early lives were companions of the apostles.

Translations

Many translations of the Bible have been made, each with a desire to express the real thought of the inspired text. It is lamentable that so many have been unconsciously biased in their work of translating by some theory. But none of the translations are necessarily misleading. The Authorized Version was published in 1611. This translation is the one most usually found in our homes. It is sometimes called the King James Version, because it was made under the authority and patronage of King James III. In many copies of the King James Version you will find the title page reads, “The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments: Translated Out of the Original Tongues: and with the Former Translation Diligently Compared and Revised by His Majesty's Special Command. Appointed to be Read in the Churches.” When the work of translating was complete, the translation was dedicated “To the Most High and

Mighty Prince, James, by the Grace of God, King of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, Defender of the Faith, &c. The Translators of the Bible Wish Grace, Mercy, and Peace Through Jesus Christ Our Lord." The king, being head of the Church of England, authorized this translation to be read in the churches, hence it was called the "Authorized Version." Many of the members of the Primitive Baptist Churches refuse to accept any other than the King James Translation; some of them insisting that it is an inspired translation. The Revised Version was published in 1885. The American Standard Edition was published in 1901.

Chapters and Verses

The division of the Bible into chapters and verses was the work of uninspired men, and it was wholly for the convenience of the student. The division into chapters was made in 1250. It was divided into verses in 1560.

The Bible Printed in English

The New Testament was printed in English in 1525. The entire Bible was printed in English in 1535.

Use of Italic Letters in the Bible

It is almost impossible to translate one language into another without supplying words occasionally to give the correct thought. These supplied words in the Bible, for which there is no corresponding word in the Greek text, are printed in italics.

Men who Wrote the Bible

About 40 men were engaged in writing the Bible, beginning with Moses about 1,500 years before Christ, and closing about 64-68 A.D. Some of the men who were engaged in writing the Bible were not regarded as educated men. It should be remembered, however, that they were not compelled to rely on their own literary attainments, training, or mental ability in making known the will of the Lord, for they "spoke from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit" (1 Pet. 1:21).

Verbal Inspiration

From the following considerations it will be seen that the Holy Spirit selected the very words which inspired men used:

1. On no other ground can some statements in the Bible be explained. It is expressly stated that the apostles "began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:4). The Holy Spirit not only selected the idea, but gave utterance to the idea. "Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth" (1 Cor. 2:13). This plainly declares that the inspired men did not rely on their own wisdom to select words, but used such words as the Holy Spirit taught them.
2. Inspired men frequently spoke and wrote things which they themselves did not understand. "Therefore have I uttered that which I understood not, things too wonderful for me, which I knew not" (Job 42:3). When the Holy Spirit said through Peter, "For to you is the promise, and to your children, and to all that are afar off" (Acts 2:39), Peter did not fully understand what was meant. The prophets sometimes searched diligently trying to find out the meaning of their own words (1 Pet. 1:10, 11). It is a certain fact that one cannot select words and frame a sentence to express a thought which he does not understand.
3. Inspired men frequently spoke in languages which they did not understand. In such instances it was utterly impossible for them to select the words.

Whence Came the Bible?

The Bible is here. If it did not come from Jehovah, whence did it come? It is unlike the product of any human being. It points out man's defects, and pronounces maledictions on the wicked. It cannot be ascribed to Satan, for it constantly strikes at the very foundations of his kingdom. It is the world's most wonderful library. It differs from all other books in that it gives true history. It does not fail to record the shortcomings of its heroes. It tells of Noah's drunkenness (Gen. 9), as well as his faithfulness (Heb. 11); of Abraham's faith (Rom. 4), then of his weakness and lack of courage when he represented his wife to be his sister (Gen. 20); of the meekness of Moses (Num. 12), then his

presumption (Num. 20:7-12); of David's wonderful power, then his criminality; of Solomon's incomparable wisdom, then his foolishness; of Peter's boldness, then his denial of Christ.

Is not the indestructibility of the Bible proof of its inspiration? It began in a small country with a despised and persecuted people, but it has found its way into every corner of the earth. It is the most widely read book in existence. It is the forerunner of civilization, and the foundation of every enduring government. Through the ages many have made attacks on the Bible. These critics have passed and are almost forgotten. Voltaire, possessed with a most wonderful brain power, predicted that in 100 years from his day there would not be a Bible. How short-sighted was this French infidel! The very press which was used to print his infidel criticism of the Bible was afterwards used to print the word of God; the very house in which he lived was used as a warehouse and filled with copies of the Bible.

Let us encourage you to read this wonderful book. It contains counsel and condemnation or approval for man regardless of his relationship or station in life. If you are a rebel against Jehovah, you will find warnings, admonitions, entreaties; forgiveness is within your reach. If you are a Christian, work is outlined by which you can enrich your life, bless humanity, and have fellowship with the Infinite. The Bible makes known to man his sins, reveals God's love, and shows the way to life and happiness. You should form your life, shape your character and seal your destiny in keeping with the teaching of the Bible. Would you like to live in a country where they do not believe the Bible? If no, why? If yes, why? (*Sound Doctrine*, Vol. 1, pp. 5-14).

Holy Spirit Baptism

Landry Brewer

There are many false ideas floating around about the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Many today claim to have had it, and others are willing to believe these claims without demanding proof of such. This short work will examine the component parts of Holy Spirit baptism.

For a baptism to occur, there must be an administrator of it. Jesus Christ was the administrator of Holy Spirit baptism. John the Baptist proclaimed that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:11). Speaking to His apostles, Jesus said when He went away that He would send the Comforter unto them (John 16:7). Speaking to them shortly before His ascension into heaven, Jesus reiterated John's statement. "For John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence" (Acts 1:5). The Comforter of John 16 is the Holy Ghost of Acts 1, and Jesus did the sending/baptizing.

The next essential in baptism is the element in which it is performed. John baptized in the element of water (Matt. 3:11). This is the element in which one is baptized in order to become a Christian today (Mark 16:16; Acts 8:38). While Jesus commanded the apostles to preach this baptism for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38), He baptized them in the Holy Spirit (John 15:26; Acts 1:5).

This special baptism of the apostles was for the purpose of inspiration. The apostles were to be the teachers of the world (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16). They did not have the New Testament in written form like we do today. So, in order to be able to teach the world, they needed direct inspiration. The two functions of inspiration were reminding and revealing. The Holy Spirit would, "bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26). They needed a perfect recollection of all that Jesus had taught during His three years with them. But they also needed further instruction to complete all divine revelation: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of Truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth" (John 16:12-13). The perfect recollection of His teaching that they had already received, and the teaching they were not prepared to receive before Jesus' death would be supplied via Holy Spirit baptism. It was this inspiration that produced the New Testament.

The only recipients of Holy Spirit baptism were the apostles of Christ. Acts 1:5 finds Jesus telling them that, "...ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost," and Acts 2:1 shows that "ye" refers to "the apostles whom he had chosen." Only the apostles were promised Holy Spirit baptism, and in Acts 2:4 we find the apostles, and the apostles only, receiving this baptism. The "they" of Acts 2:4 refers to the last word of Acts 1:26—the apostles. This shows conclusively that Holy Spirit baptism was confined to the apostles of Christ.

The accompanying manifestations of Holy Spirit baptism—direct revelation from God, speaking in languages they hadn't studied, etc.—lasted unto the deaths of the apostles and those on whom they laid their hands to impart spiritual gifts. The apostles could pass on certain gifts, such as speaking in tongues, interpretation of tongues, etc. An example of this is found in Acts 8. That chapter contains the account of Philip the evangelist who knew what to teach the Samaritans, even though he didn't have the written New Testament from which to preach. He was also able to perform miracles to confirm what he preached. Therefore, he must have had an apostle's hands laid on him to receive these gifts, but Philip couldn't pass them on to others. That's why he sent for Peter and John to come to Samaria to lay hands on the new converts and impart spiritual gifts to them (Acts 8:14-17).

However magnificent these manifestations were, they were to end at some point. First Corinthians 13:8-9 explains that prophecies and tongues would cease. Revelation was in parts in the apostolic era, but Paul said, "When that which is perfect (complete) is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." Partial revelation that came through miraculous gifts would cease when those parts were gathered into the perfect whole, and James 1:25 explains that the word of God is "the perfect law of liberty." Holy Spirit baptism is unnecessary today because we have all that Jesus taught in the New Testament. Holy Spirit baptism accomplished its purpose and God allowed for spiritual gifts only so long as man needed them. With the completion of the written New Testament, we must study and follow its instructions to show ourselves approved unto God (2 Tim. 2:15).

The Disciples' Question in Matthew 24

R.L. Whiteside

The particular passages to be considered in this study are Matthew 24:3, 15, 33-34 and Mark 13 and Luke 21. Was Christ referring to His second coming and the literal end of the world, or to the end of a certain age? If the latter, what age?

The question asked by the disciples grew out of the statement Jesus made about the coming utter destruction of Jerusalem. And the speech Jesus made was in answer to the questions of the disciples; and no matter what view you take of the speech Jesus made, there are difficulties. But we must not ignore the fact that the speech was made in answer to the questions asked by the disciples. Matthew, Mark and Luke give a record of these questions. Matthew: "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" Substituting the marginal reading, the last question would be, "And what shall be the sign of thy presence, and of the consummation of the age?" This would mean the complete ending of the Jewish age in the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple—the destruction of the Jews as an organized nation. Mark: "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when these things are all about to be accomplished?" (ASV). Luke: "Teacher, when therefore shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when these things are about to come to pass?" (ASV).

To say that Matthew's report of the questions does not mean the same as the reports of Mark and Luke is to accuse someone of giving a false report. Compare the wording of the last question in Matthew with the way Mark and Luke record it.

In an important sense, the Lord is always present with those who serve Him; and yet there are occasions when His presence is so manifest in some work, blessing, or disaster, it is said that He comes on such occasions. The disciples at that time expected that

Jesus would soon declare Himself King, and the Jews had so bitterly persecuted Him that they would expect Him to put down His enemies and carry out the decree He made about the temple.

Many times the coming of the Lord is mentioned when His second coming is not hinted at (Read Psa. 80:1-2; 101:2; John 14:23; Rev. 2:5, 16, 25; 3:3, 11, 20). Certainly David was not referring to the second coming of Christ. Certainly John 14:23 does not refer to His second coming; and it is just as certain that five of the references in Revelation do not refer to His second coming, and the other reference does not seem to do so. Certainly the Lord did not deceive these good people of Thyatira by making them believe His last coming would occur while they yet lived.

With the disciples' notions and understanding of matters, how could they have been asking about what we now know as the second coming of Christ? They did not so much believe that Jesus would be killed, and, therefore, did not believe that He was going away. The common idea amongst the Jews was that the Messiah, when He came, would abide with them forever (John 12:32-34).

Even after Jesus rose from the dead the disciples expected Him to soon assume the reigns of government in Jerusalem—they still did not expect Him to go away (Acts 1:6). They could not, therefore, have been asking about His second coming. Commentators have viewed their question in the light of later knowledge and not in the light of what the disciples then knew, and it is astonishing that Bible students have done so. The disciples referred to His coming in judgment on Jerusalem.

Jesus had said that the temple would be utterly destroyed (Matt. 24:2) and the disciples asked Him, “What shall be the sign when these things are all about to be accomplished?” He mentioned the signs that would presage the destruction of Jerusalem. Just as the fig tree's putting forth its leaves showed the near approach of summer, “even so ye also, when ye see these things coming to pass, know ye that he is nigh, even at the doors” (Mark 13:29). And it would all occur before all the people then living passed away. And none but the Father knew that Jerusalem would be destroyed. But it would be a dark time for the Jews.

To make most of Matthew, chapter 24, refer to the end of the world, a matter about which they had not inquired, is to accuse Jesus of not dealing fairly with His disciples; and it would be confusing to them, for they would certainly understand that He was answering their questions.

The siege and downfall of Jerusalem would be a time of great tribulation. Josephus tells us about the horrors of that time. Yet while the Jews were still fighting and the Romans were outside the walls, there was hope. But when Jerusalem fell and the Jews that were still alive were carried off as slaves, darkness settled over them. That darkness is described in Matthew 24:29. The language is figurative, as was also the language used in describing the condition of the Babylonians after the fall of Babylon (Isa. 13:1-10).

Some have argued that “this generation” in Matthew 24:34 refers to the Jewish race, and that it would not cease to be until all the things mentioned had occurred. But it seems better to take *generation* in its ordinary meaning. To make it refer to *race* is to make Jesus guilty of saying an absurd thing. He had been telling what would happen to the Jews. It would be absurd for Him to say, “This Jewish race shall not pass away till all the things that are going to happen to it have happened to it.”

Conversion of the Misinformed Ephesians

Ron Cosby

Some people fail to obey God because they are misinformed or uninformed. They simply do not know what God wants them to do. Paul met 12 disciples in Ephesus that he thought knew the truth. But it did not take long for him to realize they were not Christians.

[W]hile Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper

country came to Ephesus, and found certain disciples: ...he said unto them, Did ye receive the Holy Spirit when ye believed? And they said unto him, Nay, we did not so much as hear whether 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 unto the people that they 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 (Acts 19:1-6 ASV).

What They Knew vs. What They Didn't Know

They knew John the Baptist was a messenger of God and that, if one rejects the messenger of God, he rejects God Himself (Luke 7:29-30). They also knew that their water baptism was “unto the remission of sins” (Mark 1:4 ASV; Acts 2). After hearing Paul and knowing he was a messenger of God, they obeyed the truth as they learned it, being immersed “unto the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38 ASV; 19:5). They did not argue with Paul.

They knew the Messiah was coming for that was the message of John (Acts 19:4). However, they did not know the Messiah had already come, was crucified, buried, raised from the dead, ascended to the Father, and was being preached in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the utter most parts of the world. This means they did not know of Christ's authority (Mark 16:15-16) or of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:18-20) or of salvation “into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19 ASV). All disciples now look for Jesus to come **again**.

Since the 12 did not know of salvation “into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19 ASV), they did not know the Spirit was given. How was the Spirit given? Note the contrast of repeated passages in the Old Testament and in the days of Jesus where John and Jesus clearly promised the miraculous giving of the Spirit (Matt. 3:11; John 7:37-39 cf 16:7ff, 14:26, 15:26-27; Acts 1:4-5, 8). Then note the massive number of passages which clearly depict the fulfillment of the promise of the miraculous (Acts 2, 8, 10, 11, 19; 1 John 3:24; 4:13). Today, we have the benefit of the great work accomplished by the Spirit through brethren in the first century: The mature church and the wholeness of the knowledge of the Son of God (Eph. 4:8-16).

The Danger of Not Knowing

Though one may be sincere, there is still a danger in not knowing. John's baptism was no longer valid. Therefore, the Ephesian disciples were still in their sins, having submitted to an invalid baptism, even though, at the time, they were seeking to obey God.

We are warned over and over against ignorance (Hosea 4:6; Jer. 4:22, 8:7, 2 Pet. 3:15-18). Some folks lacked knowledge in the sense that they knew the truth but followed error. The foolish Galatians were following Judaizers (Gal. 3:1). During Jesus' sojourn on earth, the religious leaders were blindly misleading the spiritually blind (Matt. 22:29, 15:13-14; John 7:17, 17:17).

Too Many are Dangerously Ignorant of What God Commands to Become a Christian

Like the 12 at Ephesus, they have obeyed some religious set of rules, but not God's (Acts 19). Many follow blind guides as to the proper subjects of water baptism. Only the penitent may be immersed for the remission of sins. Those who have decided to remain in their sin will simply be getting wet (Acts 2:38, 17:30, 19:19; Rom. 6:1-4).

Many follow blind guides and sprinkle infants. Infants do not need to be saved. They are safe, though the denominational world teaches that they are born guilty of Adam's sin. This is simply not true (Eccl. 7:29). Believers—not infants—are the proper subjects of baptism in the name of the Lord (Mark 16:16). Lack of faith would have hindered Philip from immersing the Eunuch (Acts 8:36-37). However, he confessed his faith and was baptized into Christ.

Many follow blind guides and baptize those they call “Christians” or the saved. Obviously, such baptisms are **not** for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 1 Pet. 3:19ff), since, to the blind, the person being baptized is already saved.

Many follow blind guides and baptize in a manner that was never taught by the Lord's messengers. They sprinkle instead of immerse, being totally ignorant of the mode of water baptism. If sprinkling is the Lord's way of baptizing, then why was John “baptizing in Enon near to Salim, because there was much water there” (John 3:23 ASV)? He could have gotten a bowl of water out of any kitchen. He didn't because God wants the reader to understand that baptism is an immersion. It is a burial (Rom. 6:3-4). Both the one being immersed and the immersed must go “down into the water” (Acts 8:38-39).

For the sake of numbers and increased followers, spiritual blindness continues today. On May 9, 2005, the *Baptist Press* interviewed Max Lucado. Mr. Lucado expressed several false doctrines but we restrict our quotes to his error on baptism. He said, “We never taught—the buzz-phrase is 'baptismal regeneration,' where you go into the baptistery lost and come out saved. We never taught that. Now, I'm not saying there were not people in our church who believed that.”

The following exchange between Mr. Lucado and the Baptist Press underscores Lucado's obvious error concerning baptism:

Baptist Press: You preached a sermon in the mid '90s about baptism. What led you to preach that? (The sermon, available on the church's website, explained Lucado's denomination's understanding of the role of baptism.)

Lucado: I think our church just felt like we needed to have a clearer stand. There are those who have taught that baptism is necessary for salvation, as if baptism adds to the finished work of Christ. We have felt that baptism is necessary for obedience, but that baptism doesn't add to what Christ does for us in the cross, and doesn't add to what a person receives by faith.

Lucado tells readers why he changed doctrine. It was for numbers' sake:

I think I can say I have changed my position...When we were in Brazil, our little church wouldn't grow. We thought, 'Why won't it grow?' [after a new study, RC] Then, the church had its own mini-revival. It was a wonderful experience for me. I can say that in my own life, I have gone through a personal discovery of grace.

Beware of blind guides who, for numbers' sake preach the so-called gospel. Our souls depend upon being alert and knowing heaven's will in all spiritual matters.

Conclusion

We pray that your ending will not be a great tragedy like the young prophet who failed to maintain his knowledge of what God commanded (1 Kings 13). Make things right; do things right; then the end will be right. Like the Ephesians, be immersed unto the remission of sins (Acts 19).

Don't Myth the Boat

Jess Whitlock

...there were heavens from of old, and an earth compacted out of water and amidst water, by the word of God; by which means the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished...” (2 Pet. 3:5-6 ASV).

The flood waters of Noah's day have been constantly under attack by the atheists, infidels, and skeptics of Bible inspiration. (Of course, this especially applies to the first eleven chapters of Genesis). As a student at Oklahoma Christian College (OCC), now OCU, one of my professors argued that the flood of Noah's day was just a local flood. Many advocate that the flood of Genesis 6-9 was a small, local flood limited to the Mesopotamian Valley, and not a world-wide deluge.

I know the flood of Noah's day was universal. Consider some of the universal

descriptions found in the Word of God. “And Jehovah saw that the wickedness of man was great **in the earth**...and **the earth** was corrupt before God...for **the earth** is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with **the earth**...I do bring the flood of waters upon **the earth**, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from **under heaven**; everything that is in **the earth** shall die.” (Gen. 6: 5, 11, 13, 17, all emphasis mine – jlw). I once read these and a few other passages to a group of fourth and fifth grade students and asked if the whole earth perished in that flood, or only a portion? Every student responded saying, “the whole earth.”

I **know** the flood of Noah’s day was universal. Only eight souls were saved by (through) water. Listen to this, “”And every living thing was destroyed that was upon the face of the ground, both man and cattle, and creeping things, and birds of the heavens; and they were destroyed from the earth, and Noah only was left, and they that were with him in the ark” (Gen. 7:23). Count up those aboard the ark and you discover only eight souls. Peter writes, “and spared not the ancient world, but preserved Noah with seven others...” (2 Pet. 2:5). Do the math! Following the events of Genesis 9 you will not read of one person that lived on earth prior to the flood that was still living. Not the first one. If there had been one area of dry ground, we would have learned about such survivors! Genesis 10 will continue the Genesis narrative by listing the posterity of Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

I **know** the flood of Noah’s day was universal. God spoke to Noah saying, “Make thee an ark of gopher wood...” (Gen. 6:14). Consider the size of the ark. The ark was 300 cubits long, 50 cubits wide, and 30 cubits high (Gen. 6:15). Most Bible students believe the cubit to be 18 inches, the shortest of all measurements is 17.5 inches. Using the smallest cubit, the size of the ark would have been 438 feet long, 72.9 feet wide, and 43.8 feet high. The late Dr. Henry Morris with a Ph.D. in Hydrology and Hydraulics observed: “It can be shown hydrodynamically that a gigantic box of such dimensions would be exceedingly stable, almost impossible to capsize. Even in a sea of gigantic waves...” Why would God demand such a structure to be built, if Noah and his family only needed to evade a local flood? All they would have to do would be to make a move to high and dry ground. Countless others would have done the same thing, and if not, why not?

I **know** the flood of Noah’s day was universal. There exists hundreds of salt lakes and inland seas such as the salty Caspian Sea. The Caspian Sea is landlocked and has been shrinking in size for many centuries. Lake Van is located southwest of Ararat and Lake Urmia are good examples of high elevated, landlocked lakes. The Gobi Desert in central Asia contains many leftover, salty lakes that continue to shrink in size. In America we have the Great Salt Lake surrounded by desert. In the Andes, there is Lake Titicaca (12,500 feet above sea level, covering more than 300 square miles), at one time much larger and known for its high salt content. Similar salt water lakes exist throughout the world. The geological evidence speaks eloquently of a world that at one time in the past was inundated with flood waters.

Peter and Jesus knew the flood of Noah’s day was universal. “And as were the days of Noah, so shall be the coming of the Son of man. For as in those days which were before the flood...the world that then was, being overflowed with water perished...” (Matt. 24:37-38; 2 Pet. 3:6).

Unbelievers continue to scoff at God and His Word and say that the account of Noah and the flood is only a myth! We can honestly say that the unbelievers have **mythed** the boat; all who **mythed** the boat when Noah entered into the ark perished in the flood. Make sure your faith in God and His inspired Word does not fail you, otherwise you will **myth** heaven in the ages of eternity!

The Gospel Preceptor

Published monthly and emailed free of charge.

To subscribe, send your request to txjch@att.net

God's Two Images?

Nana Yaw Aidoo

There are times when I thank God for social media. One of those times was when I came into contact with an old-time friend from senior high school by the agency of Facebook. I had made a religious post which he saw and which led to his sending me a direct message saying we needed to talk. I gave him my contact number, he sent me a WhatsApp message and it was like old times again.

In the subsequent discussions, I realized that my friend was a member of the World Mission Society Church of God. I knew that as a denomination it was wrong but I really wasn't alarmed until my friend asked me whether I had heard of "God the Mother." The discussion that ensued impressed on me that my friend was in a cult. Quickly, I looked up his church online and—how right I was! To say this church is a heretical sect is an understatement.

Among the many beliefs of the World Mission Society Church of God (including the idea that a dead South Korean man, Ahn Sahng-hong, is Christ who returned to earth a second time) is the belief that there is such a thing as "God the Mother" in the Bible. They posit on their website, *english.watv.org*, that "The Bible clearly testifies that our heavenly Mother exists, and that only our heavenly Mother can give us eternal life." How did they come across this idea? They quote from Genesis 1:26-27 and give this commentary:

The above verse states that God has two images—a male image and a female image. Until now, we have only known and called upon the male image of God: "Father." Then how should we call upon the female image of God? Logically, we should refer to God's female image as "Mother." This is why God had said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness."

The word "us" is a plural term. "Elohim," the Hebrew word used in place of "God" in Genesis 1:26, directly translates to "Gods," the plural form of the word "God." Therefore, the references to "us" in the book of Genesis refer to God the Father and God the Mother. Some say that the word "us" in this verse indicates God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. If this argument is correct, there should be three types of people in the world—those who were made in the image of God the Father, those who resemble the image of God the Son, and those created in the image of the Holy Spirit. However, on this earth there are only two types of people: men and women. Therefore, the "Gods" mentioned in Genesis 1:26 are the male image of God and the female image of God—God the Father and God the Mother.

As if this weren't blasphemous enough, apparently "God the Mother" dwells among men in the person of an old South Korean woman named Jang Gil-Ja. (*Wikipedia*). Like the false teachers of Peter's day, the leaders of this group are unlearned and unstable and as a result, they wrest the scriptures to their own destruction. Unfortunately, ignorant yet sincere people like my friend are being led to hellfire with their error. Does God really have two images like this group teaches? A careful look at Genesis 1:26-27 should debunk this heresy. It is written:

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

Indeed, the words "Elohim," "us" and "our" are plural. Yet one thing is unmistakable; the word "image" is singular. The text does **not** read, "...let us make man in our **images**..." but in our "image." The reason being that, though the God of the Bible is an "Us" God (see Gen. 11:5-7; 1 Pet. 1:2), He really is one God (Deut. 6:4) and He has a singular image, an image which isn't physical (cf. John 4:23-24; Luke 24:39).

Notice also that the singular "image" is qualified with the singular pronouns "his" and "he." It is in this singular "he image" that God created man and woman. "...male and

female created **he** them.” If there really were two Gods with two different images at the creation of man, how difficult is it to say that God created man in “their (plural) own images (plural)...male and female created they (plural) them?” If God could inspire Moses to use plural words like “Elohim” and “us,” then surely, He could have inspired Moses to use “their,” “they” and “images.”

There was only One God at the creation of man and beside Him there was none other. David said; “Wherefore thou art great, O LORD God: **for there is none like thee, neither is there any God beside thee**, according to all that we have heard with our ears.” (2 Sam. 7:22). If there were “God the Mother” besides God at the creation of man or at any point in time, then the heroes of the Old Testament never heard of it.

The apostle Paul was inspired to write; “There is...one Spirit...one Lord...One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” (Eph. 4:4-6). Yet, conspicuous by its absence from inspired writ are the words “God the Mother.” If there really were such an entity besides God Almighty at the creation or at any point in time, then the heroes of the New Testament never heard of it.

Friends, beware of the World Mission Society Church of God.

A Solid Basis for Religious Unity

Cled E. Wallace

The strident clamor of discordant voices in religious matters makes a mockery of the prayer of Jesus that His disciples stand united on the teaching of the apostles. The purpose of that unity, as stated by Jesus, is that the world may believe (John 17:20-21). The prevailing discord is an effective handicap to faith, the result of which is widespread unbelief.

The unity that Jesus prayed for and the early church achieved was a unity of **faith**. “There is one faith” (Eph. 4:5). This unity demands that men believe the same thing on the same evidence. “Now I beseech you, brethren, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Cor. 1:10 ASV).

Obviously, the things to be believed must be crystal clear, and the evidence to support it must have the same character. There is no room in the picture for dreamer, visionary or speculator. Such have always darkened the clear sky of faith with the clouds and shadows of their opinions. They are apostles of confusion. The practical difference in the nature of faith and opinion, with the tremendous consequences involved, is plainly vivid when unity of faith is properly defined.

What men must believe, they **can** and **must** understand. Facts are stated and evidence is presented. An understanding and full acceptance of the case as stated mark the boundaries of faith. Since the call to faith is as universal as the **need** of it, and that takes in the Greeks and Barbarians, the wise and the foolish, the basis of faith must be streamlined. The man of faith travels light. He cannot ascend the heights to which faith inspires weighted down with the equipages the opinionated would lay upon him and stack around him. Faith stops in religion where revelation stops. Opinion takes off where revelation ceases or has ever been and leads the unwary and the curious into snipe hunts of doubt, and oftener utter folly.

Illustrations are abundant in the very texts that demand faith. It is well to begin with faith in God. “...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 ASV). The evidence of the being of God is far from meager. It is uniform and cumulative. The Almighty Being, “who is and was and who is to come,” the Eternal God, has declared Himself in the sacred writings, and His works are not only there manifest, but also throughout the world of nature. Nature corroborates what the scriptures declare. The evidence is full and satisfactory to establish what men must **believe**.

What they must believe, they can understand. Faith is in God, His being, and His re-

vealed character. When men with haughty intellects take off from the solid ground of faith to soar into heights they do not have wings for, or to sound depths they are unqualified to fathom, the man of faith will stay where the footing is solid. In religion the realm of speculation and opinion is endless and profitless. It is even worse than profitless, for the path of the speculator in religion is strewn with the wrecks of faith he has caused and endless wranglings he has engendered.

Controversy through the centuries over the questions of Deity have raged far beyond the facts which are stated in the scriptures as the basis of universal faith. Men have been burned at the stake because they could not subscribe to a **theory**. The mysteries we cannot understand even by searching are the very things that are not revealed, and also the very things that some ambitious men with itching curiosity are most anxious to pry into. "The secret things" belong to God; "the things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children" (Deut. 29:29).

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past tracing out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and unto him, are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen (Rom. 11:33-36 ASV).

Let us understand what the Book **says** about God and believe it, and in that faith abide.

The builders of faith must exercise restraint and stick to essentials. "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God" (1 Pet. 4:11). "And I, brethren, when I came unto you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:1-2 ASV). Divine demonstrations of power showed God's approval of Paul, and he addressed prospective believers with direct evidence unadorned with "persuasive words of wisdom."

No man can be truly edified by the endless maze of theories which men, both Catholic and Protestant, have spun about Jesus the Christ. They settle down like a fog on the path of faith. "These are written that ye may believe" (John 20:20-21). What are written? The inspired words of the birth, life, teaching, and works of Jesus. Men **can** understand and believe **the facts** as presented. Believe **what**? "That Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." He is declared to be just **that**, and clear evidence is presented to **prove** it, and the man who cannot believe it is either too perverse or too shallow to be impressed by facts. It is certainly no reflection on the Son or the evidence which supports Him that He is not universally accepted.

Unity of faith demands that men accept what the scriptures **say** about Jesus and eschew opinions that men have expressed about Him. Inspired preachers and writers were strong on facts, which incidentally are both easier to understand and believe than the involved type of reasoning by which men seek to establish their theories. For instance, Paul preached that Jesus died for our sins according to the scriptures, was buried, and rose again from the dead according to the scriptures (1 Cor. 15:3-4). The testimony was simple, direct, and appealing. Many speculations have been spun around these facts which are both confusing and incredible. It is far better to accept the fact of "the atonement" and not become involved in futile efforts to understand its unrevealed mysteries. Blessings come to all through simple faith in the fact.

It is absurd to charge religious strife over such matters to the inability of men to "understand alike" what the Bible teaches. The modernist does not reject the sacrificial character of the death of Christ and the fact of His resurrection because he cannot understand it, but simply because he does not believe it. It is foolishness to him as it was to many intellectual pagans in the first century, and on similar grounds. The theorist who accepts it is not satisfied to know that it **works**. Like the little boy with his father's watch, he wants to open it and take it apart to see how it works, a task he is not capable of, and confusion results.

So-called "systematic theology," coloured and flavoured according to the individual no-

tions of who happens to be the theologian, expressed in various creeds, has through the centuries furnished the munitions for party conflict and continues to do so. Even a sectarian effort to attain “union”—which is not unity—requires that creeds be largely ignored. Ignoring the creeds is a step in the right direction, but does not go far enough. Unity demands **faith**, and faith rests on revelation, not speculation (Rom. 10:17). This is the broad, solid basis for unity.

Division has always been caused by the introduction of foreign elements into the faith and practice of the church. “Mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them” (Rom. 16:17). It is not a popular text with religious agitators who have a playful imagination.

Think what a “streamlined religion” faith furnishes. There is in it no agitation about hereditary total depravity of the sinner, direct operation in conversion, but that a simple acceptance of the gospel brings the sinner into a state of reconciliation. All such constitute the body of Christ, the church (Eph. 1:22-23); and when they continue steadfastly “in the apostles' doctrine,” (Acts 2:42) there can be no occasion for parties and creeds to express their peculiarities.

The peculiarities of Christians are common and **according to faith**, not opinion. Faith, too, is entirely sufficient to put the innovator out of business and purify the worship of the church by eliminating all unauthorized practices such as instrumental music and the burning of incense. The solid basis of unity in religion is the “simplicity and the purity that is toward Christ” (2 Cor. 11:3 ASV).

The Establishment of the Church

N.B. Hardeman

When the battle was being fought between the church of Christ and denominations, and when brethren were willing to contend earnestly for the faith in public discussion, no questions were of more importance than the time when, and the place where, the church of our Lord was inaugurated, set up, and established. A clear conception of its origin has much to do with a correct understanding of what the will of the Lord is.

By the church, we mean that spiritual realm over which Christ reigns as head and in which the Holy Spirit dwells. Let it be firmly stated that no such an institution existed upon this earth until the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ. Denominationalism is founded upon the opposite of this fundamental truth, and, hence, their minds are blinded and a veil is over their faces until this day.

Daniel prophesied 600 years before the birth of Christ that the time would come when the God of heaven would set up a kingdom. The Jews expected such, and were ever looking for someone who, in the power of God, would proclaim himself king. When finally Jesus appeared, He declared, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is **at hand...**” (Mark 1:15). In Daniel 2:44, Daniel said that the God of heaven would set up a kingdom in the days of the fourth earthly kingdom—i.e., in the days of the Roman kings.

When we open the New Testament, we find in Matthew 3:1 that in those days came John the Baptist, saying, “...the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Those were the days when the Caesars were on the throne of Rome and the Herods were over Palestine. The time is A.D. 26. Jesus also said in Matthew 4:17, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand.” This was A.D. 31. In Matthew 10, Jesus sent forth the 12 under the first commission and bade them say, “The kingdom of heaven is **at hand.**” In Luke 10, He ordered the 70 to say, “The kingdom of God is **come nigh unto you.**” In Matthew 6, He taught the disciples to pray, “Thy kingdom come.” In A.D. 32, He said to His disciples, “Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” (Matt. 18:3).

All of this shows that, as yet, the kingdom, or church, had not been established, but that such an event was **at hand, had come nigh unto them.** In Matthew 16:18, after Peter's confession that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God, He declared

that, “upon this rock I **will build** my church.” This could not mean that He intended to merely enlarge it, since in the statement He referred to the foundation.

Time passes, and the Saviour said in Luke 22:18, “I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God **shall come**.” In Mark 9:1, Jesus said, “That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God **come with power**.” Christ here plainly says that some to whom He was speaking would live to see the kingdom “come with power.” The kingdom was to “come with power.” But **when** did **the power** come? After His resurrection, Christ said, “Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with **power** from on high.” (Luke 24:49). In Acts 1:8, He said, “Ye shall receive **power** after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you.”

Now note:

1. The kingdom and power were to come together;
2. the power and the Spirit were to come together;
3. the Holy Spirit came on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ (Acts 2:1-4).

From these statements of facts undeniable, the conclusion that the church was established on the day of Pentecost is forced upon us. No living man can refute the arguments thus made.

In Acts 2:30 Peter said that God had sworn to David that of the fruit of his loins He would raise up Christ to **sit on his throne**. The purpose of the resurrection is here clearly stated. If, indeed, Christ today is not on David's throne, the resurrection might have been postponed for thousands of years. Furthermore, in Acts 15:16-17, James quotes Amos as saying, “After this [the sifting of Israel] I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will **set it up**: that the residue of men **might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles**, upon whom my name is called.” The *tabernacle* of David means his house, family, lineage. The last of David's lineage to occupy the throne was Zedekiah. With his being carried away, B.C. 587, the tabernacle of David fell and passed into ruins. Six hundred years go by, but God had made an oath to David that another of his lineage should take his throne; hence, he “raised up Christ to sit on his throne.” If Christ is not now on David's throne, the Gentiles, of whom we are, cannot seek the Lord, and, therefore, are hopelessly lost. Any teaching contrary is dishonoring to God and destructive to our fondest hopes and holiest desires.

When Jesus was thus exalted at the right hand of God, where He was made “King of kings, and Lord of lords,” He sent forth His Holy Spirit to give life and energy to that material made ready by John the Baptist. The Gospel was that day proclaimed, and Peter used the keys of the **kingdom** to open the door of the **church**. Throughout the Old Testament and thus far in the New, the kingdom is always referred to as a matter of prophecy. Ever thereafter it is spoken of as an historical fact.

Begin with Revelation and trace events backward. John says, “I...am...in the kingdom” (Rev. 1:9). Paul wrote Timothy how to behave himself in “the church of the living God” (1 Tim. 3:15). Again, he said the Colossians were delivered from the “power of darkness” and translated “into the kingdom of his dear Son” (Col. 1:13). In Acts 8:1 we read of a “great persecution against the church,” and in Acts 5:11 it is said that “great fear came upon all the church.” In Acts 2:47 the statement is that “the Lord added to the church.” This brings us back to Pentecost, in the year A.D. 33, where the church, or kingdom, was established in Jerusalem where Zechariah said, “My house shall be built in it” (Zech. 1:16).

God raised up Christ to sit on David's throne (Acts 2:30). Daniel said, “I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to [**to**, not **from**] 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).

Christ received this kingdom when He was borne heavenward with the clouds and came **to** the Ancient of days. His reign began when He sent the Holy Spirit from heaven to earth on the day of Pentecost. He will continue to reign “till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.” Then shall He deliver the kingdom up to God.

Religious, But Lost

Dub McClish

How can this be? Doesn't religious equal saved? It makes no difference what you believe as long as you're sincere is a very old slogan that implies as much. (The updated version of this platitude is, “It makes no difference **whether** you believe...”)

What about it? Can a believer be devoutly religious and still be lost? Are you willing to let the Bible answer this question (it does so very definitively)? Consider the following:

- Cain, the first-born of all mankind, was religious, as indicated by the fact that he offered a sacrifice unto God. However, his apparent sincerity did not excuse his substitution of produce for blood (Gen. 4:3-5; Heb. 11:4). **Religious, but lost.**
- Jeroboam, first king of the northern Israelite kingdom, was so zealous in religion that he built new altars and objects of worship, appointed a new priesthood, and declared new holy feast days (1 Kin. 12:32). His epitaph by inspired writers reads: “he made Israel to sin” (14:16; et al.). **Religious, but lost.**
- The Pharisees of the first century were among the most zealous religious folk of their day among God's people. Yet Jesus repeatedly rebuked, exposed, and condemned them for their many hypocrisies, calling them “sons of hell” (Mat. 23:15). **Religious, but lost.**
- The Ethiopian nobleman was so sincere in his religious practice that he rode 750 miles in a primitive vehicle (a chariot) to worship God in Jerusalem, and he read the Bible as he rode toward home (Acts 8:27-28). Yet the fact that an angel of God and the Holy Spirit brought Philip into contact with this man (vv. 26, 29) so he could hear the Gospel (v. 35), conclusively indicates that he was lost. Neither this man's zeal or sincerity were enough to save him. **Religious, but lost.**
- Saul of Tarsus was as sincerely zealous in his convictions as a person can be. He was a “Hebrew of Hebrews,” a Pharisee, who concerning the law, was blameless (Phi. 3:5-6). His zeal for God's Law through Moses led him to believe he “ought to do many things contrary” to the Son of God (Acts 26:9). He proved his sincerity by leading a wave of terror against Christians. But when Saul asked Jesus what he must do, the Lord didn't tell him, “Your sincerity and zeal are sufficient; go your way.” Rather He told Saul to go into Damascus where he would be told what he must do (22:8-10), resulting in baptism, in which act his sins were “washed away” (i.e., forgiven) by Jesus' blood (v. 16; Rev. 1:5). **Religious, but lost.**

We thus learn: It is not enough to be religious or even sincere and zealous in religion. We must be sincere and zealous in **true** religion, as defined in the New Testament.

New Book Now Available!

“The Thing That Hath Been...”

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

Premillennialism's Attack Against God

Charles Pogue

Premillennialism is based upon the false idea that the Jews were chosen as the eternal people of God, and that the promises of the spiritual kingdom that God would set up and which is described in Daniel 2 and other passages, would actually be a physical kingdom with Christ reigning in physical Jerusalem. Of course, among other scriptural facts millennialists miss is that the promised Messiah would be Prophet, Priest, and King. Christ cannot be a priest upon the earth because if He were on earth, He could not be a priest as He is from the tribe of Judah, not Levi (Heb. 8:4; 7:14). In order for Christ to be high priest there had to be a changing of the law (Heb. 7:12), which there was (Eph. 2:15; Gal. 6:1-2). Beyond the contradictions of Premillennialism and the many misinterpretations of Bible prophecies in which Premillennialists engage, Premillennialism is a direct and frontal attack against God.

Premillennialists claim that Jesus came to the earth to set up an earthly kingdom, but could not, because the Jews rejected Him. Their theory is that the church was put in as an afterthought; a stop gap measure until Christ returns a second time, and sets up His kingdom. **That** theory regarding the church is reduced to inanity by Ephesians 3:1-11, and by Christ's own statement that He would build His church (Matt. 16:18). The claim that Christ could not set up an earthly kingdom, because the Jews rejected Him is also exposed as error by John 6:15, which tells us that the people tried to take Him and make Him a king by force. Beyond the abuse of the scripture, Premillennialism is an abuse of God in two ways.

Premillennialism attacks the foreknowledge of God. According to millennial theory, God had every intention of setting up a kingdom on earth. The problem, they allege, is that God never anticipated that Christ would be rejected, and thus unable to set up that kingdom. Isaiah wrote,

Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do my pleasure (Isa. 46:9-10).

Premillennial theory claims that God did not anticipate the rejection of the Jews, and consequently, the inability of Christ to set up His kingdom. Apparently, these people ignore the fact that the very same prophet, Isaiah, prophesied Christ would be rejected (Isa. 53:3), yet **would** set up His Kingdom (Isa. 9:6-7). Premillennialism is blasphemous because it attacks the foreknowledge of God. God said He knew, but millennialists say He did not. God cannot lie (Titus 1:2)!

Premillennialism also attacks the power of God. Just to think that God began with Genesis 3:15 to unfold His plan for the redemption of man, revealed that plan little by little until the fullness of time came when Christ would come into the world (Gal. 4:4), but in the end could not do what He said, is reprehensible! Premillennialism makes man stronger and mightier than God. How foolish that is inasmuch as the weakness of God is stronger than man (1 Cor. 1:25). Jesus informed Pilate that he could have no power against Him except it was given him from above (John 19:11). In addition to that, in John 10:17-18, Jesus said, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it up again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." Jesus willingly laid down His life to purchase the church (Acts 20:28) He had promised to build (Matt. 16:18), which was in the eternal purpose of God (Eph. 3:10-11). God had His plan from the foundation of the world which, by the way, was the point from which Christ was the lamb that was slain, (Rev. 13:8). Christ's death did not prevent the kingdom plan that God had; it was a piece of the design to bring it about! It is reprehensible for men to claim that the eternal purpose of God could possibly be thwarted by puny man. While we are not the eternal judge of any man, it would be a frightening thing to stand before God and believing Premillennialism that attacks **both** God's foreknowledge and His Power!

Christ And The Church

Foy E. Wallace, Jr.

“For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church.” (Eph. 5:23).

There is a common sentiment that it makes no difference what church one belongs to, if any at all, and that church membership is not essential to salvation. So the indifference of “join the church of your choice,” as though God had none, is age-old in religious nomenclature. Such expressions can only be viewed as a sort of “pious profanity” by those who know and believe what the Bible says about the church.

Jesus built the church; he died for it and purchased it with his blood; ransomed and redeemed it; washed and cleansed it. He is the Saviour of it and he will come again to own and claim it. Yet we are told that it is a very “non-essential” thing.

There are only two senses in which the church can be Scripturally viewed. First, the comprehensive, or universal, sense, to include all the saved of the earth—all who have obeyed the gospel. Second, the limited, or local, sense, to include all Christians, or saved people in a particular place described and limited by geographical terms. The denominational idea does not fit either case. A denomination is smaller than the whole church, but larger than a local church in that it is composed of many local churches of the same faith and order; therefore, a denomination is both too large and too small to be scriptural.

It is admitted that one can be saved without belonging to any denomination. The Lord adds saved people to the church (Acts 2:47). Therefore a man can be added to the church and never belong to a denomination. Hence, it is the denomination and not the church that is non-essential.

The Church is the Body

Paul’s theme in the book of Ephesians is the church in its relation to Christ— Christ and the church. In the first chapter he compares the church to a body, with Christ as head (vv. 21-22) and in chapter four he declares that “there is one body” (v. 4) ...in chapter five he compares Christ to the husband and the church to the wife (vv. 21-23). Hence, Paul’s view is, one head and one body—one husband and one wife.

Continuing his comparison, Paul uses the family analogy—God the Father, the church the family (Eph. 3:15). Hence, one Father and one family. And reverting to the second chapter, he points out the unifying power of the cross of Christ in making the “twain”— Jew and Gentile—“one new man”—the church—thus reconciling them “in one body.”

If Christ would not accept Jew and Gentile in separate bodies, but united them that they should be “one fold and one shepherd,” what must be his attitude toward the spectacle of (more than) 200 denominational bodies today that dishonor his name and ignore his prayer? (John 17:20-21).

Salvation is in the Church

The idea that one is first saved by some mystical or mystified, unintelligible or intangible process, and afterwards “joins some church” is a common religious delusion. Yet there is no truth more plainly emphasized in the Bible than the fact that the process of being saved is the process of entering the church (Acts 2:47).

First, it is affirmed in Acts 4:12 that salvation is in Christ. Then, to have salvation, one must get into Christ. But Paul, by analogy, in Ephesians 5:30, teaches that as husband and wife are one, so Christ and the church are one. “I speak concerning Christ and the church,” he said. Christ and the church being one, how can one be in Christ and out of the church?

Second, Paul makes the fact that Christ is “the Saviour of the body” (Eph. 5:23) the ground of his exhortation to the Ephesians concerning the church as the bride of Christ (v. 25). He washed it and sanctified it; cleansed and saved it; purchased it with his blood and redeemed it; reconciles us to God in it, and adds all the saved to it. Therefore, out of the church there is no cleansing, no blood, no redemption, no reconciliation to God, no salvation.

Third, the relation between Christ and the church is the same as that which exists between God and Christ. Christ is the “fullness” of God (Col. 1:19), and the church is the “fullness” of Christ (Eph. 1:22). Therefore, no man can come to Christ and ignore the church for the same reason that no man can come to God and ignore Christ.

We exhort the unsaved to come to Christ, “gladly receive the word,” be “baptized into Christ,” and the Lord will add you to his church.

Is Faith Dangerous?

Lee Moses

In the aftermath of 9-11 and subsequent terror attacks, there have been many efforts from those in power to avert the finger of blame from pointing at the Islamic religion and their holy book, the Qur’an. Some have claimed that Islam is a “religion of peace,” and therefore not responsible for influencing the conduct of these and other countless Muslim terrorists. Others have tried to say that all religions are equally bad. Professed Christians, apparently in an effort to make a show of charity, have asserted that Christianity has been just as guilty as Islam in promoting terrorism. Atheists, however, have used the events of 911 as an opportunity to gloat. Many atheists have claimed that all religion is evil and will continue to result in evil, citing 9-11 as proof. One article advocating this notion asserts, “Faith is dangerous.”

Predictably, those trying to say that Christianity is equally evil with Islam will point to such events as the Crusades, the Inquisition, the Holocaust, and such like as proof. But were any of these prompted by Christianity, the system of religion? The basis of true Christianity is the New Testament, and any Christian activity must be authorized by the New Testament (Col. 3:17; 2 Pet. 1:3; Jude 3). There is no New Testament authority for anyone to wage a “holy war” in the name of Jesus. Contrarily, when Peter attempted to engage in physical combat for Jesus, Jesus told him, “Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword” (Matt. 26:52). The New Testament instructs each believer to “suffer as a Christian” (1 Pet. 4:16), not “as a Christian, cause others to suffer.” Time and again, the New Testament instructs mankind not to retaliate in vengeance; much less does it encourage physically attacking others unprovoked (Matt. 5:38-44; Luke 9:52-56; Rom. 12:17,19; 1 Thess. 5:15; 1 Pet. 2:23; 3:9). Meting out justice upon earth is a charge which has been specifically enjoined upon civil governments (Rom. 13:1-4). Christianity is a religion which is impossible to impose upon another by physical force, and nowhere does the New Testament encourage such. Those who have claimed to be doing God’s will by slaying unbelievers merely act in their own self interest. The Crusades were supposedly to reclaim the “holy land” from the Turks; however, there is no physical holy land in Christianity — only a spiritual holy land (John 4:21-24). The Crusades likely appealed to the masses as an opportunity to plunder great fortunes during a time of famine in Europe, and appealed to pope Urban II as an opportunity to increase the power and prestige of the papacy.

The previously-mentioned article (“Faith is Dangerous”) derives the following as its final conclusion:

Peaceful coexistence with tolerance between Islamic and the western pro-Christian peoples would be considerably enhanced if both societies would reject faith-based thinking and adopt pro-fact cultures using the scientific method with emphasis on critical thinking supported by verifiable evidence...Blind faith is the problem. Faith is promoted by religious clerics to prevent inquiry and rational thinking in order to protect insupportable religious dogma. Faith is an obstacle in the way of intellectual growth, tolerance and consequently, world peace.

This statement would be true if the writer did not interchangeably use “faith” and “blind faith.” Blind faith is a belief/system of belief which cannot be supported because it is not based on evidence. If people would only understand that true faith (Christianity) depends upon verifiable evidence! (Acts 17:2,11; 18:4,19; Heb. 11:1; 1

John 4:1). True faith does not cause people to act irrationally. True faith does not cause people to murder one another. True faith can be proven, demands that people live righteously, and is the only way one can be saved. Is faith dangerous?

How to Enter the Church

L.O. Sanderson

The church of the Lord, which includes all those purchased by the blood of Christ (Acts 20:28) is also designated as the **body** of Christ (Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22-23) and the **family** in heaven and earth (Eph. 3:15), its members being children of God (Rom. 8:16-17). That process by which we are united with the body and born into the family must be the same means by which we enter the church.

The phrase and practice of “joining the church” is unknown to the Bible, and the matter of “opening the doors of the church” is even more foreign to the Scriptures. Christ, the good shepherd of the flock, which is the church (Acts 20:28) is the door. No one enters but by Jesus Christ! To enter by Christ, the door, certainly demands that we enter by His authority, for all authority is given unto Him (Matt. 28:18), and by His requirements, for no man comes except he be drawn, and he is drawn by teaching (John 6:44-45; Rom. 10:13-17).

Furthermore, Christ, who has all power, gave to Peter and the other apostles the keys to the kingdom, the church (Matt. 16:19) and Peter opened the doors of the church on Pentecost to the Jews (Acts 2) and at the house of Cornelius to the Gentiles (Acts 10). The doors have not been closed since, and certainly could not be opened when they are already open. In Scriptural fact, God adds to the church (Acts 2:41, 47; 5:14; 11:24) when we have met the requirements for entrance.

The Requirements of Christ

Surely no one doubts the right of Christ to make the terms of admission since the church belongs to Him and all authority is given to Him. Hence, our interest is, “What does He require?” He is the door and we must enter in harmony with His will.

Faith is required. Jesus said, “If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins” (John 8:24). Again, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). We must believe, for “without faith it is impossible to please him” (Heb. 11:6). Faith is the first step toward righteousness (Rom 10:10) and, necessarily the first step toward the church.

Repentance is required. Christ requires that we must “repent” or “all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3). Repentance is a change of will (Matt. 21:28-31) and leads to life (Acts 11:18). It is but reasonable that God now “commandeth all men everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30-31).

Confession of Christ is commanded. In Matthew 16:16, Peter set an example for which Christ pronounced him “blessed” and Christ Himself promised that “whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 10:32; Luke 12:8). Confession with the mouth leads to salvation (Rom. 10:10) and must, therefore, precede the saved state.

Baptism is enjoined. Christ, being baptized Himself, has plainly set our example (Matt. 3:13-16). Baptism was the first act in beginning His short life's work. His last instructions (and surely we have respect for His last words) were, “Go... preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:15-16). Baptism is in order to be saved, and is the requirement of Christ.

Baptized Into the Body

The church is the body, and the body is the church. In one Spirit (or by the authority of the same Spirit) we are “baptized into one body” (1 Cor. 12:13). To be in Christ is to be in His body, and we are “baptized into Christ” (Gal. 3:27).

One cannot enter any church claiming Christian faith without baptism of some sort. Christ, the door of the flock, requires baptism on our part to enter His own body, **the** church.

Born Into the Family

The church is the family of God, and certainly it is by birth that we enter the family, naturally or spiritually. We cannot enter the kingdom of God, the church, without rebirth. To be born again is to be born of water and the Spirit (John 3:3-5). Let “Spirit” mean *Spirit* and “water” mean *water*. We are begotten by the Spirit through the word of God (1 Cor. 4:15; Jas. 1:18; Luke 8:11) and we come forth from the watery grave a new born creature (Rom. 6:3-6; Gal. 3:27; 2 Cor. 5:17). Thus we are born **both** of water and the Spirit. When we are born again, we have no need to “join” the family—we are already in it. When the Spirit, by His words, leads us to be baptized into the body of Christ, the family of God, we are then children of God and should never join anything.

The Apostles Understood

Peter, to whom the keys of the kingdom were given, understood the requirements of Christ, and so in opening, as it were, the door to the assembly of God, uttered this command: “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38). What Peter bound on earth is what was first bound in heaven (Matt. 16:19). Therefore, repentance and baptism are bound in heaven! When an entrance was permitted the Gentiles (Acts 10) Peter “commanded them to be baptized” (Acts 10:48). He commanded **them** because Christ commanded **him** (Matt. 29:19-20).

Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, understood the will of Christ. He taught that we are baptized into Christ (Gal. 3:27), that we are baptized into the body (1 Cor. 12:13), and that we are buried with Christ in baptism (Rom. 6:3-6). Certainly the act of baptism, according to Paul, was preceded by faith (Eph. 3:12) and by repentance (Acts 26:20). He also urged confession in the strongest terms. He taught that if we do not confess Christ here, we will be forced to do so at the end of the way (Phil. 2:11; Rom. 14:11).

Others understood the terms. Philip required faith and baptism on the part of the eunuch (Acts 8:35-39) and Ananias urged a believing, repenting Saul to “arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins” (Acts 22:16).

Obeying the Gospel

Christ made the necessary sacrifice of His own precious blood and He is the door to fellowship with God. He has all authority and has given the simplest requirements. God gave His only begotten Son. Christ died, was buried, and arose again and the Spirit revealed this gospel. It is now ours to obey.

God will take vengeance on those who obey not the gospel (2 Thess. 1:8-9). There is but one gospel and the wrath of God falls on those who change it (Gal. 1:6-9). Those who are changed from the servants of Satan to servants of righteousness have “obeyed from the hear” a form of that gospel (Rom. 6:17).

To obey the form without faith would not please God. To be baptized without repentance would not be acceptable. To fail to confess Christ will result in His denial of us before God. Our conclusion, then, must be that, by faith, repentance, confession and baptism (on our part) and the blood of Christ (on God's part), we enter God's family, the body of Christ, the church of our Lord, with God doing the adding (Acts 2:47).

Life is Like a Vapor

Gary L. Grizzell

Life is like a vapor which appears only momentarily. It appears only to disappear. This is the teaching of James 4:13-17 with reference to the brevity of life. Life is like a flower of the grass in that it appears in a beautiful form and then fades away when the sun scorches it. We are called upon to endure the trials of life and then we shall receive the crown of life (eternal life).

Paul taught that the outward man is perishing, but that the afflictions which we suffer are but for a moment (2 Cor. 4:16-18). This life in length is but for a moment, in contrast with the life eternal of heaven. Our reward for living the faithful Christian life and facing up to tribulations and afflictions with faith, courage and hope is the

reception of the eternal weight of glory. We are not to place first in our lives the things seen, but the things not seen are to take the priority in our minds. The eternal is more important than the temporal. Man that is born of woman is of few days (Job 14:1).

In view of the brevity (shortness) of life, consider the following Bible facts upon which we can count:

1. God Exists.

There is an all-powerful, everywhere present and all-knowing God (Gen. 1:1). He is the creator of the universe. Men are without excuse to reject the fact of His existence (Rom. 1:19-20). When man fell into sin, God sent His Son to save him from his sins (John 3:16). Our belief in God need not ever waiver (Heb. 11:6). He has promised to reward the diligent seeker of Himself and of His will for man.

2. The Bible Is The Inspired Word of God.

It is written for our instruction (2 Tim. 3:16-17). The New Testament gives us all things that pertain to life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3). It gives us guidance and comfort: “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psa. 119:105).

3. Jesus Christ is God's Only Begotten Son and Our Savior.

At His baptism God the Father said, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:17). He is the one and only mediator between God and man (1 Tim. 2:5).

4. Life Is Short. (Jas. 4:13-17).

5. Death Is Certain.

“It is appointed unto men once to die but after this the judgment.” This is an appointment that no one will miss (Heb. 9:27). “The wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:23).

6. Eternity Is Long.

If we obey Him, then when He comes in the clouds on the last day, we shall ever be with Him in eternity (1 Thess. 4:17). Jesus is presently preparing a place for us (John 14:1-3). Thus, heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people. We may look forward to an inheritance incorruptible which fades not away, reserved in heaven for us (1 Pet. 1:3-4).

We Can be Certain of Our Salvation

In a world of uncertainty we do not need to be uncertain. We may be certain that we may be certain. Jesus teaches we may “know” the truth which makes us free from man's greatest problem—sin (John 8:31-32). The reason is because we have been given these Bible truths. These Bible facts serve as an anchor to our souls (Heb. 6:19).

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

Editor's Travels and Writings

We led singing at Willow, Okla. Sunday morning, Jan. 5, and preached that evening at Yukon, Okla. Illness prevented us from preaching at Eastside in Lexington, Okla. Sunday morning, Jan. 12. On the Lord's Day, Jan. 19, we preached at Willow, Okla. in morning worship and again at Yukon, Okla. that evening. We ended the month of January by preaching at Chillicothe, Texas on Sunday morning, Jan. 26.

After more than a year, our new book, “*The Thing That Hath Been...*” is now at the printer and should be available by Feb. 10. It parallels the cycle of apostasy in the 19th century with apostasy today. Its contents will surprise most people, be rejected as “radical,” “legalistic,” “harsh,” or “mean” by many readers, infuriate a lot of others, and perhaps open the eyes of some brethren, but its facts and conclusions cannot be refuted.

ed. It will be mailed **FREE OF CHARGE** to churches in the United States who request it and are willing to pay the postage.

“What Saith The Scriptures?”

Harrell Davidson

The question this month is: **“If we have guardian angels protecting us and also protecting us from bad angels, why does God allow harm to come to us?”**

Thanks so much for this question that was sent originally to our editor, Jerry Brewer. Of course, the question assumes that there are angels today for which assumption there is no proof. The study is longer than we have editorial room to cite every case that we could use in investigation.

The history of *angel* or *angels* starts in Genesis 16:7 with this phrase “And the angel of the LORD...” There almost 200 such passages and almost 100 times that these words are used in the Holy Text of God’s eternal Word. Concurrent with the phrase the “angel of the Lord” is the “angel of God.”

Adam Clarke correctly comments on these passages this way:

That Jesus Christ, in a body suited to the dignity of his nature, frequently appeared to the patriarchs, has been already intimated. That the person mentioned here was greater than any created being is sufficiently evident from the following particulars: 1. From his promising to perform what God alone could do, and foretelling what God alone could know; "I will multiply thy seed exceedingly," &c., Ge 16:10; "Thou art with child, and shalt bear a son," &c., Ge 16:11; "He will be a wild man," &c., Ge 16:12. All this shows a prescience which is proper to God alone.

In reference to Hagar in Genesis 16, she completely understood that this was something only God could and would do, for she said, “And she called the name of the LORD that spake unto her, Thou God seest me: for she said, Have I also here looked after him that seeth me” (Gen. 16:13).

The fundamental meaning of the word angel is “messenger”. *Angel* is found over 90 times in the Old Testament and almost every time the angel is described as “an angel of the Lord, angel of God” or “Mine angel” in reference to either God or the Lord. It was an angel of the Lord that spoke to Balaam that both the donkey and Balaam saw. “Angels” in the plural sense is used 19 times in the Old testament and again, staying with the context, they were angels of the Lord or of God.

In the New Testament, Matthew 1:20, we find this terminology: “But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost”. On and on these expressions are used wherein an angel of the Lord appeared in a burning bush (cf. Exod. 3:1-10, Acts 7: 30), opened prison doors (cf. Acts 5:19), an angel smote and commanded (cf. Acts 12:7, 8), and an angel of God stood by Paul (cf. Acts 27:23). All these things are not meant to be exclusive but rather a digest of the usage of and descriptions of angels' work in Bible times.

We do not know the names of all the angels. They were servants—messengers—of God assigned a task to carry out, like a message to be delivered, like giving instructions etc. Angels were made free moral agents in that they could choose to obey the Lord or not. Some left their first estate and fell away from God through their wish to not serve God faithfully (Jude 1:6; 2 Pet. 2:4).

On 2 Peter 2:4 where Peter wrote: “For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment,” Albert Barnes commented this way:

The apostle now proceeds to the proof of the proposition that these persons

would be punished. It is to be remembered that they had been, or were even then, professing Christians, though they had really, if not in form, apostatized from the faith, (2 Pet. 2:20-22;) and a part of the proofs, therefore, are derived from the cases of those who had apostatized from the service of God. He appeals, therefore, to the case of the angels that had revolted. Neither their former rank, their dignity, nor their holiness, saved them from being thrust down to hell; and if God punished them so severely, then false teachers could not hope to escape. The apostle, by the angels here, refers undoubtedly to a revolt in heaven—an event referred to in Jude 1:6, and everywhere implied in the Scriptures. When that occurred, however—why they revolted, or what was the number of the apostates—we have not the slightest information, and on these points conjecture would be useless. In the supposition that it occurred, there is no improbability; for there is nothing more absurd in the belief that angels have revolted than that men have; and if there are evil angels, as there is no more reason to doubt than that there are evil men, it is morally certain that they must have fallen at some period from a state of holiness, for it cannot be believed that God made them wicked.

From all the evidence in God's Holy Word, angels were used in various ways before all of revelation—the revealing of the Bible was complete, and there is no evidence that they were used after its completion. There is nothing new to be revealed. God's Word saves today through the gospel (Rom. 1:16) that comes about through preaching by individuals—not angels. No angel ever told one what to do to be saved even the Lord Himself did not tell anyone what to do to be saved such as Saul of Tarsus who was told where to find a preacher (cf. Acts 8).

All these things prove that angels today are no more than a folly in the fervent imagination of the mind of man. What need would we have that the Bible does not address? Please think about this!

We do learn from the evidence herein presented that if angels—messengers of God could fall, then surely man can also (Gal. 5:4: 2 Pet. 2:4). Many religious groups believe that one cannot fall from grace or from the faith regardless of what sins one commits and that argument would put us above the angelic host of the Almighty God!

We neither have bad or good guardian angels today. There is no scriptural evidence of such. For a moment think about a terrible accident. If we have guardian angels today, did that angel go to sleep and let us have the accident? Or, did a bad angel take charge and cause the accident? Either notion is foolish to say the least and without Scriptural support. Things sometimes happen by the choice that we or others around us make like a drunken driver can take someone's life by the choice he made to drink alcohol or take dope. Bad things happen but that is not put before us by angels but by choices that we or others make.

Finally, listen to the Hebrews writer: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds" (Heb 1:1-2) and Jesus is so far above the angels of God for angels of God were commanded to worship the Lord (Heb. 1: 4-6). There are no guardian angels today either good or bad. Thanks for the question.

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

They Cannot Learn by Observation

Stephen Settle

It is not uncommon these days to hear someone say, "I don't believe there is any God." Only a few days ago a German man past middle age came into the store my wife and I run to get a cold drink. While he was taking his drink, we talked. In his talk he used

profane language. I pointed out a card on the wall on which I had printed, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." He promptly informed me that he did not believe such a being existed. Then I asked him who it was he was calling on to "damn" things. "Oh, tot is shust a habit," he said.

Then I asked him if he thought the mind of man is the greatest mind in the universe. At once, he said he did not believe that. Then I asked him to tell me who has that greater mind and where he dwells. He evaded an answer by asking me if I believed the stories of Noah and Jonah. On receiving a direct affirmative answer, he left the store in disgust, saying, "Tot's enough for me, tot's enough for me." And so it is. The unbounded faith of anyone in God's word is enough, and too much, for the infidel. They will soon turn their backs upon you.

But why cannot these men learn from observation the same wonderful lesson that David learned? It was probably on some clear night when the moon was full, and the heavens were presenting the most glorious view to man. David, that humble, God-fearing king of Israel was out viewing the overhanging glory of God. His very soul was so deeply touched that he was made to exclaim, "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man that thou visitest him?" (Psa. 8:3-4).

The very sight of the heavens filled David with thoughts of the greatness and goodness of God, and of the littleness and dependence of man. How different it is with the "wise" men of today. They take a look at the earth only. They see only the achievements of men—the great inventions they have brought out, and the worldly wisdom to which they think they have attained, and they exclaim, "When we view the works of great men, the mighty deeds they have done, and the wonderful knowledge they have acquired, who is God that we should consider Him, or even believe in Him?" Then they boldly say, "There is no God."

Well, it took this same David to rightly describe these men. He said, "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God. They have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good" (Psa. 14:1). They say in their hearts, "There is no God," and they blaze it abroad by tongue and pen; yet there has never been even one argument in favor of the existence of God overthrown.

The infidel is on the negative side of this question, and it is his business to show that the position and arguments of the affirmative are untrue and unreasonable. He does not have to prove anything. It is his duty to disprove. But who among all the infidels of all ages has shaken the Bible doctrine that God exists and that He reigns supreme in this unbounded universe?

By his infidelity, the infidel has never done any good. He builds no schools, churches, alms houses, or hospitals. He does nothing to advance civilization, but rather retards its advance. He does nothing to restrain crime, but rather encourages it. The only real impetus to civilization, and the only real restraint upon crime is faith in God. Destroy that one element from the human heart, and chaos will reign the world over.

But the infidel may say, "Not nearly all of the nations of the earth believe in or know the God of the Bible." Even if we admit that to be true, it disproves nothing of the Bible claim that God is. No nation has been found, and none exists without some kind of worship. Without exception, they all recognize the existence of some kind of supreme being and worship that being. They have had no revelations from their gods, but have devised their religion from their own hearts.

The principle of worship and the thought of a supreme being was planted in the human heart at creation, and no condition of civilization, or station in life has ever been able to dislodge that principle. The existence of false and absurd religions and false gods disproves no argument in favor of the True God and genuine religion, any more than a counterfeit dollar disproves the existence of the genuine dollar. In fact, there could be no counterfeit of anything if the genuine article did not exist.

What would the atheist think of the reasoning of a man who pointed to the many counterfeit dollars in circulation and argue from that premise that there is no such thing as

a genuine dollar? Such a man would be a subject of ridicule wherever he might be.

Why can not these men, like David, look into the heavens and say, “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork?” (Psa. 19:1 ASV). But instead of becoming wise by observation, they seem to become more ignorant. They seem able to accept anything that comes to them as scientific education, but reject all divine wisdom and revelation.

What a dark, gloomy and chaotic world this would be if atheism were universally accepted! But that can never be. Yet they can do—and are doing—much harm and will be rewarded according to their works.

“...Or Give me Death”

Travis Allen

Death is a reality. Even the most hardened skeptic will acknowledge that death is, and that it must eventually come to all men. Those few men in world history who have tried to avert death by searching for perpetual youth have been scorned by the more level headed among their fellows. No matter what medical science may discover to prolong life, not even the most optimistic scientist seriously believes that any revolutionary discovery will make it possible for men to live forever in their physical state.

Everyone recognizes the grim finality of death. Death—the loss of the senses so that no longer is the victim able to see, to feel, to touch, to enjoy that which is most precious—physical life itself. Death—the dimming of the intellect so that no more will the one who lies so cold and motionless be able to reason and to appreciate the value of his reasoning. Death—that state in which these bodies which we value so highly disintegrate and return to the dust. “It is appointed unto men once to die” (Heb. 9:27).

The Second Death

But there is a death worse than physical death. This is the **second death** spoken of in the Word of God. While it is appointed unto all men once to die—except those who are alive at Christ's second coming (1 Thess. 4:17)—a second and more terrible death is in store for some. What is this death? Let the Scriptures answer: “But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: **which is the second death**” (Rev. 21:8).

From the foregoing passage it must be concluded that the second death is none other than the “everlasting punishment” referred to by the Saviour (Matt. 25:46). Can you imagine anything more terrible than to suffer the second death? You believe in the reality of a physical death, and the Bible teaches that it exists. The second death must be equally real, for it is described in the same Book. If one is accepted as truth, the other must also be.

“Give Me Liberty...”

The words in our title are taken from Patrick Henry's famous speech in the Virginia House of Burgesses when he said, “Give me liberty or give me death!” Uninspired as it is, this sentence potently presents the alternatives in reach of every man—liberty from sin or death in hell. He who fails to find the first must suffer the second.

Children of God enjoy a liberty of sort that is had by no other people. Paul speaks of, “the glorious liberty of the children of God” (Rom. 8:21), and of, “our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 2:4); and he gives his brethren this admonition: “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage” (Gal. 5:1).

Already, all doubt is erased as to who will suffer the second death—the unbelieving and murderers and sinners of other classes. The Book also points out that, “he that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death” (Rev. 2:11). Now, to overcome is to gain the mastery over, and thus to become free from anything. Then, since it is the child of God—or Christian—who has liberty in Christ, it must follow that only the

Christian who steadfastly maintains his freedom from sin—that liberty which Christ bought with His own blood—can hope to overcome, thereby escaping the second death. Having accepted these facts, you can do nothing wiser than to investigate the Word of God, which is “the perfect law of liberty” (Jas. 1:25), and by which all men shall be judged (Jas. 2:12; John 12:48). These are the plain, unvarnished facts about the matter. You may find the way to, “escape the corruption that is in the world through lust” and finally enjoy eternal life, or you may ignore the teachings of the Scriptures, fail to overcome, and be punished with eternal death. Which do you prefer? Liberty or death? “Give me liberty.”

God Commands Unity

David Ray

One of the biggest complaints about Christianity, or that which is perceived as Christianity, is the division among its adherents. There are so many religious organizations claiming to be Christian, yet there's no agreement. Even within the Lord's church division exists. Hence the question, “Why should I be a Christian when you all can't even agree amongst yourselves?”

Can there really ever be unity? Yes, there can. Actually, unity isn't just a good idea; it's commanded! Consider 1 Corinthians 1:10-17. In this passage, Paul identifies a problem at Corinth. “It hath been declared unto me of you...that there are contentions among you” (v. 11). What contentions, quarrels, disagreements were happening? “Every one of you saith...I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.” They were dividing over their leaders and which one had converted them! This is the spiritual equivalent of two kids arguing, “My dad can beat up your dad” when their dads are friends! All four of these men taught the same thing. This was about pride, which should never exist in the Lord's church (1 Tim. 6:4 says the proud man “knoweth nothing”)!

These factious brethren in Corinth were still brethren. We aren't told in this chapter of any doctrinal differences being taught, only that they were claiming different leaders within the church. So, even if two groups are teaching the same thing, just divided by leader affiliation, it's still sinful. For members of the Lord's church, that means we must always strive to “keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph 4:3).

In the religious world, there seems to be an unlimited number of opposing doctrines being taught in the name of Christianity. And the usual way of dealing with these differences is to not deal with them at all—just agree to disagree, or simply say “we're all taking different paths to the same place” (which allows them to accept and even revel in their disunity). But clearly this is **not** what God says! Notice verse 10.

The command (i.e., the solution to the problem in v. 11-12): “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name (authority) of our Lord Jesus Christ....” This isn't just Paul's opinion; he appeals to Christ's authority. Next, he expresses the requirement of unity and he does so **five times** in this one verse!

- “That ye all speak the same thing.” He was obviously referring to our doctrine. Those who profess to be Christians should never be saying/teaching different things.
- “And that there be no divisions among you.” If we all speak the same thing, there should be no divisions! How can there be? **All** who claim to be Christians should look alike, doctrinally. In the church, there should never be groups, cliques, etc., holding to different beliefs or following different leaders, even ones who are **not** divided. This creates division where it doesn't otherwise exist!
- “But that ye be perfectly joined together” (i.e., made complete together). All the members together make up the church; we ought to feel incomplete without one another. So, how are we to be one? How are we to be “perfectly joined together”?

“In the same mind”—this refers to our thoughts and feelings. We agree on everything doctrinally! This is always our goal! And it takes effort! Now notice the last part of this.

- “And in the same judgment”—this refers to our knowledge, advice, and **decision-making**. We can and should come to the same doctrinal conclusions.

But how can this be done? This clearly is **not** simply agreeing to disagree; it's **true** unity in thought, belief, decision, and practice! According to so many people with whom I've studied over the years, this verse presents an impossibility. “Pie in the sky” is the phrase I've heard to describe this; it's just not realistic!

But God doesn't give impossible commands! Instead, He tells us how; and it implies a standard of authority—God's Word. Colossians 3:17 teaches us that we must do everything with Christ's authority. 1 Peter 4:11 says “if any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God” (i.e., according to the Scriptures). Recall that 1 Cor. 1:10 says to “speak the same thing.” Therefore, we must speak **only** according to the authority of Christ, which is found in the New Testament, not only in His words, but in the words of His inspired apostles (cf. Luke 10:16).

Paul's reasoning for this command of unity is found in verses 13-17: because Christ is not divided in any way! “Is Christ divided” (v.13)? No! Where division exists, both parties cannot both be right! Either one or both are wrong, either doctrinally or for causing a division in fellowship (as with these Corinthian brethren).

As a side note, Paul goes on to say in vv. 14-17 that, because of this pride in the Corinthian church, he was glad he'd only baptized a few, so people wouldn't claim that he baptized in his own name. As we think about the disunity in the “Christian” world today, the incorrect views regarding baptism are certainly at the heart of the division between the Lord's one church and all others. Most believers claim one is saved without baptism, thereby assigning a far lesser importance to it than Scripture does (cf. Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:21). But here, if baptism doesn't matter, why did Paul bring it up? He did so in regard to the Corinthians' arguing about the leaders they followed, i.e., those men who'd been instrumental in **saving their souls**. If their baptism wasn't the point at which they were saved (as the above scriptures demonstrate), there'd be no reason to bring it up. Paul's reference to it actually shows the vital importance of baptism.

So, what happens when unity doesn't exist?

First, we must recognize that there can be no unity between light and darkness (2 Cor. 6:14-16). The Lord's church cannot have unity with those who are not Christians, whether they be members of denominations or those who have no religious affiliation. 1 Corinthians 1:10 explicitly condemns division in the body. And “division” is the foundational meaning of denominationalism. 1 Corinthians 11:19 states that, where truth and error exist, there **must** be division. This is not desirable; it's simply a reality. If a person or group refuses to obey the Bible (particularly the plan of salvation and baptism), then we cannot pursue unity with them. We can and should, however, pursue **future** unity by teaching them the truth and encouraging them to put away religious error and obey the gospel.

What about a lack of unity in the church? This was obviously the situation Paul was dealing with in Corinth. These were brethren, having obeyed the gospel, but were now beginning the process of division. And division can arise over doctrinal or optional matters.

When the division is over matters of opinion (optional matters).

There will be issues that are a matter of opinion (e.g., when there are multiple expedient ways to fulfill a command). Some examples are time of worship, order of worship, location of worship, old songs or new songs, number of songs/prayers, length of sermon, etc. Love should be the motivation in these matters (cf. 1 Cor. 8). Here we can agree to disagree. We cannot, however, bind laws God didn't bind (e.g., eating in the church building, located preacher, Bible classes, number of communion cups, etc.). When we bind where God has not bound in these matters of opinion, this becomes legalism, which is sin and therefore becomes no longer a matter of opinion!

When the division is over **matters of doctrine**, we cannot just agree to disagree. This is how denominations form. Both cannot be right. We must be willing to study the issue with open minds, without being prideful (God resists the proud—Jas. 4:6)! If a brother (or brethren) doesn't accept the truth, we must reprove him (Eph. 5:11) and restore him (Gal. 6:1) to the best of our ability. If he still refuses, Titus 3:10 says "A man that is a heretic (factious, divisive) after the first and second admonition reject" (i.e., disfellowship cf. 1 Tim. 1:20; Rom. 16:17). Failure to do so can divide and destroy a congregation.

A member has the responsibility to confront false teaching, to "reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:2). This was written to Timothy; but Timothy was also told to take what he'd heard from Paul and commit it to faithful men who would teach others (2:2). So, sin must be confronted.

A member has the responsibility to leave. If the congregation won't change, eventually its "lampstand" will be removed (i.e., its status as a congregation of the church of Christ; Rev. 2:5). 2 John 9-11 teaches us that, where they do not hold to the doctrine of Christ, we cannot be a part of them or we will be "partaker of his evil deeds." Too often these days, otherwise sound members are remaining in congregations that teach error and have fallen away, and thereby partake of their sin by their affiliation. These brethren need to make the right decision to remove themselves from such congregations.

The above instructions are biblical but in no way exhaustive. Many situations arise that can jeopardize unity and must be handled to the best of our ability. Division is **not** pleasing to God. However, true unity exists when both parties are walking in the light (1 John 1:7). This is the key. Each of us must live our lives in obedience to the truth of the Scriptures. Then we cannot help but have peace. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity" (Psa. 133:1).

New downloadable documents are now on our website at www.thegospelpreceptor.com

New sermons have also been added to our You Tube channel at www.youtube.com/channel/UCWMJ7eHqllzMlvj2rtk-0jg

The Nature And Purpose Of Baptism

Marshall Butz

Paul declares there is only one baptism. "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all" (Eph. 4:4-6). If there is one Lord and one God (as we know there is), this passage teaches there is also one baptism. What is it? It is well to remember, in the first place, that the English word *baptism* is not a translation of some Greek or Hebrew word; it is, instead, a transliteration. That is, it is the Greek word *baptisma* spelled with English letters. The translators of the Bible, for one reason or another, were unwilling to translate the Greek word literally, therefore they simply substituted English letters for Greek and left it up to the reader to determine the meaning of the word *baptism*.

Thayer, whose Greek-English Lexicon is recognized as an authority by all scholars, states that the Greek word *baptisma* (is) a word peculiar to New Testament and ecclesiastical writing, (and means) immersion, submersion." He further states that the Greek word *baptismos* from the same root, a word translated in Mark 7:4 as *washings* with reference to the Mosaic law has to do with "a washing, purification effected by means of water." Thayer continues with reference to the transliteration *baptisms* in Hebrews 6:2 pointing out that this passage, which condemns the preaching of baptisms "seems to mean an exposition of the difference between the washings prescribed by the Mosaic law and Christian baptism." In other words, in Hebrews 6:2 the preach-

ing of *baptisms* which is condemned is primarily, the Mosaic rites which Christ condemns in Mark 7:4.

We should remember, however, that a person who has never seen a Greek-English lexicon nor had the Greek words *baptisma*, *baptismos* and *baptidzo* explained to him can determine from the New Testament exactly **what** baptism is. Let us examine a few scriptures: In Mark 1:9-11 we read,

And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in the Jordan. And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens rent asunder. and the Spirit as a dove descending upon him: and a voice came out of the heavens, Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased.

Now answer this if you will: Why was Jesus in the Jordan River? “To be baptized, of course,” you say. Would it have been necessary to be in the river and come up out of the water if Jesus was baptized by sprinkling or pouring as some insist?

Furthermore, in Romans 6:4 Paul states: “We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life.” God, through Paul, again emphasizes that baptism is a burial when He says, “having been buried with him in baptism, wherein ye were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead” (Col. 2:12 ASV). A little later in the same epistle, Colossians 3:1, Paul reiterates the burial aspect of baptism by saying, “If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated on the right hand of God” (ASV). From these last two passages we see that baptism is a symbolic burial which through faith in God brings the sinner into contact with the blood of Christ which cleanses us from sin and from which we are raised to walk a new life.

Let us look at a familiar passage, Acts 8:36-39, which reads:

And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water; and the eunuch saith, Behold, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they both went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip; and the eunuch saw him no more, for he went on his way rejoicing.

I ask you: Why did they go down into the water? You answer it!

We have shown thus there is **one** scriptural baptism which is immersion; now we proceed to find out what baptism does for the recipient. Thayer, in speaking of “Christian baptism,” writes,

This, according to the view of the apostles, is a rite of sacred immersion, commanded by Christ, by which men confessing their sins and professing their faith in Christ are born again by the Holy Spirit unto a new life, come into the fellowship of Christ and the church (1 Cor. 12:13), and are made partakers of eternal salvation.

Scriptural baptism has only **one** purpose, namely, satisfaction of the command of Christ which demonstrates our faith in Him and washes away our sins. Consider again Colossians 2:12 where the writer points out that baptism is accomplished through faith in the working of God wherein we are made alive again, God “having forgiven us all our trespasses.” (See verses 13-15.) Reading part of the first epistle of Peter, chapter 3, we see that baptism through faith saves us:

When the long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water; which also after a true likeness doth now save you, even baptism, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the interrogation of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 3:20-21).

The Bible is replete with passages which show clearly the purpose of baptism. While on earth, Christ told his apostles “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned” Mark 16:15-16 ASV). Only one conclusion can be reached from this statement and that is that both belief and baptism are necessary to salvation. An unbeliever would not and could not be baptized anyway. (See Acts 8:37.) On Pentecost following the resurrection, Peter, when asked by the believing Jews, “What shall we do,” answered, “Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38 ASV). “They then that received (or accepted) his word were baptized: and there were added unto them that day about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:41 ASV).

After Saul of Tarsus had seen the Lord on the road to Damascus and received Christ's command “Enter into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do” (Acts 9:6), he entered Damascus and waited three days for instructions. Finally, Ananias, a devout preacher, came to Saul and told him, “Why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name” (Acts 22:16 ASV). What did Saul have to do? He had to be baptized, having already believed as a result of the vision on the road to Damascus. Why did he need to be baptized? To “wash away” his sins.

Paul was also baptized to get into the body of Christ, for writing to the Galatians he says, “For ye are all sons of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ” (Gal. 3:26-27). To the Corinthians Paul states,

For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of the body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free; and were all made to drink of one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many (1 Cor. 12:12-14).

We have here two lessons: (1) the oneness of the body through individual members, regardless of race, accepting Christ, and (2) that we who are in the body of Christ got there through baptism!

“Quoting A Roman Catholic”

Luther W. Martin

“If it is about the Catholics, ask a Catholic,” is an expression which has been used by those under Papal dominion. They seem to consider it unfair if some non-Catholic is quoted or referred to as a basis of some position or statement in the discussion of the Roman Church. Consequently, in this article, it is our intention to copy directly from a Catholic scholar concerning some issues upon which we do not agree.

First, may we remind our readers that it was on July 13, 1870, that the doctrine of Papal Infallibility was voted upon. Previous to this session there had been as many as 744 Council Members in attendance, but only 601 were present when it was brought to a vote. Four hundred fifty one voted “yes,” 88 voted “no” and 62 voted “yes with amendments.” On July 16, 1870, an amendment was added to state that the Pope's infallibility did not rest upon nor issue from the consent of the church. On July 17, 1870, 56 bishops sent a written protest to the Pope. The evening of that same day, 116 bishops left Rome, rather than vote upon the question. On July 18, 1870, the final session of the Vatican Council met and voted upon the issue. Only 536 of the original 744 were present. Five hundred thirty-three voted “yes” and two voted “no.”

From the above factual information, it is evident that there was considerable division and dissension in the ranks of the Vatican Council, and thus within the Roman Church herself, over the Papal Infallibility question. Objectively, the diverse views on the subject in 1870 might have been classified as follows: (1) Those who regarded the belief in Papal Infallibility as a necessity, and any view to the contrary as heresy. (2) Those who desired the doctrine but who respected those who opposed it up to the time of its dogmatic definition as good Catholics. (3) Those who personally accepted the truth of the

doctrine, but denied the opportuneness of declaring it as an article of faith. (4) This class comprised the immense majority of Catholics at that time, who had formed no personal opinion either for or against the doctrine. (5) This group was willing to submit to the doctrine although up to that time, had not been able to convince themselves of its truth. (6) Those who opposed the doctrine of Papal Infallibility to such an extent that they doubted the ecumenical character of any Council that might promulgate such a dogma. (7) The last group so opposed the idea of Papal Infallibility, that they also rejected the infallibility of the Roman Church itself, Council and all.

Among those Catholic subjects who were not willing to submit to the new doctrine of Papal Infallibility, was Dr. John Joseph Ignatius Dollinger, who was at the time, professor in the University of Munich. Dr. Dollinger had been a Roman Catholic priest since the year 1822. The following spring of 1871, after the Vatican Council had disbanded, Dr. Dollinger was summoned by his bishop to submit his adherence to the dogma of Papal Infallibility within ten days. He refused to accept the doctrine for the reason that it is irreconcilable with the scriptures as interpreted by the Fathers, and with the beliefs and tradition of churchmen in all ages; it is supported principally by forged documents; is contradicted by the doctrines published by two general councils and several popes in the 15th century; is incompatible with the constitution of Bavaria and several other European States; was enacted by a council which was not free; and tends to the repression of man's intellectual activity and to a temporal and spiritual terrorism. Dr. Dollinger was, therefore, excommunicated. He was no novice, he had been a Roman Catholic priest and scholar for almost a half-century. Consequently, when we quote from his writings, we are "Quoting A Catholic."

Dr. Dollinger On Forgeries

...In the middle of the 9th century — about 846 — arose the huge fabrication of the Isidorian decretals, which had results far beyond what its author contemplated, and gradually, but surely, changed the whole constitution and government of the Church. It would be difficult to find in all history a second instance of so successful, and yet so clumsy a forgery. For three centuries past it has been exposed, yet the principles it introduced and brought into practice have taken such deep root in the soil of the Church, and have so grown into her life, that the exposure of the fraud has produced no result in shaking the dominant system.

About a hundred pretended decrees of the earliest Popes, together with certain spurious writings of other Church dignitaries and acts of Synods, were then fabricated in the west of Gaul, and eagerly seized upon by Pope Nicolas I. at Rome, to be used as genuine documents in support of the new claims put forward by himself and his successors. The immediate object of the compiler of this forgery was to protect bishops against their metropolitans and other authorities, so as to secure absolute impunity, and the exclusion of all influence of the secular power. This end was to be gained through such an immense extension of the Papal power, that, as these principles gradually penetrated the Church, and were followed out into their consequences, she necessarily assumed the form of an absolute monarchy subjected to the arbitrary power of a single individual, and the foundation of the edifice of Papal Infallibility was already laid — first, by the principle that the decrees of every Council require Papal confirmation: secondly, by the assertion that the fullness of power, even in matters of faith, resides in the Pope alone, who is bishop of the universal Church, while the other bishops are servants.

Now, if the Pope is really the bishop of the whole Church, so that every other bishop is his servant, he, who is the sole and legitimate mouth of the Church, ought to be infallible. If the decrees of Councils are invalid without Papal confirmation, the divine attestation of a doctrine undeniably rests in the last resort on the word of one man, and the notion of the absolute power of that one man over the whole Church includes that of his infallibility, as the shell contains the kernel. With perfect consistency, therefore, the Pseudo-Isidore makes his early Popes say: "The Roman Church remains to the end free from

stain of heresy.'

Formerly all learned students of ecclesiastical antiquity and canon-law—men like DeMarca, Baluze, Constant, Gibert, Berardi, Zallwein, etc.—were agreed that the change introduced by the psuedo-Isidore was a substantial one, that it displaced the old system of Church government and brought in the new. Modern writers have maintained that the compiler of the forgery only meant to codify the existing state of things, and give it a formal status, and that the same development would have taken place without his trick. The truth is:

First, Before his fabrication many very efficacious forgeries had won a gradual recognition at Rome since the beginning of the sixth century; and on them was based the maxim that the Pope, as supreme in the Church, could be judged by no man.

Secondly, The Isidorian doctrine contradicted itself, for it aimed at two things which were mutually incompatible, — the complete independence and impunity of bishops on the one hand, and the advancement of Papal power on the other. The first point it sought to effect by such strange and unpractical rules that they never attained any real vitality, while, on the contrary, the principles about the power of the Roman See worked their way, and became dominant under favorable circumstances, but with a result greatly opposed to the views of Isidore, by bringing the bishops into complete subjection to Rome. But that the psuedo-Isidorian principles eventually revolutionized the whole constitution of the Church, and introduced a new system in place of the old—on that point there can be no controversy among candid historians.

At the time when the forged decretals began to be widely known, the See of Rome was occupied by Nicolas I (858-867), a Pope who exceeded all his predecessors in the audacity of his designs. Favored and protected by the break-up of the empire of Charles the Great, he met East and West alike with the firm resolution of pressing to the uttermost every claim of any one of his predecessors, and pushing the limits of the Roman supremacy to the point of absolute monarchy. By a bold but non-natural torturing of a single word against the sense of a whole code of law, he managed to give a turn to a canon of a General Council, excluding all appeals to Rome, as though it opened to the whole clergy in East and West a right of appeal to Rome, and made the Pope the supreme judge of all bishops and clergy of the whole world (Canon 17 of Chalcedon, which speaks of appeals to the *primas dioceseos*, i.e., one of the Eastern patriarchs, not a civil ruler, as Baxmann thinks (Politik der Pabste, ii. 13).

Nicolas said the singular meant the plural, *dioceseos* and that the *primate* meant the Pope—a notion which would not seem worth a reply in Constantinople. He wrote this to the Eastern Emperor, to the Frankish King, Charles, and to all the Frankish bishops. And he referred the Orientals, and so sharp-sighted a man as Photius, to these fabrications fathered on Popes Silvester and Sixtus, which were thenceforth used for centuries, and gained the Roman Church the oft-repeated reproach from the Greeks, of being the native home of inventions and falsifications of documents. Soon after, receiving the new implements forged in the Isidorian workshop (about 863 or 864), Nicolas met the doubts of the Frankish bishops with the assurance that the Roman Church had long preserved all those documents with honor in her archives, and that every writing of a Pope, even if not part of the Dionysian collection of canons was binding on the whole Church. In a Synod at Rome in 863 he had accordingly anathematized all who should refuse to receive the teaching or ordinances of a Pope." (Pages 76-80, *The Pope and the Council*, written by Dr. J.J.I. Dollinger, under the pen name *Janus*).

I know that Dr. Dollinger is accepted by Roman Catholic authorities, because Bertrand L. Conway, quoted from two of Dollinger's works in *The Question Box*.

Speaking As The Oracles of God

Ollie Duffield

The Scriptures contain many admonitions respecting the principle in the above title. In 1 Peter 4:11 we find our key passage: "If any man speaketh, speaking as it were oracles of God; if any ministereth, ministering as of the strength which God supplieth that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, whose is the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen." This passage points out what should be the goal of our speaking and ministering. "That in all things God may be glorified."

In Matt. 5:16 Jesus said, "Even so let your light shine before men: that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." Many of the religious problems of men will be solved if in everything our ultimate goal is God's glory rather than our own.

In order to accomplish this goal we must be submissive to the Father's will even as was Jesus. "For I am come down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." (John 6:38) Jesus said in Matt. 7:21 "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven." The doing of God's will is expressive of love (1 John 5:3) and of faith (Jas. 2:18), and submission to the will of God.

Because of the importance of speaking as the oracles of God we must thoroughly understand the meaning of this. In the Greek text (1 Pet. 4: 11), the word for oracle is *logia*, defined by Thayer as words or utterances of God, With this in mind let us examine Hebrews 1:1, 2: "God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds." This declares that now God's oracles come through His Son. This is the prophet of whom Moses prophesied and whom Peter declared as the fulfillment of his prophecy in Acts 3:20-23. But Jesus taught his apostles, "He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me." (Matt. 10:40) and "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that rejecteth you rejecteth me" (Luke 10:16). In order to assure that this would be absolutely true, Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to guide these men. "But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you" (John 14:26; See also John 16:13).

The seriousness of strict adherence to these oracles of God as spoken through Jesus and his apostles is expressed by John:

Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God; he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son. If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house and give him no greeting; for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works (2 John 9-11).

Paul expresses it, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached, let him be anathema" (Gal. 1:8). These oracles had already been granted in Peter's day (See 2 Pet. 1:3, 4) and to the writings by inspiration in the New Testament we must go for life in Christ Jesus.

This article has dealt in generalities, but we need to be specific as well. Desiring to learn how to be delivered from sin and its penalty we must go to the teaching of Christ and his apostles. It is here we learn that faith in God and Christ is essential (Heb. 11:6, John 8:24), that one must repent of his sins (Luke 13:3, Acts 17:30), confess his faith in Jesus as God's Son (Matt. 10:2, Acts 8:36-37, Rom. 10:9, 10), and that one must be baptized in water into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit for the remission of sins (Mark 16:16; Matt. 28:19; Acts 8:36-39; Acts 2:38).

That we may know what is meant by baptism we observe that when Jesus was baptized, he "went up straightway from the water" (Matt. 4:16), that both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water where the eunuch was baptized, then both came out of the water (Acts 8:36-39). Paul describes the action which took place in the water in

the following scripture:

Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the (dead) through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:3, 4. See also Col. 2:12).

In view of this we know baptism is not a sprinkling or a pouring, but is an immersion; a burial in water. In a like manner, by comparing Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38 and related passages we know baptism is administered to penitent believers and not to infants. When one has been baptized into Christ he then begins to walk in the new life and must be faithful unto death to be saved eternally (Matt. 24:13; Rev. 2:10; 2 Pet. 1:5-11).

Keeping in mind that we speak as God's oracles when we seek information upon our worship unto God and learn it must be "in spirit and truth" (John 4:24) or "with the spirit and the understanding" (1 Cor. 14:15). To be in spirit it must be earnest, sincere, humble, from the heart. To be in truth and with the understanding it must be as God taught. We learn that this worship includes: singing (Eph. 5:19, Col. 3:16). Notice that no mechanical instrument is mentioned, praying (1 Thess. 5:17), apostles' teaching or preaching (Acts 2:42), fellowship, including contribution for the Lord's work (Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 16:1, 2; 2 Cor. 9:6-11), and breaking bread or observing the Lord's Supper each first day of the week (Acts 20:7, 2:42; 1 Cor. 1:23-29).

These same principles must be observed in learning how to please God in church organization and government, in Christian living, and every other realm under God's direction. Let each of us ask himself the question, "Am I speaking as the oracles of God?" In teaching truth, nothing else matters.

Who is Worthy?

Doug Post

God's crowning jewel of Creation was mankind (*ha-adam*) and His love for His Creation is eternal. Long before Creation, however, God had a plan. He knew He would create mankind, knowing mankind would have a sin problem. He also knew Christ would be the remedy. God's plan for mankind involved sending His only begotten Son to die for man's sin problem (Acts 2:22-23; Eph. 3:10-11; cf. John 3:16; Rom. 5:8). God believed His Creation was worth saving. Therefore, He extended grace to mankind affirming the worth of His Creation (Isa. 43:1-7). Mankind was worthy to be saved.

While God loves and adores His Creation, there is a difference between His love extended toward mankind, in general, and the love expressed toward His children in particular. For instance, in the book of Genesis, God's focus is no longer on the world, but upon the Hebrew nation, coming from the lineage of Seth. God called them His people, separating them from the rest of the world. Likewise, God's children, living under the New Testament, have been set apart from the rest of the world by virtue of walking in the steps of the faith of Abraham (Rom. 4:12; Gal. 3:7-29).

All spiritual blessings are located "**in Christ**" (Eph. 1:3). Spiritual blessings are not provided to those outside of Christ, including the forgiveness of sins. Therefore, there is a definite "dividing line," as it were, between God's children and the rest of His Creation. In fact, regarding salvation, the apostle Paul writes: "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" (2 Tim. 2:10).

While God's love for mankind is shown in His desire for all of mankind to be saved (2 Pet. 3:9; 1 Tim. 2:4; cf. Acts 17:30), the only ones who will be saved are those who obey Him: "And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Heb.5:9).

The "dividing line" between being "in Christ" and remaining outside of Christ is rather explicit: "For ye are all the children of God by [the] faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:26-27). Elsewhere,

Paul writes:

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:3-4).

Obviously, getting into Christ involves obeying the command to be baptized into Christ, for the forgiveness of sins. Jesus said as much, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved...” (Mark 16:16; cf. John 3:3-5; 1 Pet. 3:21). To buttress the fact that God’s love toward His children is different than His general love for mankind, we learn that Christ died for His church (Eph. 5:23). While, the sacrifice of Christ is for the entire world, salvation is ultimately obtained by being “in Christ,” which is being in His body, the church (1 Cor. 12:13; Acts 2:47).

The unfolding of God’s scheme of human redemption began in the Garden: “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). It continues through the New Testament with the coming of Christ (Gal. 4:4; John 3:16; Luke 2:7-20). God’s wonderful plan to save mankind was out of His love for His Creation. Our Creator thought His Creation was worthy of saving. None of us obligated God to develop a plan, which involved Jesus dying on the cross for our sins. His eternal plan was the result of His eternal love for His Creation—you and me—long before mankind was created.

However, the cross was never intended to be the end of God’s plan of salvation for mankind. Rather, the cross (the death, burial, and resurrection) is the foundation of the plan. Jesus spoke of the “New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you” (Luke 22:20). We note that both **forgiveness of sins** and the New Testament are inextricably tied to the blood of Christ. The shedding of His blood ushered in Christ’s last will and testament referred to as **the New Testament**. Since the cross, this is the only Will to which all mankind is amenable: “Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all (Heb. 10:9-10).

In coming to do the Father’s Will, Christ removed the **first** (Old Testament), replacing it with the **second** (New Testament). It is by **this will**—the New Testament in His blood (Luke 22:20; cf. Heb. 9:15-17)—all people today can be sanctified. This very Will is that for which Christ shed His blood—namely **the New Testament**. Therefore, we see the cross of Christ is the ground of our salvation, while the New Testament is the means. But what does that mean?

Both the blood of Christ and the New Testament in His blood cannot be separated. Both are provided by the grace of God and both are necessary for the forgiveness of sins. Yes, the blood of Christ purifies the soul (1 John 1:7), but the word of God does also (1 Pet. 1:22-25; Jas. 1:18, 21). Both are necessary to be saved.

In fact, the phrase “walk in the light” of 1 John 1:7 is equivalent to the phrase “practice the truth” in 1 John 1:6 (cf. 3:7, NKJV). Forgiveness of sin is not automatic for anyone. Forgiveness must be obtained through seeking it: “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Heb.11:6). The present tense form of the verb *seek* means an ongoing action, hence *continuing* to diligently seek Him. The ongoing nature of seeking God, is the idea of biblical faith. The seeking continues before and after salvation, which dispels the notion of “once saved, always saved.”

The idea of continuous seeking is explained by our Lord, “... If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:31-32). Continuing in His Word means continuing to learn, apply, and obey His Word. Paul said this way:

And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled In the body of his flesh through death, to

present you holy and unblameable and unreproueable in his sight: If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard ... (Col. 1:21-23).

Here we see the word of Christ, the word of His grace (Acts 20:32), is linked to remaining in His mercy, His grace. Once again, the apostle John writes:

And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked (1 John 2:3-6).

Many brethren cringe when speaking of the necessity of obedience (Heb. 5:9), even though Jesus says we must continue obeying Him (Matt. 7:21ff; Luke 6:46; John 14:15). If we claim to love Jesus, then we must obey His commandments (1 John 5:3). In fact, when one obeys, God dwells in him, but the opposite must be true if one refuses to obey: “And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us” (1 John 3:24).

By implication, we can readily see the Christian who continues walking in the light (1 John 1:7), and who continues obeying (Heb. 5:9), is the one who has salvation, which is found in Christ. Christ died and shed His blood for the world, but not all of the world will be saved. Salvation is only applied to those who have obeyed the gospel (1 Pet. 4:17; cf. 2 Thess. 1:8; cf. Titus 2:11-12). They do so by being washed in the blood of Christ, where their sins are forgiven (Rev. 1:5; Eph. 1:7). But, in order to reach the blood, one must first enter the waters of baptism by faith (Acts 22:16). Yes, sins are washed away in the blood of Christ, but only when sins are washed away in baptism (Rev. 1:5; Acts 22:16; cf. Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; Rom. 6:3-4).

After one has obeyed Christ, being baptized for the forgiveness of sins, one must continue a life of obedient faith (Rev. 2:10; Rom. 1:5, 16:26; Heb. 5:9). There is a growing number of brethren in churches of Christ who argue that spiritual growth is not necessary for salvation. They claim it is important, but in the final analysis, one will not lose his salvation if he does not grow. This sounds like Baptists who argue that baptism is important for obedience but not for salvation. This type of false doctrine is dangerous since it minimizes obedience, which, itself, is associated with spiritual growth. After all we are commanded to grow (1 Pet. 2:2). Moreover, Paul writes:

God who “will render to each one according to his deeds”: eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God (Rom. 2:5-11, NKJV).

The first undeniable thing we notice is that God judges according to the works we do—not only doing good works but **continually** doing good works and doing so for the purpose of seeking “glory, honor, and immortality.” There is no partiality with God, whoever continues working good works (works God gives us to carry out) is accepted by God (Acts 10:34-35; 1 John 3:7; Jas. 2:19-26). The indisputable implication from the above is that there are some who are worthy of God’s salvation, and some are not. What makes the difference? Obedience! And obedience is simply doing what God said to do in the manner He said to do it. We are to walk worthy of the gospel and the Lord (Phil. 1:27; Eph. 4:1; Col. 1:10; 1 Thess. 2:12; 2 Thess. 1:5, 11; Rev. 3:4). It is also important to realize that we can know we are in the faith by examining ourselves **with** the faith, His Word (2 Cor. 13:5). We can, therefore know, if we are acceptable, dare I say “worthy” of God and His salvation.

Living a life wholly dedicated to Christ and His Word is not easy because we are to

“Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses” (1 Tim. 6:12). With diligence and effort, salvation will be obtained. Moreover, Paul was not ashamed to point out the following:

I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing (2 Tim. 4:7-8).

Keeping the faith is obeying the gospel or the Word. By examining His own life with the Word (2 Cor. 13:5), Paul knew he was saved—in the faith or in Christ. Keeping the faith is simply keeping His commandments (1 John 5:3; cf. John 14:15), which is the true love God desires of His children. And if we can know we are saved like Paul, then does that not imply we are worthy of salvation? Of course, it does! Only those worthy of salvation, obtain salvation. If I know I am to walk worthy of the gospel and the Lord, as noted above, then I can know I am worthy by virtue of examining myself with the faith.

Some might object saying we are to consider ourselves as unworthy servants (Luke 17:10). First, Jesus is speaking directly to His disciples, the twelve, not to you and me. Second, even if the application is extended to all Christians, then all we that Jesus is addressing is the need to maintain a self-effacing attitude or humble spirit. If we can know we are in Christ with a humble spirit, then we can know we are saved with a humble spirit. And, if we can know we are saved with a humble spirit, then we can know we are worthy of said salvation with a humble spirit.

God thought you worthy of His love, grace, and Son. God desires you to be worthy of His love, His gospel, and His Son. You can know if meet the requirements of the faith, knowing you are saved, and therefore worthy of His salvation, without obligating God. No person can obligate God, but God certainly obligates Himself to His promises we can read in the faith.

Bible Study Resources

The Scripture Cache

Precept Upon Precept You Tube

Spiritual Perspectives – Gary Summers

Biblical Articles & More – Gary Grizzell

False Doctrines of Man

Yukon, Okla. church of Christ

Berea church of Christ

South Seminole church of Christ

Death comes to all mankind, Judgment is certain, Heaven and Hell are real, and eternity is never ending. Where will you exist after this life is over? Heaven or Hell is your own choice. Make the right one before you die.

New Book This Month!

“The Thing That Hath Been...”

The Cycle of Apostasy

By Jerry C. Brewer

Foreword By Daniel Denham

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

We see on the theater of the world a certain number of scenes which succeed each other in endless repetition: where we see the same faults followed regularly by the same misfortunes, we may reasonably think that if we could have known the first we might have avoided the others. The past should enlighten us on the future: knowledge of history is no more than an anticipated experience (Charles Pinot Duclos).

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

He is a poor observer of men and things who does not see slowly growing up among us a class of men who can no longer be satisfied with the ancient gospel and the ancient order of things. These men must have changes; and silently they are preparing the mind of the brotherhood to receive changes (Moses E. Lard, 1865).

If history repeats itself in the rise and the fall of empires and in the destinies of nations, it is nonetheless true in the development and the declension of the church. This antecedent thought dates back to Israel, God’s Old Testament church, whose mistakes have been repeated in the history of the church of his Son through the ages of its existence.

...This Biblical record is not mere ancient history. It was written for the learning and the admonition of those upon whom the ends of the ages are come. The lesson is aptly put in the words of Jeremiah: “My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water” (Jer. 2:13).

...In their idolatry Israel had not committed one evil merely, like the heathen idol devotees who know no better. Besides the evil of idolatry Israel added the sin of forsaking the Living God whom they had known. Forsaking God, “the fountain of living waters,” for idol nonentities was like taking cracked and leaky cisterns hewn out by men in preference to the ever flowing supply of fresh waters that a natural fountain could give. In turning from God to idols, Israel had abandoned fountains for tanks-man-made, broken cisterns that could hold no water.

...Can we not see the application in our own deviations? The denominations, like the heathen idolaters, know no better, but in our departures from the way, the church like Israel commits two evils: first, the evil of the thing done; second, the evil of forsaking what we have known in the doing of it.

Wise and just Samuel was rejected for young and handsome Saul. The choice

seems to have been made on looks—mere appearances. Today, many are more concerned about how the church looks to the world—outside appearances—than about what God wants the church to be. The result of such will prove sadder and far more fatal than with Israel, who rejected not Samuel, but God (“The Evils Of God’s People,” *The Bible Banner*, April, 1941, p. 2).

This book will surprise some readers and infuriate far more, but its truth cannot be successfully denied. In it we clearly and unashamedly identify examples of “mainstream churches of Christ” as an emerging denomination. They are “churches of Christ” in name only and have repeated 19th century apostasy as history proves.

This book—which would normally sell for \$20.00—is **free of charge to churches** in the United States who request it and agree to pay postage and handling. Request copies by emailing Jerry C. Brewer at **txjch@att.net**. Single copy postage and handling is \$3.00.

The Gospel Preceptor

Published Monthly at Elk City, Oklahoma

Editor & Publisher.....Jerry C. Brewer

Staff Writers

Nana Yaw Aidoo – Accra, Ghana Ron Cosby – Disney, Oklahoma
Harrell Davidson – Obion, Tennessee Gene Hill – Indianola, Mississippi
Dub McClish – Denton, Texas Lee Moses – Union City, Tennessee
Doug Post – Gore, Oklahoma David Ray – Yukon, Oklahoma

Jess Whitlock – Maysville, Oklahoma

Email Address: txjch@att.net

Salvation From Snakebite: A Lesson for Today

C.R. Nichol and R.L. Whiteside

The children of Israel became discouraged, and murmured against God and Moses. They complained about their food and lack of water.

And Jehovah sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, and much people of Israel died. And the people came to Moses and said, We have sinned because we have spoken against Jehovah, and against thee; pray unto Jehovah, that he take away these serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people, and Jehovah said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a standard: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he seeth it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and set it upon a standard: and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he looked upon the serpent of brass, he lived (Num. 21:6-9).

Of course there was no virtue in the serpent to heal the snake bite. God healed them, but it was when they looked on the serpent of brass. No one can reason correctly and see any connection between the act performed and the blessing to be obtained. How often has God selected something to test man's faith which was far from reasonable from man's point of view. Had God directed Moses to make a concoction of different kinds of herbs, and bathe, or anoint the snake bite therewith, it is possible that the people would have ascribed the cure to the medicinal treatment, instead of the power of God, and all the people would have desired to keep the prescription for making the lotion. The people knew there was no power in the brazen serpent to heal. They knew the power to cure was of God. Surely no one thinks there is power in the water of baptism to cleanse one of sin, but God commands those in the Christian Dispensation who would be saved, to repent “and be baptized” in the name of Jesus Christ “unto the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38). Because some irreverent sectarian cannot see how it is possible for baptism to have anything to do with one's salvation, he cries, “water salvation.” Doubtless had such a perverter of the truth lived in the wilderness when the fiery serpents were among the Israelites, and they were required to look on the serpents, he would have cried: “Snake salvation.” (*Sound Doctrine*, Vol. 5, p. 13).