

# The Gospel Preceptor

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

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## On Why I am a Baptist

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Some time ago the *Baptist Standard* published a list of reasons by Otis L. Spurgeon, a Baptist pastor, on the subject of “Why I Am a Baptist.” He advises the readers of the article to “Put Me In Your Bible.”

A careful reading reveals to me more denominational pride than New Testament truth. If Jesus intended that His disciples be called “Baptists” and proudly parade about under that name, then there ought to be clear evidence of the fact in the New Testament. You are invited to take a look at some of the evidence that the *Baptist Standard* thinks is worth pasting in the Bibles of its readers.

1. “Because it is a fact that the first gospel preacher was a Baptist (Matt. 3:1; Mark 1:1-5; Luke 16:16).”

“It is a fact” that John was called “the Baptist” or the Baptizer or immerser. It takes a good deal of party pride and sectarian zeal to see in John the sort of Baptist preacher the *Baptist Standard* delights in.

We do not deny that John immersed people, and for a period was the only person who did, and was, therefore, known as “the Baptist.” Dr. Armitage, a Baptist historian, says, “John was his proper name, and the term ‘Baptist,’ added by the inspired writers, is a title of office” (*History of The Baptists*, p. 30).

Perhaps the *Standard* will explain why no one else was ever called a “Baptist” in the New Testament.

2. “It is a fact that Jesus was baptized in Jordan by a Baptist minister (Matt. 3:13-16; Mark 1:9).”

It is true that Jesus submitted to baptism at the hands of John the Baptizer or Immerser. That John was “a Baptist minister” in the sense that term is used in the *Baptist Standard* is a clear case of sectarian hallucination. How would it sound to say that, “Jesus was baptized in Jordan by an Immerser minister?”

3. “It is a fact that the apostles were baptized by a Baptist minister (John 1:32-40; Acts 1:21-22).”

Evidently they did not consider “Baptist” a religious name, for they did not call themselves “Baptists,” nor did anyone else ever call them that while they lived. It did not occur to any of them that they should be called Baptists because John the Baptizer immersed them. Mr. Spurgeon has on denominational spectacles.

4. “It is a fact that the first church organized was composed of baptized believers (Matt. 10:1; 18:17; Acts 8:36; 11:17).”

There is nothing said about a church being organized in Matthew 10:1. Here is the way it reads: “And he called unto him his twelve disciples, and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out and to heal all manner of disease and all manner of sickness” (ASV).

At this time all these 12 were **unbelievers** in the death and resurrection of Christ. No “baptized believers” were ever called “Baptists” in the New Testament. No one was called “Baptist” except John, and he was **unbaptized**.

5. “It is a fact that 3,000 converts on the day of Pentecost all joined the Baptist Church which Christ organized (Acts 2:41, etc).”

Mr. Spurgeon seems to be reckless with facts. It is nowhere said that 3,000 converts on Pentecost “Joined the Baptist Church.” “The Baptist Church” is not mentioned in all the New Testament. The term is not found in any history written prior to the 16th century.

Peter, on Pentecost, commanded convicted inquirers to “Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins” (Acts 2:38 ASV). Baptist ministers who write for the *Baptist Standard* do not talk that way now. Peter is nowhere called a “Baptist” in the New Testament.

6. “It is a fact that Paul, the apostle, was a Baptist (Rom. 6:4; Eph. 4:5).”

The New Testament does not say that Paul “was a Baptist.” Romans 6:4 does not say so. It reads, “We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death” (ASV). The third verse says Paul was “Baptized into Christ Jesus.” Can a man be saved out of Christ? Ananias told Paul to “arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name” (Acts 22:16). Baptists do not preach that way now. No, Paul was not a Baptist.

7. “It is a fact that the apostles taught that every church member should be a regenerated person (Acts 2:38, 41; 10:43, 48).”

Dr. John D. Freeman, of the *Baptist and Reflector*, says that Judas was a member of the first Baptist Church, made so by the Lord Jesus Himself, and he was not a regenerated person, so Dr. Freeman says.

The apostles taught that “as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ” (Gal. 3:27). People are not saved out of Christ, and they do not get into Him before baptism. This is not Baptist doctrine, even if the New Testament does teach it. In the New Testament people became members of the church in the same way and at the same time they became Christians.

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## Adam and Eve: Their Sin and its Consequences

C.R. Nichol and R.L. Whiteside

### Lesson Text: Genesis 3

The garden into which God put the newly-formed couple did not cover all the land of Eden. Eden was a district, and God planted a garden eastward in Eden. In this Eden-home man was innocent and carefree. The most perfect and sweetest companionship, untainted by sin, misunderstanding, or sorrows, was the happy portion of earth's first couple—no weariness, no fatigue, no toil, no heartaches, no sorrow. They worked, yes; but work brought no fatigue, for they could eat of the tree of life which perpetuated the freshness of youth in undiminished vigor. O blessed family of God's first paradise, how hast thou sinned against thyself, and, in sinning against thyself, how hast thou sinned against us thy helpless offspring!

### Comment on the Lesson—the Tempter

Verse 1. The tempter is described by Peter (1 Pet. 5:8) as, “Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.” He is referred to as “the evil one” (Matt. 6:13), “the prince of the power of the air” (Eph. 2:2), “the prince of this world” (John 12:31), “the tempter” (1 These. 3:5), “murderer” (John 8:44), “the dragon, the old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan” (Rev. 20:2).

In our lesson he appeared to Eve in the form of a serpent. Here he is described as being more “subtle” than any beast of the field which God had made. “Subtle” is sly, cunning, crafty. Of course, any Bible student recognizes the fact that we have recorded in Genesis 3 only an outline of the incidents and sayings of this momentous occasion.

## **The Temptation and Sin**

Verses 1-3. By his cunning craftiness the tempter was able to throw Eve entirely off her guard, and thus to approach her in the most seductive and captivating way. How much time he spent in indulging in flattery and pleasing speech, so as to gain the confidence of Eve before finally tempting her, we have no means of knowing. When Satan asked Eve if God had prohibited their eating any fruit of the garden, he perhaps meant to insinuate that such prohibition was a reflection on them: any way, Eve's pride, if any had been stirred up, would be wounded by her being forced to acknowledge that God, despite his liberality, had restricted their freedom. The woman acknowledge that they were restricted only at one point; they might not eat of the fruit of the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil." The penalty for this act was death. Here the devil took square issue with Jehovah and boldly affirmed that Jehovah knew the consequences would be the reverse, that eating the fruit in question would make them as God, "knowing good and evil."

That the devil here told the truth, in part, is attested by the fact that God later said, "Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil" (v. 22). But the devil deceived her in that she did not know, and he failed to inform her, that the legal consequences of an act may be the very opposite of the natural consequences. If the legal consequences had not been inflicted the result would have been that they came to know "good and evil," and the devil deceived her by making her believe that this would be the only consequence.

When the serpent said to Eve, "Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil," he uttered a most deadly lie; for his statement contained enough truth to make it overwhelmingly deceptive. In his assertion he charged God with untruthfulness; and, in saying that the fruit would make them as God, he virtually charged that God was holding them in ignorance through selfishness, envy, and jealousy. This would tend to stir up a spirit in Eve that would prepare her for the final act. In addition to this, she saw that the tree was good for food, that it was a delight to the eyes, and that it was to be desired to make one wise. Everything about this fruit commended it to Eve as a very desirable thing. The only restraining influence was her respect for God's command, and fear of the consequences of disobedience; and Satan had almost, if not altogether, removed these. Hence, she took of the fruit thereof and did eat; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he did eat. Eve was deceived; Adam was not deceived (1 Tim. 2:14). Shame and fear seized them, and they sewed fig leaves together for aprons, and hid themselves from the presence of Jehovah. Sin not only produces separation from God, but it creates a desire for that separation.

### **Jehovah Appears and Pronounces a Curse Upon Them**

Verses 9-21. When God questioned Adam and Eve each sought to minimize his guilt by blaming others for getting him into the transgression. Neither denied the act, but sought to shift at least a part of the blame on others. How like their offspring today. Our confessions of wrongs are usually only half-way confessions. "I did wrong, but" ... and some excuse is given. How few can humbly hang their heads in shame and contrition and say as did David, "I have sinned greatly, in that I have done this thing: but now put away, I beseech thee, the iniquity of thy servant for I have done very foolishly" (1 Chron. 21:8).

Curse on the Serpent. The serpent was condemned to go upon his belly always, and to eat the dust of the ground; and God put an undying enmity between him and the woman, and between his seed and her seed.

The Curse on Eve. Unto the woman he said: "I will greatly multiply thy pain and thy conception; in pain thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule thee."

The Curse on Adam. For the man the earth was cursed so that, amidst the thorns and other noxious growths, the earth, yields her fruit only by the severest toil and labor. Work was not now required of man as a curse, for before his sin his duty was to "dress the garden and keep it." Then he might eat the refreshing, invigorating fruit of the life

perpetuating tree, insuring the vigor of his body. But now, under adverse circumstances and against the evils of noxious growths, he must toil for his daily food. Weariness is only the result of the death and destruction of the cells of the body. Now he has no life-giving fruit to prevent this death; hence weariness must accompany work.

### **Driven From the Garden**

Verses 22-24. The expulsion of Adam and Eve from the garden was one of the direct results of their sin. They must be driven out, away from the tree of life, lest by continuing to eat of its life-perpetuating fruit they might live forever in sin.

### **Death a Necessity**

Death became necessary because of sin. With no restraining influence to hold them in check sinners grow worse and worse as long as they retain their vigor of manhood and womanhood. "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse." Not only so, but they grow wiser and more skillful in their crimes and diabolical deeds. Think what the world might have been today if all the evil men of all past ages had lived till now, becoming more and more depraved and all the while growing wiser and more cunning in their efforts to satisfy their growing thirst for sin. Think what death has done for the world in arresting the career of such men; hence, death which came as a result of sin is also a powerful check on sin. While it is true that sin brought death, it is also true that death brings an end to the active career of the sinner.

### **Penalty for Sin**

Adam's sin—his disrespect and disregard for God—brought on him the penalty of the infracted law—death. How long Adam and Eve were in the Garden before they sinned we do not know. In the garden they had access to the tree whose fruit perpetuated life. They were as mortal before as subsequent to their sin in the garden. It is a mistaken idea that eating the fruit planted the seeds of mortality in their bodies. There is no reason to believe that the nature of their bodies was changed in the least degree. Their sin resulted in their being cast out of the garden, away from the fruit which perpetuated natural life, and death followed as a natural consequence.

What kind of death. "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." (Gen. 2:17). Death was the penalty for sin. "Through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin" (Rom. 5:12). In the Bible we read of the death of the body (Jas. 1:26), and of death in sin (Eph. 2:1). What death did Adam experience the day he sinned?

It should be remembered that existence does not necessarily mean life. Rocks and minerals exist, but they do not live. Even the spirit of the sinner exists while he is dead in sin. The devil lives, but he does not have what is termed in the Bible spiritual life. Man is dead to that with which he is not in union, to that with which he is not in correspondence. Adam's sin separated him from God (Isa. 59:2). He thereby became dead to God, dead in sin. Is this the only result?

Death passed on all. Paul declares (Rom. 5:12) that, as a result of Adam's sin, death passed on all. Again, "In Adam all die" (1 Cor. 15:22). This cannot have reference to death in sin, or spiritual death for the infant which does not sin, and cannot sin, dies. Christ died, and he did not sin. The death which passed on all as a result of Adam's sin can be naught but physical death. "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead" (1 Cor. 15:21). Physical death comes to us unconditionally on our part; resurrection will come to us without conditions on our part. Hence, what we lost unconditionally in Adam, we regain unconditionally in Christ. In 1 Cor. 15 Paul is discussing physical death, and the resurrection from that death.

In Adam all die, that is, as a consequence of the sin of Adam all die. We are not guilty of Adam's sin, but we do suffer the consequences of his sin. The guilt of sin attaches only to him who commits sin, but the consequences may be transmitted to remote generations. Children often suffer the consequences of the fathers' sin without in any way having shared in his guilt. But does not Paul say, "All sinned"? Certainly; but in what sense? Levi is said to have paid tithes before he was born. At the time the tithes were paid, Levi existed only in the sense that he was in the loins of Abraham, who paid the tithes (Gen. 14:18-20; Heb. 7:9-10). Hence Levi paid tithes representatively; so we

sinned only by representation. The whole human family existed in Adam in the same sense that Levi existed in Abraham.

### **Some Immediate Results of Sin**

1. Fear of Jehovah (Gen. 3:10).
2. Shame (Gen. 3:7).
3. Moral deterioration. This is seen in Adam's case. (1) When God inquired, "Where art thou?" Adam lied as to why he had hidden. (2) Folly in trying to hide from Jehovah. (3) Cowardice; blamed his wife.

### **Blight of Sin**

Sin has been a blight in the world. View the brokenhearted husband as he follows the corpse of his wife to the grave; the mother as she touches her lips to the cold brow of her babe in the embrace of death, or hear her wail as she sees her son marched off to prison; see the pain, sickness, heartaches, tears and sorrows of earth, and know that they are the result of sin. Behold the rose as she breathes her sweet perfume; reach forth your hand to pluck the flower and feel the prick of the thorn, and know that briars and thorns are the result of sin.

Some men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. Most sins are committed in the night, and in covert and secret places. Germs and vermin of all kinds thrive in the darkness—they can not live in the sunlight. Neither can sin abide in your heart if you allow God's word to illuminate it. Why will men cleave to a life of sin when such fatal results always follow?

### **Breaking the Law**

"Sin is the transgression of the law," or, "Sin is lawlessness" (1 John 3:4). Frequently it is said that sin is breaking the law. This is but an accommodated expression. Man cannot really break the law; he breaks himself against the law. This is the truth both as to God's natural laws and those revealed in the Bible. The man with a wrecked body did not break the law of nature; he broke himself against the law. The law stands unbroken (*Sound Doctrine*, Vol. 1, pp. 27-34).

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## **If Cornelius and his House Were Saved Before Baptism. . .**

**Nana Yaw Aidoo**

If Cornelius and his house were saved before baptism, then they were:

### **Saved Without Faith in Christ**

After Peter's encounter with the Gentiles had rendered fellow "Jewish Christians" unhappy (Acts 11:2), Luke records that in trying to explain the incident, "...Peter rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and expounded it by order unto them..." (Acts 11:4). This clearly proves that Luke's own report of the conversion of the first Gentile converts to Christianity in Acts the tenth chapter, was not the order in which the events happened.

In giving the order in which the events happened, Peter revealed that as he "**...began to speak**, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning" (Acts 11:15). Notice the word "began." It is translated from a Greek word that means "to commence (in order of time)" (Strong's Greek). What this means is that, Peter had barely spoken a word when the Holy Spirit fell on the Gentiles. The apostle at a later time, made known how God chose him to be the mouthpiece by which the Gentiles "should hear the word of the gospel, and believe" (Acts 15:7). Yet, in the house of Cornelius, he had barely begun preaching the facts of the gospel when the Holy Spirit fell on the Gentiles.

Therefore, if Cornelius and his house were saved before baptism, when "God gave them the Holy Ghost," then they were saved without hearing the gospel and thus they were saved without belief in Christ since from Peter's mouth, they had to "hear the word of the gospel, and believe" (cf. Rom.10:17).

## Saved Before They Were Told What to do to be Saved

Notice if you would that Cornelius was commissioned to send for Peter so he and his house would be told what to do to be saved. "...call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter...he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do" (Acts 10:5-6). "...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).

From the foregoing, we see clearly that the Gentiles had to be told what to do to be saved by Peter (cf. Acts 15:7). We know however that they had heard almost nothing from Peter when the Holy Spirit fell on them (see Acts 11:15). Did God go back on His word? Did He grant salvation to the Gentiles, when He had in effect said, "no words from Peter, no salvation?" (Acts 11:15)? If Cornelius and his house were saved before baptism, when the Holy Spirit fell on them, then they were saved before they were told what to do to be saved.

Peter, who was sent to tell Cornelius and his house what to do to be saved, **commanded** that they be baptized (Acts 10:47-48). We wonder why an apostle would **command** that which is non-essential to salvation, if denominational preachers are to be believed. This same apostle would later write in an epistle; "...baptism doth also now saves us..." (1 Pet. 3:21). Now watch carefully. If it is the case that baptism saves us, and if it is the case that Peter was sent to tell Cornelius and his house what to do to be saved, then clearly, Peter was sent to tell Cornelius and his house to obey the gospel, a course of action which culminates in baptism (cf. Acts 2:38; Rom. 6). Little wonder, then, that Peter who was sent to tell Cornelius and his house what to do to be saved, "**commanded** them to be baptized in the name of the Lord."

### Conclusion

While it is true that the Holy Spirit fell on Cornelius and his house before they were baptized, to assume that this was proof of their salvation is to make a false assumption. If Cornelius and his house were saved before baptism, when the Holy Spirit fell on them, then they were saved without faith in Christ and before they were told what to do to be saved. That which proves too much proves nothing.

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## Peter Preached a "Feel Bad" Religion

### Jerry C. Brewer

In the circus of life that is modern America, denominational religion is its cotton candy. Those big balls of fluffy stuff that are eagerly consumed by circus-goers promise a lot, but have no real substance. Cotton candy is fun to eat—while it lasts—but provides no substantial nourishment. That's a fair description of the denominational industry's version of "Christianity." It's all about preaching a "feel good" religion for the moment, with no spiritual substance for life. But that's not the kind of religion Peter preached. He preached what folks today would call a "feel **bad**" religion.

Consider Peter's words in the first sermon recorded in this dispensation. He began his discourse by explaining the phenomenon the multitude had witnessed—the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles, accompanied by the sound of a rushing mighty wind and the appearance of "cloven tongues like as of fire" (Acts 2:2-4, 14ff). Astonished at those events, many among them charged the apostles with being drunk on new wine (Acts 2:13). After explaining that they were not drunk, but those things fulfilled Joel's prophecy (Acts 2:17-21; cf. Joel 2:28-32), he reminded them of events which they already knew—that Jesus of Nazareth had been approved of God by the mighty works He did among them (Acts 2:22).

Having reminded them of that, he immediately charged them with murder in delivering Jesus to be crucified. "Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:23). Peter's aim wasn't to make his auditors feel good about themselves as is the case in today's denominational industry. His purpose was to lay before them the bare facts of their sin, Christ's sacrifice for their sins, and to bring them to repentance for their sins. No "cotton candy religion" here.

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

Answering their anguished cry, “...Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins... and with many other words, did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation” (Acts 2:38, 40). Responding to Peter's words, the record says,

Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers (Acts 2:41-42).

That's a far cry from the “cotton candy religion” preached by today's denominational preachers.

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

Men and brethren, there is some validity to your belief that some of us may be drunk because we **are** social drinkers. And though we have diversity of opinion on this matter, we can continue to be brethren because I believe we can find strength in diversity and in our love for each other. Indeed, most of us have been drunk at one time or another, or at least done other things that were just as indiscreet. But I cannot condemn any of my colleagues, nor would I presume to judge any of you for thinking we are drunk because we have different interpretations of this event and there is certainly room for diversity among all of us. In fact, a scholarly study by professors at Gamaliel Jewish University (GJU) indicates that Solomon was drunk when he wrote that “wine is a mocker and strong drink is raging.”

However, though we have different interpretations of this event, that is not a salvational issue, and I can still call you “brother.” What you have witnessed today is a great revival of Holy Spirit renewal that some ancient scribe researched and wrote about in a scholarly work that the rabbis often attribute to Joel, but may have been written by an unnamed Hittite.

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

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

Get involved in a blood drive in your communities, let the Holy Spirit direct you to parking places. And with many other soft, kind, sweet, and gentle words did he testify and exhort saying, Form Family Ministries, Youth Ministries, Outreach Ministries, and Children's Ministries. Send your kids to

camp, let Youth Ministers take them to Six Standards Over Jerusalem, and busy yourselves with lots of programs to make everyone feel good.

Then they that gladly received his word really felt good about themselves, and had their self-esteem raised, and about 3,000 formed their Church Family that day. And they continued to shout and clap their hands, and they formed an *a cappella* singing group that could make sounds with their lips just like the harps and lyres of the Romans. And they accepted all into the Church Family and called all men “brothers” who called God “Father” and recognized Jesus as a BFF and a good buddy and they all dwelt under the umbrella of egalitarianism, singing Kumbaya, and playing basketball in the temple gymnasium which they called their Family Life Center.

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

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

“All have sinned and come short of the glory of God,” (Rom. 3:23) and, “The wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). That's **not** a “feel good religion,” but that's what the world needs to hear. To **genuinely** feel **good** one needs to **first** feel **bad** about his sinful condition, then believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God (John 8:24), repent of his sins (Acts 2:38), confess his faith in Christ (Acts 8:37), and be baptized “for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16).

Having done that, one can then **truly feel good** that his sins are forgiven and, as the Ethiopian nobleman did in Acts 8:39, he can “go on his way rejoicing.”

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## Why We Meet on the First Day of Every Week

Lee Moses

There has been a growing trend in recent decades: That of various denominations to provide church services at alternate times for those not desiring to come Sunday mornings. Many people have found it unreasonably burdensome to awake at a reasonable hour on the Lord's Day to worship their Creator, so they have moved worship services to another day. I recall when living in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex that there were particular roads to avoid on Saturday nights, because certain mega-churches would be dismissing thousands from their services at that time. Is it acceptable to forego assembling on the first day of the week in favor of meeting on a more convenient day? No one disagrees that churches professing Christianity have traditionally met on the first day of the week. But tradition in itself is not sufficient reason to say that churches professing Christianity must meet on the first day of the week (Matt. 15:9). What does the Bible teach? Is it obligatory to meet on the first day of every week?

Clearly the apostolic pattern entailed assembling at a particular time to worship. When Jesus gave instructions to the apostles regarding how they were to partake of the Lord's Supper, He told them, “I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until **that day** when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom” (Matt. 26:29, emph. LM). They were not to be partaking of the Lord's Supper prior to the time of the kingdom's establishment on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), and there would be a specific day on which it would be taken. Jesus did not yet make clear whether “that day” was literal or figurative; weekly, monthly, or yearly—the apostles would have to wait for further instructions. But as of the day of Pentecost, the apostles had clearly received those in-

structions, as **all** the early Christians “continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42). The phrase “breaking of bread” is obviously included here in a context of worship (the use of the phrase in Acts 2:46 is clearly in the context of a common meal), therefore referring to the Lord’s Supper, and there was a particular pattern being observed by all. From what Jesus had told His apostles as recorded in Matthew 26:29, this pattern would have to include assembling at a particular time to partake of the Lord’s Supper. The apostle Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, “For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till he come” (1 Cor. 11:26). And how often was this? “And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow, and continued his speech until midnight” (Acts 20:7). While it is again agreed that the phrase “break bread” can refer to a common meal, it is impossible but that it here refer to the Lord’s Supper. The prior verse indicates that they waited a full week for this day and came together to break bread, that is, **for the purpose of** breaking bread. It cannot be understood that they waited a full week to eat, but that they waited a full week to partake of the Lord’s Supper. Since it is to be understood that this congregation was also following the apostolic pattern (Acts 2:42), and that this is provided as an example for us; it follows that we should observe this pattern.

Not only is the first day of the week set aside as the time to partake of the Lord’s Supper, it is also set aside as the time for giving: “Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come” (I Cor. 16:2). The phrase “in store” has reference to a common treasury; made clear by the fact that if it were not a common treasury, there would still have to be gatherings made when Paul came. One can only put into a common treasury in a common place, showing that they were assembled together for this, and on a common day—the first day of the week, literally translated, “the first day of every week.”

Pliny in A.D. 112 wrote in a letter to the Roman Emperor Trajan regarding Christians: “It was their habit to meet on a fixed day to assemble before sunlight and sing.” The day was fixed but the particular time was their “habit.” Jesus Christ began the practice of assembling on the first day of the week:

Then the same day (of Christ’s resurrection, LM) at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you (John 20:19).

“And after eight days again (the Jewish way of counting one week, LM) his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you” (John 20:26).

The key to understanding the need for meeting on the first day of the week is understanding the need for responsibility to God and authority from God. Each of us has a responsibility to worship God, including partaking of the Lord’s Supper and giving of our means. But when do we have Biblical authority to do these things? (Col. 3:17). Only on the first day of the week. Also essential to the first-day-of-the-week worship is congregational singing (Matt. 26:30; Col. 3:16), preaching of God’s word (Acts 20:7), and prayer (Matt. 26:26-27; 1 Tim. 2:8); although these acts of worship are authorized at other times as well (Jas. 5:13; Acts 13:14ff; 1 Thess. 5:17).

If we are to be pleasing to God, we must indeed meet on the first day of the week. It is a day greatly anticipated by Christians for the opportunities it provides that exist at no other time. We love the Lord, and we love to worship Him—this is why we meet on the first day of the week.

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## The Worship of the Church

Ron Cosby

In John 4:24, Jesus reminds us of the three components that comprise “true worship.” The denominational world agrees with Jesus on two of the three. First, they acknowl-

edge that God seeks those who will worship the one true God instead of idols or false deities. They also agree that true worshipers must worship from the heart. However, they ignore or minimize the third essential aspect of true worship which Jesus has commanded in this text.

Instead of worshiping as God directs, they teach that God has no concern for the items or avenues of worship. The do-as-you-please worship practices of today directly contradict the words of the Master.

We ought to heed the warnings of the past. “Will-worship” or self-chosen worship, as Paul describes it, is sin (Col. 2:23). As an example to others, God sent fire from heaven upon the two sons of Aaron because they substituted their own fire for that which God authorized in worship (Lev. 10:1-2). Notice the words, “...which he commanded them not.” God had not commanded the fire which they offered. They chose to follow their own will in the matter and were destroyed for it.

Though God no longer strikes worshipers dead for worshiping contrary to His will, He has illustrated that He is highly displeased with such high-mindedness.

Since God no longer shows His displeasure in the same manner, having made it clear what He wants, some will mistakenly conclude, “Oh, that was the way it was long ago. God does not care how we worship as long as we are sincere.”

To these Jesus declared,

But in vain do they worship me, Teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men. Ye leave the commandment of God, and hold fast the tradition of men. And he said unto them, Full well do ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your tradition (Mark 7:7-9).

Make no mistake. God is not so starved for attention that He will accept anything we offer Him.

Here are the directions that God has commanded for those that worship in truth: We are to pray (Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 14:15). Preaching or teaching God's message is another avenue of worship that we have from God (Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 14; Acts 20:7). We are also to give as God has prospered us (1 Cor. 16:1-2). This does not mean we are to be taking up a “love offering” every time the doors are open. The specific instruction is to give “upon the first day of the week.”

Though the denominational world will take up a collection every Sunday, they partake of the Lord's Supper when it pleases them instead of on the first day of the week. Which has God instructed? First of the week, or when we it pleases the worshiper?

Following the Bible, we have at least two examples of when the apostolic church observed the Lord's Supper. Those at Troas broke bread (ate the Lord's Supper) upon the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). In fact, because the apostle Paul arrived a little later than he planned, had to wait a week to worship with those brethren. Now if God allowed men to partake of the communion at any time, then he could have broken bread on Tuesday or Thursday and then continued his journey to Jerusalem. Remember, he was hastening to attend a feast, but waited in Troas until the first day of the week to worship with them and observe the Lord's Supper.

The inspired custom of the church at Corinth is a second example of when we are to partake of the this important item of worship. Following inspired instructions, they ate the Lord's Supper when they assembled themselves together and the first day of the week was when they did this (1 Cor. 16:1-2). That's why he rebuked them for their corruption of the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week. “When therefore ye assemble yourselves together, it is not possible to eat the Lord's supper” (1 Cor. 11:20).

Denominational preachers will push their members to give every Sunday but allow them to communion in the Supper when they feel like it. One wonders why they don't advocate partaking of this most solemn Supper every week and allow their members to take up a collection every quarter or semiannually! As faithful followers of the New Testament, the first day of the week will find us breaking bread and giving.

We call your attention to one last God-given item of worship—singing. This is the only

music God has authorized in the New Testament. Ask yourself, “What kind of music did the Christians present to God in the days of the apostles?” History shows they only sang, but we don't prove our thesis by history. Founders and leaders of denominational groups—John Wesley (Methodist), John Calvin (Presbyterian), and Charles Spurgeon (Baptist), argued in favor of singing, but we do not prove our thesis by what they argued. We only ask for you to read the New Testament, see what Christians did in the first century and then follow their example (Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:19; 1 Cor. 14:15). What they did pleased God. Adding to what they did will certainly displease God.

The only instrument in Christian worship that pleases God is the heart of man. The passage that teaches we must worship with grace in your hearts also teaches the kind of instrument God commands—the heart (Col. 3:16). You have to add to the Scriptures to include mechanical instruments of music in Christian worship. Jesus warned,

But in vain do they worship me, Teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men. Ye leave the commandment of God, and hold fast the tradition of men. And he said unto them, Full well do ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your tradition (Mark 7:7-9).

Let us not offer unto God unauthorized music (Lev. 10:1-2).

### **Conclusion**

A corruption of the worship authorized in the Scriptures means the destruction of the identity of the worshiper as one who worships in truth. It makes one a false worshiper. Martin Luther was wrong when he said, “Now every one can note and tell for himself when he does what is good or what is not good; for if he finds his heart confident that it pleases God, the work is good, even if it were so small a thing as picking up a straw...” (*A Treatise on Good Works*, p. 22). You will be wrong to practice what Luther taught. God is not so starved for attention that He will accept anything you offer Him. The church of the New Testament offers only the worship God authorizes.

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## **The Gospel For Today**

**Foy E. Wallace, Jr.**

“If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed” (Gal. 1: 9.)

The ever-increasing demand for things new requires emphasis on things old. The varied products and commodities of the commercial world are continually changing. Hardly has one been marketed until a later, improved model is announced. So the “new model” is the salesman’s stock argument, and the only one needed. This sentiment, sad but true, is growing in religion, and popular religion today is but little more than “keeping up with the times.” The people have become victimized by attractions and the world is deluged with many gospels. But there is only one attraction which can draw men to Christ. It is the cross of Christ. “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me” (John 12:32). And there is only one gospel that saves—the gospel of Christ. All others are perversions. “Which is not another [gospel]; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.” A perverted gospel may have in it all of the elements of the true gospel. There are doctrines about God, Christ, Holy Spirit, faith, repentance, baptism, etc.; but if these are perversions of the true, they have no saving power. The gospel of Christ is the “power of God unto salvation,” and it is the truth that makes men free. “Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). The old but ever-new gospel of Christ is the only gospel that has power to save.

Tis the same old gospel story,  
Just as beautiful and true,  
Just as full of Jesus’ power,  
As it was when it was new.

The principles of this old gospel—the gospel for today and forever—may be summarized in platform style.

### **The Bible God Versus Evolution**

The first sentence in the Bible is where we begin: “In the beginning God.” It stands as an archway upon the horizon of time. A memory of childhood serves to illustrate this great truth. We lived near a railroad track. Often I stood in the center of the track and looked as far down the track as the eye could focus. In the distance the rails seemingly converged, or reached the focal point. Beyond that the eye could not see. Then it was only an amusement and a wonder why. Now it is the picture of a mighty truth. Looking back through the centuries and millenniums of earth’s generations, everything comes together. The rails converge in the first sentence of the Bible—“In the beginning God.” Beyond that point no man can see. Everything before it is admittedly “prehistoric,” the admission of speculation on the part of those who try to begin before and without the God of the Bible.

### **The Bible Christ Versus Modernism**

Too much is heard today about Jesus the **man**, Jesus the **teacher**, Jesus the world’s greatest **character**, and not enough of Jesus Christ the Son of God. Modernism accepts Jesus the man and Jesus the teacher, but rejects Jesus the Christ.

The first sermon of a converted infidel—Saul of Tarsus—“proclaimed Jesus, that he is the Son of God” (Acts 9: 24). That is the heart of every gospel sermon today.

### **The Church Versus Denominationalism**

The Bible view of the church is not that Christians may form themselves into so many religious societies, parring with commercial clubs and fraternal orders, furnishing the religious association of our choosing. The Bible church is one body—“many members, but one body.”

The question, “What church do you belong to?” has become so common that one expects it as he does a usual morning salutation. Yet, Scripturally speaking, it is known to be true that one had as well inquire, “What God do you worship?” or, “What Christ do you believe in?” Our Bibles all read: One God, the Father; one Lord, Jesus Christ; and one body, the church. We want the church versus denominationalism.

### **Salvation Versus Sensationalism**

The evangelism of the apostles was of marked simplicity. It consisted in the Gospel story plainly and simply told. It was void of all sensationalism and ostentation. Today, passing from the extreme of a slow, agonizing waiting at the altar of prayer, once known as the “mourner’s bench,” religionists have swung to the “get-saved-quick” system of a modern sensationalist who exhorts his hearers to “hold up your hand” and “sign a card” [or “pray the sinners’ prayer”] and the work is done. Both methods are perversions, but there is more of religious devotion and change of heart in the former delusion than in the later sensation. The New Testament plan of salvation has never changed. Its simple conditions, briefly put, are: Faith, repentance, and baptism, all of which together “translates” us out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of His Son.

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## **The Modern Religious Trend**

**Herschel E. Patton**

In the days gone by, most people’s religious activity was the result of conviction. Today, conviction has little to do with one’s religion. This, of course, is a great departure from New Testament Christianity.

The apostles and other early members of the church had convictions. They were moved by conviction and were even willing to die for their convictions. In fact, many of them died horrible deaths rather than renounce their convictions.

Today, if a man has convictions—believes with all his heart that a thing is right or wrong religiously and stands firm for his convictions, he is branded as fanatical and narrow-minded. With most people in this age, it is “out of place” to consider anyone wrong in their religious activities. One who does so is said to be “narrow,” “egotistical” and “fanatical.” Thus, the modern trend is to consider every system of religion as pleasing and acceptable to God—regardless of what its doctrines and practices might be. The following are illustrations of this modern thinking in religion.

Some time ago, the dean of the University of Alabama told a large gathering that, “The churches cannot preach the same gospel to its children now that they did 40 years ago and expect the same kind of children.”

From this statement, it seems the Dean thinks the old gospel has become ineffective. Since the New Testament reveals only one gospel, if another is taught today it would have to originate with man. But, in the minds of many people, it’s perfectly fine for them to try to direct their own steps religiously even though the Bible says this is impossible. (Jer. 10:23). This is the modern trend. But one must remember that the New Testament says, “If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached, let him be accursed.” (Gal. 1:8-9).

Again, *The Birmingham News* (Dec. 1, 1944) carried an article by William T. Ellis entitled, “Churches of World Developing Non-Denominational Viewpoint” in which the following statement was made:

“The universal church turns many aspects to the variety of **human needs and tastes**. (Emph. HP). Some of the new and growing emotional sects, for instance, make an appeal to the common people that is entirely lacking in more formalized churches. So long as both groups greet each other as brothers in Christ, we may be content.”

The writer goes on to say, “At a Sunday School convention a man said to me, ‘It’s sort of funny, but although I was brought up a United Presbyterian, and was well indoctrinated with my church’s distinctive teachings, when I moved to a new suburb which had only a Lutheran Church, which I joined, I found no real difference in it and I am as good a Lutheran as I was a United Presbyterian!’ That man learned that Christ is in all churches.”

These statements certainly picture the modern trend of religious thought—any and all systems of religion are pleasing to God—Christ is in them all. In other words, according to modern religious thinking, it makes no difference with God what we are or what we do religiously.

In the December, 1944 issue of *The Way of Life*, A. E. Emmons, Jr. wrote a timely article concerning a statement made by a newspaper editor who said, “When a great preacher preaches, few hearers can tell even what church he belongs to—religion is just as simple as that—it belongs to no one, yet it is the property of all for the asking.” This editor had the same idea of religion that we have noted in this article—anything will do.

But this modern trend of religious thinking contradicts every passage of scripture in the Bible that warns of false teachers and doctrine. In Matt. 15:9, Jesus said, “In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.” In verse 13 of the same chapter, he said, “Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.” The modern trend teaches that there is no such thing as vain worship and none will be rooted up because Christ is in all churches and those of all different faiths are brothers in Christ.

But the apostle John says in 1 John 4:1 “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.” Peter says, “But there were false prophets among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways.” (2 Pet. 2:1-2).

Again, the apostle John says,

Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not

God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.(2 John 9-11).

If all churches were abiding in the doctrine of Christ, there would not be such division as now characterizes the religious world, for His doctrine does not cause division. Where division exists, someone is not abiding in the doctrine of Christ. Yet the modern trend says Christ is in all churches. But the apostle says, “Whosoever...abideth not in...doctrine of Christ...hath not God.” What shall we accept—the modern trend of thought or what an inspired apostle said?

In the above passage from John, special reference is made to those who deny “that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh.” (2 John 7). Jews today deny that Christ has come in the flesh. As a result, John says they “have not God,” but Mr. Ellis says in his article that he has worshipped in Jewish synagogues and his conclusion is that “Christ is in all churches.”

It is impossible for one to believe these verses of scripture and at the same time hold to the modern trend of religious thought. As much as we would like to consider all churches as constituting one big brotherhood in Christ, we cannot do it and still be guided by the scriptures.

The scriptures teach that Christ came to this world where he made the supreme sacrifice, shedding his own blood for remission of sins. (Matt. 26:28). He then commanded his apostles to “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” (Mark 16:15-16).

In Acts 2, when those believing people repented and were baptized for the remission of their sins, they were added to the church by Christ (Acts 2:38-47). Christ established only one church (Matt. 16:18) and it is only by baptism into Christ that one enters that church. (Rom. 6:3-5; Eph. 1:22-23).

When one is baptized into Christ, he enters the only church Jesus built and when one obeys from the heart (Rom. 6:16-18) he is a brother in Christ to all who have done the same.

No matter what the religion, if one has not done these things, he is not a brother in Christ—regardless of the modern trend of religious thinking. My prayer is that people will be more interested in being led by the scriptures rather than the popular notion of the day.

**(Editor's Note: The religious trend Herschel Patton described more than 70 years ago were the “seeds of postmodernism” noted by Dub McClish in the next *article—Early Postmodernism*).**

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## Early Postmodernism

Dub McClish

“Postmodernism” is the ascendant philosophy. To mention **post**modernism implies its antecedent, modernism. Modernism attempts to explain all things by nature. It arose in 19th-century Germany, about the time Darwin published his God-denying theories. Its blood-brother is secular humanism.

Modernists deny Biblical miracles (no “natural” explanation) and the need for revelation (one can discover all the truth he needs through reason). Modernism has dominated the major US theological schools and denominations for more than a century, destroying the Biblical faith of multiplied millions.

Modernism treats all religion as superstition and seeks to “free” men from such “hang-ups.” Postmodernism freely accepts any and all religions—as long as none make exclusive or universal truth-claims. This philosophy screams pluralism, giving all religious/ethical systems “moral equivalence.” Thus two propositions may be diametrically contradictory but both be “truth”—so long as neither claims his position alone is right and all others are wrong (never mind that “Dr. Postmodernist” makes

this very exclusive and universal claim for his position!).

Ironically, the seeds of postmodernism were in the soil of religion even before modernism. Some very old religious slogans well illustrate this suggestion, among them the following:

“It makes no difference what one believes as long as he is sincere.” This inanity was invented to justify the plethora of denominational names, creeds, and practices, all claiming to have sprung from and belong to the Christ. (Obviously, its mouthers didn’t really believe it, for it was never [until recently] applied to the sincere Buddhist, Muslim, or Hindu.) The Bible, however, says that one’s belief makes all the difference. It was Saul’s perverted belief that caused him to sincerely persecute the saints (Acts 23:1). Must one believe in Jesus as God’s Son (“Except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins” [John 8:24])? God’s judgment is upon any who believe a “different gospel” (Gal. 1:6–9).

“One church is as good as another.” Again, this bromide sought (and seeks) to justify denominational diversity among professed “Christians.” Postmodernism simply applies it to religion in general. The Bible renders both applications of it false. Jesus built, died for, and bought only one church (Mat. 16:18; Eph. 5:25; Acts 20:28). Only one—the one revealed in and that yet follows the New Testament—is His (Eph. 1: 22–23; 4:4–6). Only when human religious organizations are considered is “one as good as another,” regarding salvation.

Postmodernism is the “favorite son” of Political Correctness.

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## The Value of the Church

**Fred E. Dennis**

The church is a divine institution. Jesus said, “I will build my church” (Matt. 16:18). He is the only one who has a right to speak of it as “**my** church.” When men say, “my church,” they are not thinking clearly. We have hundreds of religious organizations in the world started by men. There is no salvation in any human institution, be it religious, social, fraternal, or political.

The church is valuable because of what it cost. It cost God His Son, and it cost the Son His blood. The church was made possible by the blood of Christ, and we are bought with His precious blood. Paul told the Ephesian elders that the church was purchased with the blood of Christ (Acts 20:28).

We do value things in proportion to their cost, and so we should highly value the church. We have not been redeemed with corruptible things such as silver and gold, but by the precious blood of Christ (1 Pet. 1:18-19).

The church is valuable because salvation is in it. There is no salvation for any of us outside of Christ. Neither is there salvation in any name other than that of Christ (Acts 4:12). The same thing that saves us makes us members of the church. We are added to the church by the Lord when we are saved from our sins (Acts 2:38, 46-47).

When we do the things that God commands us to do to be saved—believe in Jesus as God’s Son (John 8:24), repent of our sins (Luke 13:3), confess Christ before men (Matt. 10:32; Acts 8:37) and are baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38)—we are added to the church by Christ Himself. If we all do those things, they will make us all members of the same church. Doing something else will make us members of something else, but it will not save us.

Sometimes people say, “The church never saved anyone.” It’s true that the church does not save, but the saved are in the church and it is the church which Christ saves (Eph. 5:23, 1:22-23; Col. 1:18). The church is the body of Christ and He is the Saviour of the body.

The church is valuable because it wears only Christ’s name. No other institution or organization has the divine right to wear the name of Christ. He called it His church, and Paul called various congregations of that church, “churches of Christ” (Rom. 16:16).

What a grand privilege to be in the church that honors Christ as its Head and wears His name. The faithful wife loves to wear the name of her husband. The church is the bride of Christ and faithfully wears His name. A faithful wife would wear no name but her husband's and a faithful Christian wears no name but Christ's.

The church is the **only** kingdom that will stand forever. The kingdoms of men are here today, but in a few hundred years they are fallen. But the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed (Dan. 2:44) and that kingdom is the church of Christ (Matt. 16:18-19). "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear" (Heb. 12:28).

In the clash and destruction of empires today, the humble Christian can rest assured that the kingdom—or church—of Christ will stand forever. It cannot be moved. Therefore, we must be true and faithful in our service to the God of heaven. He has the power to sustain His own, and this He will do.

We are **now** in the kingdom. The kingdom of heaven is not some future earthly kingdom, but a present spiritual reality. It is the church, and we who are in the church are in the kingdom.

Before the kingdom was established, Jesus taught His disciples to pray, "thy kingdom come" (Matt. 6:10). That prayer was in order then, but is not now because the kingdom has been here for nearly 2,000 years. Paul wrote, "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son" (Col. 1:13). All will agree that it would not have been possible to be translated into a kingdom in Paul's day that did not exist. It did exist, and the saved were translated into it.

The apostle John said he was in the kingdom. "I John, who also am your brother and companion in tribulation and **in the kingdom** and patience of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 1:9). It would be pretty hard to be a brother in something that did not exist.

We are living in the last age. When Jesus comes again, it will **not** be to set up a kingdom, but to deliver the kingdom up to the Father (1 Cor. 15:24). Christ is now reigning and will come the next time without an offering for sin (Heb. 9:27-28).

Are you ready to meet the Lord when He comes again? Have you done what He commands in the New Testament in order to become a Christian? We plead with you to become one now. Don't trust the notions of men or religious leaders. Read the New Testament for yourselves and learn the will of God.

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## How do You Know You are a Christian?

Gale Oler

Ask a person if he is a Jew, and right back you get your answer, yes or no. There is no doubt in his mind about that. Ask him if he is a Mason, and there you are again. A positive answer. He knows beyond a doubt. But ask him if he is a Christian! "Well, I hope so," he may reply.

Others may answer, "Yes sir!" And then if you ask, "How do you know you are a Christian?" you will likely hear, "Well, I just know that I am."

Paul plainly tells us how you can know whether you are a Christian, a child of God. "The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God." (Rom. 8:16 ASV).

You will notice that there are **two** witnesses, not one as many suppose. God's Spirit does **not testify to** your spirit, but the two spirits jointly testify. If one testifies to another, there is only one witness. If they testify with each other, there are two witnesses. So the two witnesses must join in making testimony that we are children of God.

But how does the Spirit testify? He testifies by words: "Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth, combining spiritual things with spiritual words." (1 Cor. 2:13 ASV).

But we ask the question: “What is this testimony that the Spirit bears with reference to ones being a child of God?” Is it a new revelation, borne directly to us by the Holy Spirit? It is not. God has already given men all the testimony by the Holy Spirit that they will ever get. Look at this passage: “According as his divine power **hath given** unto us **all things** that pertain to life and godliness . . .” ([Emph. GO] 2 Pet. 1:3). Notice that “hath given.” Two thousand years ago, all things pertaining to life and godliness **had been given**. The Spirit has already borne His testimony. Why expect anything further?

Is the Spirit's testimony a matter of our feelings? It is not. Many people talk about how they “feel” in religion. They think if they feel good, they are saved. If they don't feel something strange, and if they feel bad, they think they are unforgiven and lost.

Feelings are deceitful. Jacob listened to the false reports of his sinful boys about Joseph, and looked upon Joseph's coat that was bloody (Gen. 37:31-35), and “felt” that his boy was dead. But his feeling deceived him. A person can be happy and contented in a false religion if he believes the false religion to be right. True religion will make a person joyful and happy, but joy and happiness is no sign that one is saved. It is a sign that he “thinks” he is saved.

Sincerity is no evidence of being a Christian. True Christians are sincere, but others are sincere too. Jacob was sincerely mistaken when he said he would see his son no more this side of the grave. Paul was sincerely mistaken when he persecuted the church.

The combined testimony of God's Spirit and man's spirit offer us knowledge as to whether we are Christians. The Holy Spirit testifies as to the way of pardon through the word of God, and man's spirit testifies as to whether he has obeyed that way. Here is the way it is done:

- The Spirit says, “. . . Whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16).
- Man's spirit says, “I have done this”, or “I have not done this.”
- The Holy Spirit says, “. . . Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” (Luke 13:3).
- Man's spirit says, “I have repented”, or “I have not repented.”
- God's Spirit says, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...” (Acts 2:38).
- Man's spirit says, “I have been baptized in Jesus' name for the remission of my sins”, or “I have not been baptized in Jesus' name for the remission of my sins.”

Any honest, intelligent person can take the Spirit's testimony as to how to obtain pardon, compare that plan with what he has or has not done, and know beyond a doubt whether he is a Christian. You know whether you are a believer, don't you?

Do you know whether you have turned your heart to God? Do you know whether you have been baptized in Jesus' name for the remission of sins? Then in the light of the full testimony of the Holy Spirit, and in the light of honest conviction about your own actions, you can **know** whether you are a Christian.

Regardless of how much you may **feel** you are saved, of how your own spirit testifies to that effect, the Holy Spirit must corroborate that testimony by His, which is the word of God. A man is never saved before the Spirit says he is.

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# “Baptism Does Not Save Us...”

Gary W. Summers

Who would issue such a statement as the claim made in the title of this article? The answer is that a Baptist Church in this area not only would but has done so. It is from “Section 1” of a handbook given to those who decide to be members of that particular Baptist Church. The title of this section is: “**Baptism and Church Membership.**” Underneath this main heading is the following sentence: “After a person receives Jesus as Lord and Savior, God commands him/her to be baptized and join a local church.”

No Scriptures are provided for this point, but the claim is made that one is baptized **after** he receives Jesus as Lord and Savior. Apparently, **receiving** Jesus is the equivalent of being saved. Only when this has been accomplished does one need to be baptized and join a local church. The Bible teaches that one is saved **when** he is baptized (not before) and does not speak at all (in any of the verses cited later) about joining the church.

Ordinarily, when citing materials produced by others, only the most pertinent comments are repeated, but in this case every word will be cited just to make certain that the reader knows nothing significant has been omitted. Section 1 includes two sub-headings, the first of which is **BAPTISM**. Immediately under the heading are the following words:

Baptism does not save us (give us or keep us in a relationship with God), but it is the first step in obeying our Lord.

Have these Baptists never read what Satan did in the Garden of Eden? God told Adam that in the day that he ate of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, he would surely die (Gen. 2:17). Eve knew of this command because she repeated it in Genesis 3:3. Satan told her, “Ye shall not surely die.” When a statement such as this one is completely reversed in meaning, most of us call it a lie.

1 Peter 3:21 says: “The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us....” Yet the Baptists say, “Baptism does not save us....” To contradict the Scriptures in this way is just as much of a lie as what Satan told. Jess Whitlock used this comparison in a debate once. The entire audience could see the difference between the words **now** and **not**. Does baptism save us now? Is it part of the process of having sins removed, as Acts 2:38 and Acts 22:16 teach? Or does it have nothing to do with salvation?

Most people would absolutely dread directly contradicting a verse of Scripture, but Baptist leaders do not hesitate to do so. Nor can this be an honest mistake—not when it is as clear a lie as the devil’s. No one can claim sincerity when they add “**not**” to a command of God. Such an act is intentional.

The truth is that baptism does put us in a relationship with God because we connect to the death of Christ through baptism. We are united with Him in that watery grave (Rom. 6:3-5). His blood washes away our sins at the time we are immersed. For this reason both the blood of Jesus and baptism are said to wash away our sins (Rev. 1:5; Acts 22:16). Baptism is not the first step of obedience; it is the last step in the salvation process, following faith, repentance, and confession (Mark. 16:16; Acts 2:38, Acts 8:37). Rejoicing always follows baptism (Acts 8:38-39; Acts 16:33-34). In the Scriptures, no one ever believed, rejoiced in his salvation, and then was told to be baptized. Not once! If the Baptists had a single example of such an occasion, they would present it for everyone to see. Such a turn of events does not exist.

## Baptism Is Commanded

Roman numeral I is titled **The Importance of Baptism**. It consists of an A, B, C, and D. A is very brief: “The last command Jesus gave his followers.” This is followed by Matthew 28:18-20, and that is the entire point. This passage does teach baptism—but not the way Baptists do. Jesus said to go and “make disciples of all nations.” Now an inquiring person might wonder, “How does one make disciples?” There is a twofold answer: 1) “baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”; and 2) teaching them to observe all things” that Jesus had commanded the apostles (Matt. 28:19-20).

One is baptized as part of the process of becoming a disciple. Neither this verse nor any other verse says that one is a disciple **before** being baptized. He cannot be because he is not **saved** until baptism. But watch carefully how Point B is stated:

After 3000 people were saved on the Day of Pentecost, they were immediately baptized and made members of the local church.

Following this statement the Scripture passage of Acts 2:41-47 is cited. This is all there is to point B.

The discerning Bible student must ask, “Where in this passage does it say that anyone was saved?” First of all, they did not start with the correct verse. They should have started with the question that the people asked Peter on the Day of Pentecost after he convinced them that the Jesus they crucified was, in fact, the Christ (Acts 2:36-37). They asked what they should do, and Peter answered in the very next verse: “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38).

### **Why Were They to Repent and be Baptized?**

Notice that the people have not responded by verse 38. They had asked what to do in verse 37, and Peter is just now answering their question. If they want to do something about their sins (specifically, crucifying Jesus, but all others as well), they must repent and be baptized. Notice that these acts bring them forgiveness of sins (remission). Why did the Baptist booklet fail to mention the answer Peter gave the people?

But he is not through. He continues to speak to them in verse 39: “For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.” At the end of verse 39, no one is said to be saved yet. They are still listening to Peter’s answer to their question. However, the apostle is still not through: “And with many other words he testified and exhorted them saying, ‘Be saved from this perverse generation.’”

Notice that nowhere does the text say they were saved. In fact, not one of them was yet because Peter was still pleading with them to save themselves! Yet the Baptist booklet provides none of this background. It simply says 3,000 were saved and then baptized, advising their readers to begin reading with verse 41, which does mention 3,000—but still says nothing about being baptized **after** they were saved. In fact, no one has responded yet to Peter’s urgings to be saved, but they will in verse 41. Consider it carefully.

“Then they that gladly received his word were baptized...” This is the crowd’s response. Peter told them to be baptized for the forgiveness of their sins, and now we see that they are. Nothing is said about them being saved before this point. This is the way they are saved—by being baptized. They gladly received his word regarding repenting and being baptized. “...and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.”

The Baptist booklet is wrong to say they were saved and then baptized. Peter admonished them to save themselves, and this they did by repenting and being baptized. Whoever wrote those words in the booklet deliberately misrepresented this text. They can read and understand the text as well as anyone, but their doctrine does not match the truth; so they just twist the truth and hope no one will read the text carefully. Below is a synopsis of the text.

1. Peter preaches the resurrection of Christ, which he established through fulfilled prophecy and through eyewitness testimony (Acts 2:22-36).
2. The people ask what they should do (verse 37).
3. Peter tells them, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...” (verse 38). He then encourages them and exhorts them to save themselves (verses 39-40). Nothing has been omitted in this summary.
4. Those “who gladly received his word” (about repenting and being baptized) “were baptized.” What is so difficult about understanding this point (verse 41)?

5. These 3,000 “were added unto them” (verse 41). Added to whom? The apostles who had been doing the preaching.

6. It is not until later in verse 47 that a more explicit answer is given about that to which the 3,000 were added. All who had been baptized were “praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.”

The reader may not have noticed the discrepancy between the introductory paragraph and the wording of Point B. The introductory paragraph says a person should be baptized “and join a local church.” That is not what the Scriptures teach; they stated it correctly in point B when they said the 3,000 were “made members of the local church” (the only local church in existence, as a matter of fact). God makes those who are baptized members of the church. No one joins the church. But even if they did, there was no Baptist Church to join in Jerusalem. The only church in existence is the one that belonged to Jesus, which He promised to build (Matt. 16:18). The church does not belong to men; it belongs to Christ, Who is the Head over it (Eph. 1:22-23).

### **Acts 8:12-13; Acts 10:48**

Point C cites the above passage after making this brief statement: “All believers in the local church were baptized.” However, if you read verse 12, it does not say the Samaritans were already saved. Instead, it describes their conversion: “But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.” They were not in the church first, but when they believed they were baptized, just as Jesus taught in Mark 16:16. Notice the text does not say, as the booklet does: 1) believe; 2) saved; 3) in the church; 4) baptized. Two and three are missing. When they believed, they were baptized.

The final verse on baptism that is cited is Acts 10:48. The accompanying sentence states: “Because baptism was expected after a person was saved, Peter commanded these new believers to be baptized.” The only trouble is that the text does not teach this error. Where does any verse in Acts 10 say that Cornelius and his family were saved prior to baptism?

Roman numeral II is titled **The Meaning of Baptism**. It begins with these words: “Baptism is symbolic,” and closes with: “Baptism is only proper when it follows conversion.” The first question is, “What Scripture says baptism is symbolic?” Where can we read that in the Bible? It is not there. The second question is: “Where does the Bible teach that baptism **follows** conversion instead of being **part of** conversion?” Baptist assumptions cannot take the place of Biblical evidence.

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## **Proving What Is Practiced**

**Nathan Brewer**

Whenever you hear someone mention the church of Christ, you might say to yourself, “That’s the church that doesn’t use instruments in worship.” That seems to be the first thing that pops into people’s minds when the church is discussed. That’s probably because **not** using musical instruments is so rare. It seems that most people who worship God sing accompanied by a piano, organ, or even a full band.

Sometimes, when people learn that we’re members of the church of Christ, they ask why we don’t use a piano. The answer is simple, and we’ll get to that in a little bit. But first, let me ask you this: If you use an instrument when you sing to God, **why** do you **do** it? Whether in a court trial, a formal debate, or just in a general conversation, the burden of proof rests on the affirmative. If you practice something in worshiping God, you’re supposed to be able to **prove why** you do it. Peter tells us to be able to defend our beliefs in First Peter 3:15. Can you prove that using instrumental music in worship pleases God?

Maybe you think it doesn’t matter to God whether you use instrumental music—that it’s an optional matter. Maybe you think it doesn’t matter how we worship as long as

we do it with a sincere heart. But if that's the case, why didn't God accept Cain's sacrifice in Genesis 4? Why didn't God accept Nadab and Abihu's sacrifice of incense in Leviticus 10? And why didn't God accept King Saul's sacrifice in First Samuel 13? God told all of these people how to worship Him, but they did something different. And God rejected their worship. You see, God doesn't accept everything that man offers Him.

Maybe you think the Bible tells us to use instrumental music in our worship. Lots of times, people will turn to a passage in the Old Testament book of Psalms that mentions a harp and then say, "See, it's okay to use instruments." But that same book mentions sacrificing animals and offering them to God. Do you do that when you worship today? No, you don't. That's because God doesn't want Christians killing animals in worship. The Old Testament told **Jews** how to worship under the **Law of Moses**. But today, we live under the Gospel of Christ. It's in the New Testament that Christ tells us how to worship acceptably.

Others have said that they like instrumental music in worship because it "sounds so good." Maybe you **do** enjoy it, but the question is, "Does **God** want it?" God has never left it up to man to worship the way he wants to. Worship isn't meant to please man. Its purpose is to please God. We worship God to honor Him as the Creator Who has given us everything. God is the audience when we worship, not us. What we want is irrelevant. And frankly, it's a little bit selfish to do what **we** want instead of what **God** wants.

Someone might argue that if a person has the talent to play an instrument and he wants to praise God with his ability, then it must be okay. But we still have to ask, what does God want? We all have some talent or ability, but that doesn't mean God wants us to use it to worship him. Some are great cooks. Some are great golfers. Others are great builders, or baseball players, or fishermen. That doesn't mean we're at liberty to incorporate these things into our worship.

Cain, Nadab, Abihu, and Saul didn't see anything wrong with the way they worshiped God. But God did. If God rejected worship in the Old Testament, it stands to reason that it's possible for Him to reject your worship today. Faithful congregations of the church of Christ don't use instruments when we sing to God because the New Testament doesn't tell us to (Col. 3:16-17).

It's that simple. The kind of worship that God wants today is plainly laid out in the New Testament, and **we can prove why** we worship the way we do. But can you do what Peter commands and prove **why you use** instrumental music in worship? We don't think you can, because the Bible simply doesn't authorize it.

Refusing to worship God the way He wants was a sign of disrespect in the Old Testament, which God punished severely. Don't wait until Judgment Day to find out whether God accepts your worship. Study this subject with an open Bible and an open mind.

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## The Identity of the Church

### H. Leo Boles

We are taught in the New Testament that Jesus would build but one church. He called this one "my church" (Matt. 16:18). We are to inquire what sort of church Christ did build. In order to determine the church that Christ built, we must go back through more than 20 centuries and visit Jerusalem on that eventful Pentecost which occurred after the ascension of Christ to the Father. We must examine with unbiased minds the preaching of Peter on that day.

### Peter's Sermon In Acts 2

On this Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles and they began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. There were physical manifestations that accompanied the miraculous descent of the Holy Spirit. When these manifestations were noised abroad, a great multitude came together.

There were dwelling in Jerusalem at that time Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. They had come to Jerusalem to keep the Passover and had remained to keep the feast of Pentecost 50 days later. When they came together, they heard the apostles speaking in their own tongues and were confused about what they heard. They did not understand the extraordinary events that were taking place. Some even concluded that the apostles were drunken and made that charge.

But Peter, speaking by the Holy Spirit, denied the charge and explained the phenomenon. He said those events were in fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel. He continued to speak and quoted from David to show that Jesus of Nazareth was the long-looked-for Messiah. He convinced many in the multitude. They had crucified the Christ who had been raised from the dead and ascended back to the Father. By Peter's words, they came to belief in Christ.

### **Terms Of Admission**

When the multitude had been convinced that the Messiah had been crucified, many of them said, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter then continued and said, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you and to your children and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:38-39). "Then they that were gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:41).

Here we have the first preaching that was done under the commission that Jesus had given the apostles after His resurrection. He had said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15-16). The terms of remission of sins were the terms of admission into the church. These people complied with them and were added to His church.

They continued steadfastly in the apostles teaching, which means they were instructed how to live in the church. So the preaching of the Gospel was essential to making church members. The Gospel must be believed, sins must be repented of, and people must be baptized into Christ in order to become members of this church.

### **The Test Applied**

Suppose that Peter were to arrive in this country today. What church would he attach himself to? If he could find a church with the terms of admission like he preached on Pentecost, then he would know that was a church of Christ. If he did not find a church with the same terms of membership, he would know that church was not the one Christ built.

If Peter should join any one of the present-day denominations, he would put himself in a church that Christ did not build. It is impossible for us to think that an inspired apostle would put himself into a church established by uninspired men and governed by uninspired regulations. If he should join the Methodist Church, he would have to subscribe to the Methodist Discipline. If he should join one of the Baptist Churches, he would have to subscribe to its peculiar creed. If he should join the Presbyterian Church, he would have to subscribe to its Confession of Faith. None of these admit people on the same terms that Peter preached on the day of Pentecost in Acts two.

### **Christ's Church Today**

Since we can learn from the New Testament what it took to establish the church of Christ on the day of Pentecost, and since the Gospel that was preached on that day is preached now, and people hear it, believe it, and obey it today just as they did in Acts two, we have the same church that was established on Pentecost.

If the members of this church continue steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship and breaking of bread and prayers as the first members did, we will have a church like the one that was established on Pentecost. In fact, we would have the identical church that was established on Pentecost.

If people know what was preached on Pentecost and what was believed and practiced, and know what is preached and practiced today, they can know, or identify, the church

of Christ and distinguish it from religious denominations. People today need not be mistaken or confused. It is possible for the **same Gospel** to be preached that was preached then, for people to **believe the same Gospel** as they did then and to live as they did then as members of the church. This would then constitute them members of the church of Christ, and make a group of such people a church of Christ.

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## Life In Three Domains

**Kent Bailey**

Life in all of its forms is a mystery. While we recognize the reality of it and appreciate its importance and values, we still cannot totally grasp the full significance of its essence. As we consider life there is no weight, no dimension, but an invisible force.

When we consider life in all of its forms we become very much aware that it is indeed communicated. Life is brought about by both seed and germination. We note that when it comes to physical life, whether that of vegetation, animal, or human. The same principle is true when it comes to spiritual life.

New Testament Christianity—the religion of Christ is a life. That being the case, it is also communicated. During the personal ministry of Christ on earth, in preparation for the Gospel and the New Testament church, our Lord gave clear indication that acceptable religion in the coming Gospel age would be communicated—germinated by means of divine truth; the word of God. Christ affirmed this fundamental truth:

No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall all be taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me (John 6:44-45).

In considering the reality of spiritual life, it is found to be a process brought about by the word of God being communicated to individuals. That truth is affirmed throughout the New Testament and demonstrated in the accounts of conversion as recorded in the book of Acts. Paul, the apostle of Christ, affirmed the germinating power of the gospel. While spiritual life in Christ does not terminate in doctrine, it does owe its origin and existence in it:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth: to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith (Rom. 1:16-17).

Life in all of its forms is considered precious. The plant struggles to live, animals cling to it, from the worms of the dust to the monsters in the depths of the sea. Humanity's greatest fear is the loss of life.

In view of these fundamental truths let us give serious consideration to life in three domains:

### **The Domain of Nature**

We enter nature by birth. Life in this realm is universal. It is not miraculous, but rather is brought about by procreation and the laws of nature (Psa. 8; Acts 17:24-29).

In considering the domain of nature, we note that the blessings of this aspect of life are both temporal and universal (Matt. 5:43-48). God gives the temporal blessings of physical life to all whether they be righteous or evil. As Christians we must react to all individuals in the same manner (Gal. 6:10).

As we consider the domain of nature we must also consider life not only in the present, but also in the hereafter. **Between** these two dominions there is spiritual life which results from salvation from sin. It differs from physical life (Acts 2:38-47; Rom. 6:3-11; Gal. 2:20; Rom. 8:2). For this aspect of life we look to the gospel of Christ.

### **The Domain of Grace**

This is found within the kingdom of Christ, the New Testament church (Col. 1:1-23; Eph. 1:22-23; 5:23; 4:4; Rom. 5:1-2).

We enter into this domain by a **spiritual** birth (John 3:1-5). This genesis or birth is a new spiritual beginning by God's divine forgiveness. It is not a miracle, but is accomplished by our acceptance of, and obedience to, the Gospel of Christ. Faith changes our trust (John 1:12), repentance changes our mind (Acts 17:30), confession of our faith changes our allegiance (Rom. 10:10) and baptism changes our spiritual state, or condition (Acts 2:38).

The domain of God's grace brings one to spiritual blessings that are in Christ (Eph. 1:3). However, we must also live faithful to Christ (Heb. 10:39; Phlp. 2:12; Rev. 2:10).

### **The Domain of Glory**

Christians will enter into this domain, or dominion, either by the resurrection from the grave or, if alive when Christ returns, by transformation (1 Cor. 15:20-26; 15:40-58; 1 Thess. 4:13-18).

Life on this earth is precious. We need to make the most of how long God allows us to live. We must also be good stewards of the time God has allotted us and use our time for his service and glory.

As great as life in the domain of nature really is, let us never forget that it is the time of preparation that God has given unto us to make ready for eternity. When we pass into eternity, either by death or the Lord's coming, our destiny is sealed either for eternal rest, peace, and non-ending fellowship with God, or the eternal misery of an eternal Hell.

As a penitent believer in Christ, confess him and be baptized for the remission of sins today. As a fallen child of God, repent and return to Christ before it is too late. As a Christian, live faithfully, grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ, and lead others to God's truth. Life in all three domains is valuable. Let us take none of them for granted.

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## **A Salvation Analogy**

**David Ray**

Everyone loves analogies. When it comes to explaining important truths, whether in religion or academia, analogies can be invaluable in helping us understand certain concepts. They can also be very detrimental if we don't pay close attention to them and make sure we're presenting them appropriately. But usually they'll benefit us in our understanding of truth.

With this in mind, I'm aware of many analogies for the process of salvation; i.e., how we become lost, what God does to save us, what we do to save ourselves, and the part brethren have in this. Consider the following analogy, using the image of a ship on the ocean.

The ship is the church, headed for home (Heaven). The water is the world. In the water surrounding the ship are people who are lost. They're lost because they have chosen to disobey God (Isa. 59:1-2; 1 John 3:4). Most don't even realize they're lost and will eventually drown because, to be honest, it's fun to swim in the water. Therefore most continue in their fun, never even noticing the ship or the evangelistic calls from the people on board (Christians) who want to save them and who have even thrown them the lifesaver (the Gospel).

Occasionally there's a person in the water who realizes his dire situation. So he heeds the warnings of those on board. In order to be saved he must have true remorse for his foolishness in putting himself in this perilous predicament (2 Cor. 7:10). Next he must respond to the efforts of those trying to save him. They've thrown him the lifesaver, which is floating easily within his reach, and he believes that this lifesaver can and will save him. But, as close as he is to salvation, he's still lost. What will he do now?

This scene, so far, represents man's sin and God's grace, which is available to every single person in the water (Titus 2:11-12). It is **not** God who caused this man, or anyone else, to be lost (Rom. 3:23; Col. 2:13); God didn't push him overboard! But it **is** God who, through the sacrifice of His Son, created this ship (the church) to save the world from sin and eternal punishment.

But we notice that God's grace can be rejected; not everyone will be saved (Matt. 7:13-14; 21-23). This man is not saved yet. He hasn't grabbed the lifesaver yet (i.e., obeyed the Gospel). So, what will he do with God's gracious offer of salvation, given through the Gospel (lifesaver) being thrown to him by concerned Christians?

Now enter faith. Faith is man's part in salvation and it includes his obedience to the gospel (Jas. 2:14-26; Heb. 5:9). If this man truly trusts this salvation process, he'll act upon his belief and take hold of the lifesaver. And what if he doesn't?

According to many religious folks, this man is already saved—by grace alone. But grace is the hand of God sent down to save us; it's up to each of us to reach out in faith and take that hand, or in this analogy, the lifesaver. If this man rejects the lifesaver, he rejects God's grace. And there is no other ship or lifesaver that will be offered. Grace and faith are equally useless without the other.

Therefore, **in faith**, he takes hold of the lifesaver (i.e., he obeys the Gospel)! He knows the promise of God, that through his grasp on the lifesaver he will be pulled to safety. He is doing his part to save himself (cf. Acts 2:40) and God is doing **His** part—through the Gospel truth and through loving brethren.

But what if the man lets go of the lifesaver (or, once in the ship, decides to jump back into the water)? Sadly, this often happens. Having been saved from drowning, people will let go of the Gospel and return to the world, like a dog returning to its vomit (2 Pet. 2:20-22). Holding onto the lifesaver—the Gospel—is our continued responsibility of remaining faithful even unto death (Rev. 2:10) and growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 3:18). Once in the ship, we have to remain in the ship!

Most people are drowning, completely uninterested in the lifesaver or the ship. Some people are joyously jumping from the ship back into the miry water. Still others, through obedience, are being pulled to safety by those who love them and who steadfastly believe, live, and teach the truth. Which are you?

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## **Editor's Travels and Writings**

We led singing at Willow, Okla. Sunday morning, Feb. 2, and preached that evening at Yukon, Okla. Sunday morning, Feb. 9, we preached for the Willow, Okla. church, led singing there on Feb. 16 and traveled to Yukon, Okla. to preach that evening. Our last trip of the month was to Chillicothe, Texas where we preached on Sunday morning, Feb. 23. March will be even busier.

**The first 100 copies that were printed of our book, “*The Thing That Hath Been...*”, are already gone.** Another 100 copies have been ordered. The book parallels the cycle of apostasy in the 19th century with apostasy today. It 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. It is **FREE OF CHARGE**. Details are found on the last page of this issue.

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# “What Saith The Scriptures?”

Harrell Davidson

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Our question for this month comes from a reader in Missouri: **“Would I be correct in assuming that a great number of Christians in the first century possessed spiritual gifts? (1 Cor. 1:7, the prophecy of Joel Acts 2:17-21).”**

One would probably be correct in saying that many Christians possessed spiritual gifts in the first century church. Spiritual gifts were only accomplished through the laying on of an apostles' hands. A good text to emphasize this is found in the following: “Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost” (Acts 8:17). This is the record when those in Samaria had heard the preaching of Philip the evangelist, one of those selected in Acts 6 to minister to the Grecian widows who were being neglected in their daily needs. Peter and John—apostles—were sent for the purpose of laying their hands on them to enable them to have the gift of the Holy Spirit.

There are some misunderstandings regarding these spiritual gifts. Paul said in First Corinthians 12:8-10,

For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another *divers* kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues.

The misunderstanding here is that many say that there were only nine spiritual gifts. While nine were enumerated here, there were others. If we have counted correctly, there were about 15 or 16 different gifts. We must use all accounts of such gifts and not limit ourselves to one or two passages.

A second misunderstanding is that every Christian received a spiritual gift. There is an interesting statement in Acts 2:39 where, in part, Peter said, [E]ven as many as the Lord our God shall call.” This is interesting because of the meaning of the word “call.” It comes from the Greek word *proskaleo* and is used only in the middle voice. One might ask what this means. First, it signifies that only those called would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Within the framework of all of those who obeyed the Gospel, only those called would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, from within the larger group that obeyed the Gospel, a smaller group would receive the gift as the Lord saw fit.

The spiritual gifts were given so that the church in any location could function scripturally. The church in Samaria is a good example of this. When Peter and John had laid their hands on sufficient individuals to enable the church to function properly, it is interesting that Samaria no longer needed Philip, Peter, and John. Why? They had been given spiritual gifts so they could carry on their own worship. The Bible student should ever keep this in mind.

Yes, many received spiritual gifts, but this side of eternity no one will ever know how many. Spiritual gifts were no longer needed when the Word was completely revealed and confirmed. Since revelation and confirmation occurred in the first century, we have no spiritual gifts today, nor do we have the need for them.

Thank you 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](mailto:harrelld@charter.net)**

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# Lessons From Beyond the Grave

**Jerry C. Brewer**

Throughout history, man has sought to see beyond this life. Job asked, "If a man die, shall he live again?" (Job 14:14). A few years ago when baseball great Ted Williams died his body was frozen with the hope of reviving it through cryogenics. Others have done the same, yet they are still dead and many questions remain. Can we know of things beyond the grave?

In one of the most remarkable passages in all of the Bible, Jesus pulled aside the curtain and gave us a small glimpse of what happens when we die and, in so doing, taught many lessons to the living. That passage is found in the account of the rich man and Lazarus.

There was a certain rich man which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: and there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores, And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, there is a great gulf fixed: so that they that would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us that would come from thence. Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldst send him to my father's house: for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead (Luke 16:19-31).

This account provides our only glimpse beyond this life, but it's rich with lessons for us today:

## **All Must Die**

The rich and mighty will ultimately occupy the same amount of land as the poor and lowly. In a recent stroll through our local cemetery, I noticed that the rich in our community who have died have no larger grave plots than the poor who have also died. Death is an appointment that all shall keep, for the Bible tells us that "it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb. 9:27). But this account is also intended to teach us lessons from **beyond** the grave. These two men, whose lives were such contrasts while they lived, are also contrasted after death. The rich man, who regarded not the misery of Lazarus while he lived, is now in far greater misery, and Lazarus, whose life was wretched on the earth, is now comforted in Paradise, a place which Jesus calls "Abraham's bosom."

## **Where These Men Are**

Jesus says, "...in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom." The Bible has two words that are translated "hell." One is *hades* and the other is *gehenna*. *Gehenna* is a word of Hebrew origin and is used in the New Testament describing the place of eternal punishment for the wicked. It is used this way in Matthew 5:22, Matthew 23:33, and Luke 12:5.

The word *hades* means "unseen" and describes the unseen realm where the departed souls of men go at death to await the resurrection and judgment. This word was used by Peter in Acts 2:27 to refer to Christ's death when he said, "thou wilt not leave my

soul in hell.” Christ did not go to the place of eternal punishment, but to the paradise in *hades*.

*Hades* consists of two places—torment where the rich man is, and paradise where Lazarus is. *Hades* (or what is termed *hell* in Luke 16:23) is divided by what Abraham describes as “a great gulf.” Both men were in the same general place, but the rich man was in torment. That's why he could see Abraham and Lazarus in paradise when “in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments.”

### **Death Seals One's Eternal Destiny**

For those who are in rebellion to God, this ought to be a chilling thought. The world is full of people who believe that it makes no difference whether we read, understand and obey the Bible. They believe that God will save men in the next life, no matter how they have lived in this one. But the account of the Rich man and Lazarus teaches otherwise. When the rich man died, his eternal destiny was sealed. According to Luke 16:26, he had absolutely no chance of crossing that “great fixed gulf” between his place of torment and paradise where Lazarus was comforted. Abraham told him that, “they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence” (Luke 16:26).

While the rich man lived upon the earth he had the opportunity to do God's will, but refused to do it. His day of opportunity was ended and that is, sadly, the case for millions in our day. The Bible says, “now is the day of salvation” (2 Cor. 6:2). That's why we preach the gospel of Christ—because there will be no opportunity for salvation when you die. If you die faithfully serving Christ, you will repose in Abraham's bosom, but should you die without obeying the gospel in faith, repentance, confession, baptism, and a faithful life of service in Jesus Christ, you will be in torment with the rich man.

### **Memory Will Torment the Lost**

While memory is precious to us all, it will be one of the most horrible things for those who are lost. Memory is one of the rich man's torments. Abraham told him, “Son, **remember** that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now, he is comforted, and thou art tormented (Emph. JCB). John Greenleaf Whittier penned these famous words in his poem, *Maud Muller*: “Of all sad words of tongue or pen/the saddest are these: “It might have been.” Those who enter torment will remember the opportunities they wasted in this life. They will regret those things for all eternity, and they will remember every time they spurned the call to gospel obedience. Again and again, world without end, they will cry, “If only I had heeded the call of Jesus Christ. **It might have been.**”

### **Material Things are not the Sum of Life**

Like multitudes of people today, the rich man lived his earthly life without a thought to what lies beyond the grave. He was concerned only with material things and Jesus says he “was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day” (Luke 16:20). He was literally, “making good cheer daily in splendor” without a thought for others or even his own soul. He obviously had plenty of food and drink and the “purple and fine linen” of his day was the clothing of royalty. He wanted for nothing that provides material comfort.

Now, there is nothing wrong with riches. The Bible does not condemn money, but it **does** condemn the “love of money” (1 Tim. 6:10). When men's lives consist only of material things in which they place their trust, they will be sorely disappointed at death, for all those things shall be left behind.

In the parable of the two builders, Jesus taught that those who build their lives upon material things shall suffer eternal loss, but those who hear and obey His word shall have eternal life (Matt. 7:24-27). The rich man isn't lost because he was rich in this life, but because he failed to **use** his riches in service to God.

### **Man Chooses his Own Eternal Destiny**

There are many people who object to the notion of eternal punishment, saying, “A merciful God would not send men to torment.” But what they fail to realize is that God **sends no one** to be punished. All who are punished will go voluntarily, like this rich

man. He had opportunities to do God's will while he lived and escape the condemnation that he now suffers, but he chose to ignore them. That's what Abraham recalled when he said, "Son, remember." God "is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9), and Jesus begs, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28).

Hell is not prepared for man, but for the devil and his angels (Matt. 25:41). Those who go to eternal torment will do so by choosing to follow the devil.

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## The Home as God Intended

**Landry Brewer**

The home has fallen on hard times in America. One out of two marriages ends in divorce. Children used to grow up with a mother and father at home. This isn't the case anymore. Friends, this isn't what God had in mind when He instituted marriage.

The home is the foundation of society. But as the home fractures, society's foundation cracks. How long can a society last without a solid foundation?

Genesis 2:18 says God saw that it wasn't good for man to be alone. So He created a helper for Adam named Eve. That's when marriage was instituted, and the home as God intended it began. According to verse 24, God desires husband and wife to cleave to each other and be one flesh. God wants a husband and wife to be joined, thinking and acting as one. And this is for life.

That's why Jesus says in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 that whoever gets a divorce and remarries commits adultery. A lot of preachers don't preach these words of Jesus, but they're in the New Testament for the world to see. A marriage is not to be taken lightly, but today many approach it with the attitude that if it doesn't work out, a divorce will take care of things. But Jesus says that can cost you your soul, and there's only one exception. In Matthew 19:9, Jesus says that if one spouse commits fornication, the innocent party may remarry. That's the only exception to the rule of marriage for lifetime.

How many people today are on their second, third or even fourth marriage? Yet, Jesus says that remarriage for a reason other than fornication results in adultery. Paul lists adultery among sins he calls "works of the flesh" in First Corinthians 6:9-10 and Galatians 5:19-21. In both places Paul says that those who do these things won't inherit the kingdom of God. That means they won't go to heaven. Divorce and remarriage is an American pandemic more serious than the Coronavirus. It can cost you your soul.

And divorce has a negative spiritual effect on children. Fathers are given the responsibility of bringing up their children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4.) That means fathers are supposed to teach their children the word of God and how to obey it so they can go to heaven. But fathers who don't live with their children can't do that. It's no wonder that the news is filled with stories of teenagers who've shot up a school or committed some other crime. The home is falling apart, and kids get little or no spiritual guidance from their parents. Mom and Dad set a bad example by tossing aside the God-given institution of marriage, and they don't teach their children to obey God.

The home God intends has one man married to one woman for life. Paul says in Ephesians 5:25 that husbands are supposed to love their wives just as Christ loved the church, and He died for it. Husbands, are you showing your wife that kind of love? Wives, you're supposed to submit yourselves to your husband. Are you doing that? When a man and woman work together to make their marriage what God wants it to be, the home functions as it should, and society is stable. So make your first marriage your only marriage, and raise your children in a loving home where God's word is taught.

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**Judgment is sure and eternity never ends. Where will you be?  
Heaven or Hell? It's YOUR Choice.**

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# Alien Sinners Praying for Salvation

Perry B. Cotham

Prayer is not in the Great Commission, the law of pardon as announced by the risen Christ, and no example of prayer for pardon was recorded in Acts of the Apostles. We then conclude that prayer is not a command given for salvation from sins. It is an addition by man and many souls are being led astray by this doctrine. Many are also being kept from learning and obeying the truth by a prayer system of salvation.

## For What Should An Alien Pray?

1. For God to **love him**? No, for God loves him now and has shown His love (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8; 1 John 4:9-10).
2. For **light or understanding**? No, for the word of God gives light, and the sinner has God's word (Psa. 119:105, 130). Hence, read and understand.
3. For **the Holy Spirit**? No. The Holy Spirit came upon the apostles to guide **them** into all truth. Christ never promised the Holy Spirit to anyone save the apostles (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7-13).
4. For **Christ to come to him**? No, because the sinner is invited to come to Christ (Matt. 11:28-30). If the sinner fails to come he will not be saved (John 5:40).
5. For **mercy**? No, for God has already extended his mercy to man (Ex. 34:6-7).
6. For **God to be willing to save him**? No, for God is willing to save him **now** (1 Tim. 2:3-4; 2 Pet. 3:9; Ezek. 18:23, 32). Yes, God is now anxious to save!
7. For **converting or saving power**? No. The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16; Psa. 19:7).
8. For **God to be reconciled to him**? No. The sinner must be reconciled unto God (2 Cor. 5:18-20). This is done by obeying the truth.
9. To **get religion**? No. Religion is something to **do** not **get** (Jas. 1:27).
10. For **saving grace**? No. God's grace that saves has already come (Tit. 2:11-12).
11. For **pardon**? No. The sinner must turn to God in order to be pardoned (Isa. 55:6-7). God is "ready to pardon" (Neh. 9:17). Is the sinner ready to turn to God?
12. For **salvation**? No. The sinner must comply with the terms of pardon before he can enjoy salvation (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 11:14; 22:16).
13. For **faith**? No, for faith comes by hearing God's word (Rom. 10:17).
14. For **repentance**? No, for repentance is a command of God for **man** to obey (Acts 17:30; Luke 13:3; Rev. 22:14).
15. For a **pure heart**? No, for the heart is made pure by obedience to the truth (1 Pet. 1:22).
16. For **freedom from sin**? No, for this comes by obedience (Rom. 6:17-18).
17. For **God to accept him**? No, for man must work righteousness (obey) to be accepted (Acts 10:34). When he does this he is accepted.
18. For **remission of sins**? No, for man must obey the Lord for remission of sins (Acts 2:38).
19. For **the Lord to make known his will to him**? No. The Lord has already made known His will to all sinners (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16).
20. For **the baptism of fire**? **No, No!!** That will come later—too soon for some, I fear—upon the wicked and disobedient at the end of the world (2 Thess. 1:7-9; Rev. 19:20; 20:14-15; 21:8).

Then why should an alien sinner pray at all? Where does the Bible teach a sinner to "pray it out with the Lord," or "stay on your knees in prayer until God saves you"?

The sinner must hear the gospel, believe, repent and, upon confession of his faith in Christ, be baptized in order to be saved. This is the Lord's way. Why change it?

To teach the mourners-bench system of salvation, instead of what the Lord has said, is to lead souls astray. What a terrible thing! Millions are being led into eternal damnation by this false doctrine. Better be careful (Matt. 15:14). It takes obedience—not prayer—to save (Luke 6:46). If one will not obey, God will not hear his prayer. God does not hear a sinner's prayer (John 9:31; Prov. 28:9; Psa. 34:15). Prayer belongs to the child of God, not to an alien. And the saved cannot pray to God to save the sinner independent of the sinner's obedience to the gospel.

I pray for sinners—that God may spare their lives until they have obeyed the gospel, that the sinner may obey the truth. This is the way Paul prayed for sinners (Rom. 10:1-3). Prayer must be asked according to God's will, and I cannot ask God to save a sinner while the sinner is in disobedience to the Lord's law of pardon (1 John 5:14). God will not set aside His law to save a sinner, even though I pray for his salvation. The sinner **must** obey the Lord's law of forgiveness.

The rich man “in hell” (Luke 16:19-31) begged for mercy. It was denied him. Then he asked that a miracle be performed—that God would send Lazarus back to the world to warn his brothers not to come to that terrible place. This is the **only** time I ever read of anyone in all the Bible asking God to perform a miracle to save someone. Was this prayer answered? No. The reply from Abraham was, “They have Moses and the prophets [the Old testament Scriptures]; let them [your brothers] hear them [Moses and the prophets]” (Luke 19:29).

Today we have Moses and the prophets and, in addition, Christ and the apostles. If one refuses to hear what the Bible says, if he fails to obey the teaching as found in the book, he will die and be eternally lost. The sinner must in humble, submissive faith obey the Lord and be saved.

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## Thank You to Our Website Visitors!

www.thegospelpreceptor.com set new records for the number of daily users in February. The single day's record of 526 that was set Dec. 26, 2019 was surpassed Feb. 5 with 530. That was surpassed Feb. 17 with 557 and that record was surpassed Feb. 24 with 561. Thank you to all use this resource for Bible articles, videos and downloadable books.

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## David Meade Missed It (Again)!

Jess Whitlock

Christ said that He would come again (John 14:1-3). James said Christ would come again (Jas. 5:7). Peter said Christ would come again (1 Pet. 1:13). Paul taught that Christ will be coming again (Phil. 3:20). God declared that Jesus will come again (Rev. 1:7). Christ is coming again; but the burning question is “when”? Jesus gives us our only clue: “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only” (Matt. 24:36 cf. Mark 13:32). There have been, and continue to be, false prophets by the hundreds who declare that they know what Christ declared—that **nobody** living on earth can know.

A Baptist/Adventist preacher, William Miller, predicted the dates would be October 22, 1843, October 22, 1844, and October 22, 1845. In 1950, the late Billy Graham preached this message in Los Angeles: “I sincerely believe that the Lord draweth nigh. We may have another year, maybe two years, to work for Jesus Christ.” But, in 1958 he finally admitted “...but of that day and hour knoweth no one...” It only took Mr. Graham seven years to learn the truth of Matthew 24:36 and Mark 13:32. Jerry Falwell and countless others warned that all would come to an end January 1, 2000 (Y2K). Pat Robertson made numerous false predictions of “the end.” His final failed prophecy being April 29, 2007. You may recall Harold Camping, radio preacher from California, who originally set the end of the world for September 6, 1994. Later he announced that 200,000,000 Christians would be taken up in the rapture on May 23, 2011 and that the world would end on May 24, 2011. After both of those dates failed to come to pass,

he then set the date as October 21, 2011. As a young boy, my dad taught me that after “three strikes you’re out.” The Jehovah’s Witnesses thus far, have set in excess of seventy different dates that were to mark the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. All of those dates have since expired! The false prophets are batting 1,000 percent and **all** are **wrong!**

So, like your GPS the false prophets are “recalculating.” Will they ever learn? David Meade, (not his real name), styles himself as a Christian numerologist. In doing his math David Meade announced the Hebrew term *Elohim* is found 33 times in the Bible. He did not miss it by too much! That term is actually found 2,570 times in the Hebrew Bible. This may account for his numerous miscalculations.

In Mr. Meade’s book, *Planet X—the 2017 Arrival*, he claimed the end of time would begin September 23, 2017 (oops), then it was going to be October 15, 2017 (oops). The sun, moon, and Jupiter were going to align marking the beginning of the rapture. David Meade nicknamed Planet X “Nibiru.” (NASA denies the existence of any such planet). The Nibiru myth was linked to the Mayan calendar. NASA calls Nibiru the non-existent planet. The supposed planet was rumored to collide with planet earth in December of 2012. That supposed collision was to mark the end of the world. Then David Meade touted another change to his date for the end of the world as taking place the “middle of October, 2018.” Would that not be another Oct. 15 date? We are now living in the year 2020. When I study all these failed prophecies for the return of Christ, I think about one of my favorite lines from Deputy Barney Fife: “He’s a nut!”

The years 2012 and 2018 have gone into the history books. Mr. Meade took his third strike as April 23, 2018. That was to mark the “rapture” (a word and doctrine that is nowhere taught in the Bible). Then would come the rise of the Antichrist and seven years of tribulation. Mr. Meade thought he had found the “proof” for his fourth prediction in Isaiah 13:9-11 and Revelation 12:1-2. The “woman” of Revelation 12 according to Mr. Meade was the constellation “Virgo” and the “death planet X” would appear in the night sky. All of that was to have happened April 23, 2018 marking massive volcanic eruptions and tsunamis, along with earthquakes all over the planet. The day passed with about as much interest as watching metal rust!

In our study of the book of Revelation we observe several times that the message was designed to give “comfort and assurance” to those Christians living in the perilous times of the first century. Of what comfort and assurance would this bunch of nonsense have offered to those saints at the close of the first century? If only the false prophets would listen to the forthright words of Christ. What can we know of a surety about these myriad prophecies supposedly marking the exact date of the return of Jesus Christ?

But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die. And if you say in your heart, ‘How shall we know the word which Jehovah has not spoken?’...when a prophet speaks in the name of Jehovah, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which Jehovah has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him” (Deut. 18:20-22).

Therefore, we do not fear David Meade or any of his cohorts.

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## Worship and Parallelism

**Doug Post**

The most common word for *worship* in the Hebrew Scriptures is *hishtahavah*, meaning “to bow down.” The Greek equivalent is the word *proskuneo*, also meaning “to bow down” or “to prostrate one’s self.” Whatever nuances of meaning there may be, both the Hebrew and Greek words for *worship* are synonymous, carrying the idea of “bowing down.”

The Bible indicates that folks bowed their heads and worshiped (Gen. 24:26; Exodus

4:31 etc.), or they bowed down (fell) and worshiped (Josh. 5:14; 2 Chron. 20:18, 29:29, Job 1:20; Psa. 22:29, etc.). Therefore, a distinction is made between “bowing down” (the lexical meaning) and the word **worship** itself. In some passages it could literally be translated as *bowing down and bowing down (worship)*, but it is translated as *bowing down and worshiping (bowing down)*.

Throughout Scripture, the grammatical construction of *parallelism* is often employed whereby different words, with different lexical meanings, are used synonymously or co-equally. That is, within the context they refer to the same thing. For instance, in Psalm 19 (which is a miniature of Psalm 119), David speaks of **the law** of the Lord, **the testimony** of the Lord, **the statutes** of the Lord, **the commandment** of the Lord, **the fear** of the Lord, **the judgments** of the Lord. In context, each word is synonymous with each other, all referring to the same thing, **the law of the Lord**, which is the word of God (See also 1 Pet. 1:22-25).

Moreover, the words, *serve* and *worship*, are routinely used together. They are two different words, with differing lexical meanings, yet are sometimes used in parallel fashion. Context will certainly determine the meaning. However, when used alone, the lexical meaning of each word becomes the focus.

The words *praise* and **worship** are also often used together. Two distinct words yet both are sometimes used synonymously. Note what David wrote:

I will praise thee with my whole heart: before the gods will I sing praise unto thee. I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name (Psa. 138:1-2).

Here we see *praise* being used with *worship*. The act of praise is that singing (cf. Heb. 13:15). Essentially, what is done in praising God is also David’s *bowing down* or *worship* of God—with his whole heart (cf. John 4:23-24; Josh. 24:15). Coincidentally, David, in part, is going to praise or worship God for His **Truth**, which is then referred to as His **Word** (John 17:17). David uses these two words synonymously or in parallel fashion. Please note, God magnified His **Word** above His **Name**. However, I’m pretty sure liberals would not accuse God of “Bibliolatry.” Since God has placed such a premium on His Word, so must we.

After David recaptured the ark, he wrote a song of thanksgiving, which is recorded in 1 Chronicles 16:7-36. In verse 23 David said to **sing** and then says the Lord is worthy to be **praised** (v. 25). Here, again, *singing* is synonymous with *praise*. A little later David says, “Bring an offering and come before Him; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness” (v. 29). Grammatically, the thought of worshiping God in the beauty of holiness refers back to the offering and/or the giving, which in this case refer to the same thing. The giving is that of the offering, and each are parallel or synonymous with each other. Moreover, worshiping God also refers back to praising God and singing. Therefore, the worship, here, includes the giving of the offering and the singing of praises. These are the acts of worship David said to provide.

As we consider singing in the New Testament, the Hebrews writer expressly says: “By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name” (Heb. 13:15). As noted previously, praise can refer to worship, but it is always connected to worship, since the giving of praise must be a sacrifice of our heart, mind, soul, and strength. We are to sing “psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs” (Eph. 5:19). While each are different, psalms and hymns are **spiritual songs**, yet they are distinct from all other kinds. They are sacred or spiritual.

When we consider the use of the word *worship*, alone, we see its lexical meaning (*bowing down*) cannot be taken literally within certain contexts. For instance, Abraham said, “I and the lad will go yonder and worship” (Gen. 22:5). Abraham did not mean he and Isaac would go over yonder and literally bow down, but that he would take the boy to be sacrificed. This was the worship contemplated.

The New Testament or “law of Christ,” tells us we must worship God “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). We are under law (God’s authority) to do so (Isa. 2:2). In spirit

means with the whole heart; in genuineness and sincerity of heart (cf. Josh. 24:15). Of course, whenever we are to submit to God's commands and keep them, it must be with the heart (Rom. 6:17). God has specified the acts of worship in the New Testament. Therefore, we must worship according to His word, the truth (cf. John 17:17). Otherwise, we become guilty of "will-worship" or self-imposed worship (Col. 2:23).

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## Sympathy vs. Truth and Right

John W. Hodge

Like many other characteristics of the human race, sympathy may be, and in many instances is, misdirected. It is good to be sympathetic, provided, of course, our sympathy is guided in channels of truth and right. We have known people who have allowed their sympathy to override common sense—yea, even the truth of God's word.

Regardless of how **I think** or **feel**, the word of God is to have the preeminence in my life. **It**—not how I feel—"is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path" (Psa. 119:105). If others—even my relatives according to the flesh—have not walked in the light thereof, I am not to allow my feelings or sympathy for them to be the deciding factor of my own eternal destiny. My feelings cannot alter the will of God or change the destiny of any man. "If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth: and if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be" (Eccl. 11:3). Considering Israel's aloofness from Christianity, Paul could wish himself accursed for their sake. But nowhere does he intimate that they could be saved in their rebellion to Christ and His gospel. With him, it was a settled fact that the Lord will take vengeance on all those who obey not His gospel (2 Thess. 1:7-9).

How often is it the case that when the Lord's plain declaration, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," (Mark 16:16) is quoted, someone responds, "Oh, but my father and mother were not baptized? Am I to believe that they are lost?" Such a remark clearly shows that feeling, or sympathy, is allowed to predominate over the word of the Lord. The Universalist affirms the salvation of all mankind, regardless of conduct or character. When pressed for proof of his affirmation, he stresses the love and mercy of God, saying that God will overlook our transgressions. He by no means will clear the guilty (Exod. 34:7). What the world—religious and irreligious—needs is not sympathy, but faith—a full acceptance of what the Bible teaches.

We need to create a sympathy for truth and right. David said, "Through thy precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way" (Psa. 119:104). We cannot hate a thing and be in sympathy with it at the same time. We may love and sympathize with relatives and friends who are in error, but certainly we cannot afford to sympathize with their error to the extent that we would walk therein.

As an outstanding example of one who allowed his faith to override his sympathy, we find none better than Abraham. God commanded him to offer his son Isaac (Gen. 22). There existed in the heart of Abraham love and sympathy for this "only son." But there existed in his heart a faith that "staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief" (Rom. 4:20). Would his love and sympathy for Isaac lead him to the sacrificial altar? It could not! Rather, it would revolt at the idea. But when the strength of faith takes hold of God's word, sympathy is overpowered—not destroyed—and the deed is done.

And so it should be now. For "...this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 John 5:4). There are problems which we cannot solve and difficulties which we may not overcome by sympathy, but unwavering faith in God's word is the sure way to victory. The heroes of God are the heroes of faith. From the burning, smoking altar of righteous Abel till the last trump shall sound, God has ordained that "the just shall live by faith" (Rom. 1:17, Gal. 3:11, Heb. 10:38) and no man is regarded by Jehovah as "just" who is devoid of this fundamental principle, regardless of how he may sympathize with the forces of error. Is your sympathy in harmony with truth and right?

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# Christ's Prayer for Unity was Answered

Foy E. Wallace, Jr.

The Lord's prayer of John 17:20-23 anticipated the inauguration of the new dispensation and the beginning of the church by the preaching of the apostles on Pentecost:

Neither pray I for these (apostles) alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me...that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one.

It is plain that the prayer of the Lord for unity had reference first to the oneness of the apostles in the unity of their apostolic teaching; and second, to the unity of all who believed the word preached by them. This prayer anticipated the establishment of the church by the preaching of the apostles, and it was answered when the believers were made one in the church (verse 20)—through their word.

The usual prayer that is heard today calls upon God to answer the prayer of His Son for the unity of all believers—as though God had ignored this prayer from then until now. The prayer of Jesus for the unity of the believers through the word of the apostles was answered when the church was established.

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## Eternal Life—A Promise

W. Claude Hall

Scriptures should not be arrayed against each other. One should have insight enough into the Scriptures to know there are no contradictions. If the Lord did not give us a perfect revelation, then we have no guide in religion. Infidels are made by preachers oftentimes. For instance, one preacher will proclaim that the Book teaches we have eternal life right now and can't lose it. The other will stoutly deny this and say we have eternal life in the world to come. Each reads his proof out of the Bible, and the poor listener cannot tell which is right, hence sometimes goes into unbelief. Who can blame him?

These are a few of the passages referred to as teaching one has eternal life now: "He that believeth on me **hath** everlasting life" (John 6:47); "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me **hath** everlasting life" (John 5:24); "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (John 11:25-26). There are many more such passages. These all seem to teach that actual possession of eternal life comes here and now.

But there is another set of Scriptures that seem to teach right the opposite. Here are some of them: "But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time...and **in the world to come** eternal life" (Matt. 10:30). Paul, in writing to Titus, said, "In **hope** of eternal life" (Titus 1:2). One is taught by the Bible that he cannot hope for that which he has in actuality.

What kind of explanation shall we make of these seeming contradictions? Is it the proper procedure to continue to array these statements against each other? The plan more reasonable to pursue is to find a solution which is reasonable and true. This may be done, for John himself, the one who wrote the former passages, makes the matter plain in his last writings. I have often wondered if he did not read his gospel in later life and decide that some preachers in later centuries would misinterpret those statements, so he made one more which would forever settle the case with those who would desire a harmony of all Scriptures. He may have done this, but we know the Holy Spirit guided his writing and made his meaning clear. Here is a Scripture which makes both sets of statements relative to eternal life easily understood: "And this is the promise that **he hath promised us**, even eternal life" (1 John 2:25).

There are two ways of having anything—one by promise, and the other in actuality. We first have our wives by promise, then by actuality. We have eternal life by promise.

That is the way John said we have it. Paul had it “in hope,” and when we get to the city of God we will have it in actuality. This makes all seemingly contradictory passages clear and plain. All discrepancies disappear.

When John says, “he that believeth hath everlasting life” that is, of course, nothing but the truth. We do have it, but in which way? We have it **in promise**. When Paul said he had eternal life in hope, he stated the truth. When Jesus said, “and in the world to come, eternal life,” He spoke of the actual possession of eternal life.

One additional thought is sufficient for this lesson. If one has eternal life in promise, then there is a possibility of being cut off from that promise by unrighteous living. Let us, then, “take heed lest we fall.”

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## Politically Correct Warfare

Jerry C. Brewer

The inanity of political correctness which decrees that evil is good and good is evil is integral to America’s war against Islamic savages. When Jihadists murdered thousands of Americans on Sept. 11, 2001, government officials, from President George Bush, Colin Powell, Donald Rumsfeld, and John Ashcroft, to Senators and Congressmen, fell all over themselves to convince us that Islam is a harmless religion. Bush even went so far as to help Moslem children celebrate the end of Islam’s “holy month” Ramadan with a reception at the White House. That was despicable and inexcusable for a U.S. president. A harmless religion? Nothing could be further from the truth.

Islam is a mixture of Coptic Christianity, Judaism and Paganism that came from the fertile, imaginative, and evil mind of the false prophet Mohammed. It was born of bloody struggle and for centuries it spread across a large part of the world at the point of a sword. Bush and others tried to convince us that Osama bin Laden did not represent true Islam. That was the politically correct propaganda following the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks. But the **truth** is that bin Laden and his fanatics **did**—and **true Moslems do**—represent the religion of Mohammed. The Koran itself proves the violent nature of Islam and its assessment of those who oppose it.

“Many a time will the infidels wish they had been Muslims. Let them feast and enjoy themselves, and let hope beguile them: but they shall know the truth at last” (“Hedjr” 15:2).

“This Book is not other than a warning and a clear Koran, to warn whosoever liveth; and, that against the infidels sentence may be justly given” (“Ya. Sin” 36:69-70).

“And fight for the cause of God against those who fight against you: but commit not the injustice of attacking them first: God loveth not such injustice: And kill them wherever ye shall find them, and eject them from whatever place they have ejected you; for civil discord is worse than carnage: yet attack them not at the sacred Mosque, unless they attack you therein; but if they attack you, slay them. Such the reward of infidels” (“The Cow” 2:186-187).

All the political correctness, multicultural “diversity” and ecumenical platitudes in Washington cannot change the fact that Islam **is** a **violent, murderous, religion** which teaches its adherents to **kill** “infidels.” And according to Islam, an “infidel” is anyone who isn’t a Moslem. That includes every person in the world who worships the One True God through His Son Jesus Christ.

### Gospel Meeting

April 5 - 8, 2020

Northpoint church of Christ

4224 North I-35

Denton, Texas

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# **Bible Study Resources**

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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.

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## **The First 100 Copies are Gone!**

***“The Thing That Hath Been...”***

***The Cycle of Apostasy***

**By Jerry C. Brewer**

**Foreword By Daniel Denham**

The first 100 copies of this book were requested before they were received from the printer, but another 100 copies have been ordered and will soon be available.

**“The Thing That Hath Been...”** will surprise a lot 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** in lots of 5-20 to churches in the United States who request it and agree to pay postage and handling. Request your copies by sending your mailing address to Jerry C. Brewer at **txjch@att.net**. Single copy postage and handling is \$3.00. Multiple copies will be sent by priority mail which will cost \$15.00 or more.

# “I Think”

C.R. Nichol

Not long ago I heard one of my preacher brethren in his sermon to a nice audience, say, “I think” so many times in the course of his talk that it registered with me that he had formed the habit of saying, “I think” when his lips were working in advance of his mind.

When I was a lad I saw a circular issued by a merchant, headed, “**Time is Money.**” The world is living at such a fast pace today that I begin to think, “Time **is** money.” It is possible we pay now for more time than we do service.

Time was when a preacher was two hours in delivering his sermon; now he has his lesson so condensed, pared down to such small content that twenty minutes is about the limit. Possibly he has more to say, but his listeners are in a hurry to be off to some place of pleasure.

Surely the audience was assembled to worship, and to be instructed by the minister, and not to hear what he “thinks” about any matter of Divine revelation; and surely the audience is not interested in the minister's “I think” about political or financial matters. The charge to the young preacher, found in the Bible is, “Preach the word”! He is to preach the gospel.

Preach the word, be instant in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears, and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables (2 Tim. 4:1-4).

“Reprove, rebuke.” How? By preaching the “word,” not by reciting “I think.” Why should anyone be asking what you “think” about some Bible subject? Are not we all aware that what you or I may think about the subject will not settle the matter; for each of us may have a wrong view? Why not ask, What does the Bible say about that subject? Would not that be much more effective?

It piqued my pride, when I was younger, when asked some Bible question or about same statement in the Bible to have to say, “I do not know.” But I have learned to say, “I do not know.” Long ago I formed the resolution to so prepare myself that if someone asked me a question that I did not know how to answer to be very certain that the next time such a question was submitted, I would know the answer, if it were possible to be known.

When it comes to Divine matters, if Jehovah has revealed the answer, Gospel preachers should **know** the answer. Do not say, “I think.” There are too many people who today take what the preacher says as final on any question about Jehovah or about any matter of revelation.

“Thus shall ye say every one to his neighbor, and every one to his brother, What hath the Lord answered, and what hath the Lord spoken?” (Jer. 23:25).

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