

The Gospel Preceptor

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

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God's Word is Forever "Settled in Heaven"

Dub McClish

The great psalm that exalts God's Word throughout its 176 verses contains the following majestic claim: "For ever, O Jehovah, Thy word is settled in heaven" (Psa. 119:89, ASV). It is hardly possible to imagine a stronger statement of warranty for anything than that it is "settled in heaven." The force of this statement is that God's Word is final, sure, immutable, and eternal **because** it is from Heaven—God Himself spoke it. When any matter is "settled in heaven," it is fully, certainly, perfectly, and indestructibly established.

On the word *settled*, Albert Barnes commented:

The word rendered *settled* means...that the Word—the law—the promise—of God was made firm, established, stable, in heaven; and would be so for ever and ever. What God had ... affirmed would always remain true; what He had promised would be sure for ever (204).

God's inspired poet wrote elsewhere in the same vein:

The works of his hands are truth and justice; All his precepts are sure. They are established for ever and ever; They are done in truth and uprightness (Psa. 111:7–8).

The sum of thy word is truth; And every one of thy righteous ordinances endureth for ever (119:160).

Isaiah spoke with the certainty of one filled with both deep faith in and knowledge of God: "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of our God shall stand forever" (Isa. 40:8). We could multiply similar Old Testament statements manifold times. The Lord Jesus added His testimony to the finality and indestructibility of the Word in a brief, but emphatic declaration: "The Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35). If what the Christ stated about this comparatively remote statement from Psalms 82:6 is true, how can it apply any less to all Scripture? Though spoken specifically concerning His warnings of the destruction of Jerusalem, our Savior's proclamation is nonetheless true of the fullness of God's Word: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Mat. 24:35).

The foregoing claims of God's prophets—and of the Son of God Himself—regarding Holy Writ imply at least the following: Its finality and its immutability.

The Finality of God's Word

God's Word is the "last word," "the end of the matter," the ultimate and dependable authority on every subject upon which it touches. It was conceived, "settled," and certified by the eternal Godhead before it was delivered to men. Therefore, men dare not seek a "second opinion" apart from the Sacred Oracles. Woe unto those Balaamites in any age who seek to "know what Jehovah will speak unto me more," after God has spoken clearly and finally (Num. 22:19).

The Bible is also final in the sense that there has not been—nor will there ever be—any additional revelation since the last New Testament apostle and prophet laid down his inspired pen. Jude's statement is too clear to be misunderstood in this regard:

Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints (v. 3).

The faith here is not a reference to one's subjective belief in something or someone, but to that **in which** one believes or vests his personal faith. Jude thus refers to the Gospel "system"—the New Testament message as a whole—with its power to save the soul (Rom. 1:16). It is an entity that men can obey (Acts 6:7), preach (Gal. 1:23), strive for (Phi. 1:27), depart from (1 Tim. 4:1), and thus for which God's people must earnestly contend. These statements and many similar ones stress the uniqueness and singularity of the New Testament as an unrivaled revelation, rather than one among many God-given or God-approved messages.

Jude further emphasized the finality of God's revelation by writing that it was "once for all delivered to the saints." *Once for all* translates the very little, but powerful Greek word, *hapax*. Thayer's lexicon says that this term "...is used of what is so done as to be of perpetual validity, and never need[ing] repetition" (54), which definition numerous other Greek authorities echo. While Jude's exhortation particularly emphasizes the finality of the New Testament, his statement, in principle, embraces all Scripture. Likewise, while Paul's statement on the source and all-sufficiency of Scripture refers to the Old Testament in context, it is no less true of all of the Bible:

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work (2 Tim. 3:16–17, KJV).

The Hebrews writer states this unifying "revelation chain" succinctly in his majestic opening words:

God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds (Heb. 1:1–2).

Soon afterward he further described this revelation connection:

For if the **word spoken through angels** proved stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect **so great a salvation?** which **having at the first been spoken through the Lord**, was **confirmed unto us by them that heard...**(2:2–3, emph. DM).

What is true of one portion is true of all. God's Word through His Son is final—His last word! Therefore, away with every self-proclaimed "prophet" who has dared to claim he has received a Message from Heaven subsequent to the words which conclude the Bible: the New Testament. All such are false prophets and deceivers. God's Word—all of it—has already been delivered to mankind, and there will be no more.

The Immutability of God's Word

That which is immutable is fixed, inflexible, unchanged, unchangeable, and unvarying. *Immutable* is but another synonym for *settled*, as described above.

We live in a world of constant change and flux. Nothing pertaining to our material world and our lives in it long remains the same. The Word of God—because the Almighty is its source—is not subject to such fickle variations, evolutions, mutations, or fluctuations. Its immutability has survived centuries of the earnest efforts of pagans, kings, popes, atheists, amoral perverts, theologians, and even "translators" to destroy and/or alter it. God's providence has preserved it in thousands of various documents that include all or portions of it in ancient manuscripts, translations, lectionaries, letters, and other writings.

The Word of God is as immutable and eternal as its Triune source:

God the Father Is Immutable

"For I, Jehovah, change not..." (Mal. 3:6a). He is Him "...who is and who was and who

is to come...the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end” (Rev. 1:4, 8; 4:8; 21:6). He is “the eternal God” (Rom. 16:26) with an unwavering “eternal purpose” (Eph. 3:11). Tillit S. Tedlie wrote faithfully when he wrote his beautiful hymn, “Hold to God’s Unchanging Hand.”

God the Son Is Immutable

The Son of God is the “King eternal, immortal, invisible...who only hath immortality...to whom be honor and power eternal” (1 Tim.1:17; 6:16). The Christ “...hath his priesthood unchangeable...[and] is the same yesterday and today, yea and for ever” (Heb. 7:24; 13:8). To John on Patmos the Lord said: “I am the first and the last, and the Living one; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore...” (Rev. 1:17–18; cf.22:13). All of these passages either imply or clearly speak of the changeless nature of God’s Son.

God the Holy Spirit Is Immutable

God the father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are one in their nature and attributes. Since the Father and His Son were changeless in what They spoke, so then was the Holy Spirit. He spoke not of Himself to the apostles, but the things the Father and the Son gave Him to speak (John 15:26; 16:12–15). He is “the eternal Spirit” (Heb. 9:14).

There is, of course, a sense in which men, as creatures of free will, can “change” the Word of God, as many have done and still do. Denominationalism is a glaring illustration of such alterations. Such turn the true Word of God into the word of fallible men. False teachers among the Galatian saints preached a “different gospel,” but it was “not another gospel” (Gal. 1:6–7). All such perverters of the true Gospel brought—and bring—the anathema of God upon themselves (vv.8–9). The Old Testament contains innumerable warnings against false prophets. Beginning with the Lord and flowing through the New Testament books the reader finds systemic warnings **against** those who would alter the Holy Word and **to** those who would hear them (e.g., Mat. 7:15–16; 15:13–14; Acts 13:10; Rom. 16:17–18; 1 Cor. 15:12–15; Gal. 1:6–9; 2 The. 2:1–3; 1 Tim. 1:5–7; 4:1–3; Tim. 2:14–18; 4:1–4; 2 John 9; et al.). Men can indeed “wrest” the Scriptures, but they do so “unto their own destruction” (2 Pet. 3:16b). Men dare not add to or subtract from Holy Writ (Rev. 22:18–19).

We can have the same absolute confidence in the Bible as God’s settled, final, and immutable Word that Peter expressed:

“Having been begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the word of God, which liveth and abideth... But the word of the Lord abideth for ever” (1 Pet. 1:23–25).

May we ever be content to abide within its confines and enjoy its blessings!

Works Cited

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An Overview of the Bible

Harrell Davidson

The Bible has one Divine author—God—and is one book with 66 chapters with each book being a chapter. Each book or chapter of the Bible builds on the book that precedes it as well as the book that follows with the exception of Genesis and Revelation. God, through the Holy Spirit, inspired about 40 writers to pen the words of Holy Writ. The Bible is a book about sin and redemption.

The Old Testament

We begin by listing each book of the Old Testament in its relation to others.

Genesis is an introduction to the Bible, to God, the scheme of redemption, His nature, goodness, and power. It is a book that introduces man, where he came from. In chapter 3 evil enters into the picture and man gives way to evil. The Redeemer is purposed in Genesis 3:15 and in Genesis 12 God promised Abraham and his seed, the One through Whom redemption would come.

In Joseph we have the picture of redemption as it unfolds.

Exodus—procedures of redemption take place. There's poverty of the spirit when they cried out in their helplessness. We had the preaching of Moses by which their faith was established. The Passover was established—death to those who refused. Worship comes in Exodus 20. The building of the tabernacle that pleased God. There are two things that please God: gifts or service and the pillar of cloud.

Leviticus is an extension of Genesis and Exodus. In Leviticus we see that fellowship is developed with God and one another. Fellowship with God was through sacrifice, priesthood, the tabernacle and the principles of holiness so that other nations could see the righteousness of God.

Numbers is the failure of faith for the first generation. They refused to follow God's exhortation.

Deuteronomy is the law restated to the second generation and Moses' farewell address. He sets forth the proper motive for God's love for us and our love for God and man. Over and over he says do not forget.

Joshua is the redeemed in victory by faith. They go into Canaan. Every victory in Joshua is by faith. Every battle lost was a lack of faith.

Judges—Moses failed to get the people into Canaan. Joshua got them there. “In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Jud. 17:6). When there is no king the people celebrate. In chapter 18 there's no king for Israel. Chapter 19 no King. Chapter 21:25, the last verse in the chapter there was no king over Israel.

“And when Joshua had let the people go, the children of Israel went every man unto his inheritance to possess the land. And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD, that he did for Israel” (Jud. 2:6-7). Verse 10 then is the background of kings in the book of Judges when every man did what he wanted to do based on his own judgment. There was the song of Deborah and Gideon and the kind of leadership they needed. The judges also provided leadership.

Ruth—during the time of the Judges there's the breath of redemption. She, a Gentile, was brought into the framework of Israel. She proves to have Christ's blood in her thus showing that God never intended for redemption to be only for Israel.

First Samuel—the people rejected the prophets and demanded a king and they selected Saul to be the first king. He had no spiritual qualities listed in 1 Samuel 9:2: “And he had a son, whose name was Saul, a choice young man, and a goodly: and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people”. Young, energetic, handsome above all others, but Israel now has a king like the other nations. This is what first Samuel is about. Saul said “I have played the fool.” 1 Sam. 16 God rejected Saul for God looks on the heart.

Second Samuel—David is a king after God's own heart. David has his weaknesses and failures but he never assumed that he was the king for he looked to God for that. He never took the kingdom into his own hands this is how he was a king after God's own heart.

First Kings—the problem of the material glory of the redeemed. They were never larger than during Solomon's reign. Solomon dedicated the temple. It took seven years to build the temple with 13 years to build his own house, the palace. There is a contrast then in Solomon over the material and spiritual. Fake gods were brought in. Jeroboam divided the kingdom and continued the downfall and every sin from here on was

referred to as being like the sins of Jeroboam.

Second Kings—the downfall of the redeemed nations. Second Kings 17 is why the 10 tribes went into Assyrian captivity and when you read this chapter you know they rejected God. In verse 13 God testified against them through the prophets. In verse 14 their heart was hardened. In verse 18 God was angry and removed them out of His sight and verse 29 God let them go the captivity. The rest of Second Kings tells of the fall of Judah into Babylonian captivity.

First Chronicles—God reigns over the redeemed.

Wherefore David blessed the LORD before all the congregation: and David said, Blessed be thou, LORD God of Israel our father, for ever and ever. Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all” (1 Chron. 29:10-12).

Here David summarizes what is found in first Chronicles. They had rejected God but God was still on the throne.

Second Chronicles is why they failed. They did not give the temple its rightful place.

Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther are not in chronological order. **Ezra** is the return of Zerubbabel to rebuild the temple and he was in the lineage of David. The temple and religion was the heart of the nation. They would never have another earthly king. Ezra was the priest. God's plan is back in order Ezra 9:4, “Then were assembled unto me every one that trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the transgression of those that had been carried away; and I sat astonished until the evening sacrifice”. This represents a return to the law itself.

Nehemiah leads a return and the rebuilding of the walls of the city. They had a mind to work.

Esther—the influence of the redeemed in the world. A godly woman through her influence saved the nation.

Job—the importance of the redeemed and trusting in God. “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him” (Job 13:15). The book is about things in life that the redeemed cannot unravel so they must trust in God.

Psalms—is the redeemed in God's presence and there is something for everyday living in the presence of God. Psalm 139 where shall I go to be out of the presence of God?

Proverbs—wisdom for the redeemed for daily living.

Ecclesiastes is a book about what happens when we try to work by sight instead of by faith. We cannot walk by our five senses. The last verse is fear God and keep his Commandments.

Song of Solomon—God's special love for a redeemed people.

Isaiah—the redeemed and the Redeemer. The throne of grace chapter 6. Chapter 7 the virgin birth is announced and this book reminds me that God is on his throne and His throne is one of grace. Isaiah 53 the suffering servant.

Jeremiah—a prophet's cry over the redeemed. “Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people” (Jer. 9:1).

Lamentations—the prophet Jeremiah's cry over a people that had backslidden.

Ezekiel—two basic things; the largeness of the Redeemer King and the responsibility of the people. Chapter 3 and chapter 18 God is not a respecter of persons. He punishes the unrighteous and blesses the obedient. Ezekiel sets up the way of return from captivity through prayer and confession.

Daniel—among the first carried into captivity, Daniel prophesied during the time of captivity. He proves there would be 70 years of captivity and that there would be four kingdoms that would arise over a time frame of 490 years. He, as well as others, of the prophets told of the coming kingdom the King and the destruction of Jerusalem.

From **Hosea** through **Zephaniah** the minor prophets told in various ways and by sundry warnings of the captivity and what it would be like except the last three prophetic books.

Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi belong to the time of Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther. They are out of captivity and coming back to the land of Canaan.

So, the Bible from the times of Abraham developed around Canaan, and the Jewish people, and redemption. God promised the land and they received all the land of the promise.

The Old Testament closes looking forward to the New that would follow some 400 years later.

The New Testament

There are four biographers of Christ each detailing something about His coming, His promises, His work, His teaching and His death burial and resurrection: **Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John**.

The book of Acts is about the kingdom of the Lord. Any book that opens and closes the way Acts does sets the tone and tenor for its contents. “To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3) and “Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him” (Acts 28:31). It is then rather obvious regarding the content of Acts. Additionally, the New Testament seems to be written with the background of the destruction of Jerusalem that occurred in about 70 A.D.

The epistles were written to various places addressing various problems that arose in the kingdom. It appears that no congregation had the same problem as others although the principles and precepts were/are usable to address any problem that occurred or will occur. No two of them are exactly alike because the problems differed. Paul wrote most as an apostle to the Gentiles.

It appears that First and Second Thessalonians were the first New Testament books written though it is very obvious that other events preceded them.

There are personal epistles First and Second Timothy, Titus and Philemon.

Hebrews is the greatness of the Redeemer and His kingdom over all others.

James, written by the half-brother of our Lord was written to the common man,

First and Second Peter to the strangers scattered through out various areas (cf. 1 Peter 1:1).

First John tells us one can **know** that he is saved.

Second John was written to a faithful woman and her children.

Third John was written to Gaius a well beloved brother in the Lord.

Jude—also a half-brother of the Lord—wrote urging those to contend earnestly for the faith (vs. 3).

Revelation was written of things which must shortly come to pass. “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John” (Rev.1:1). “Shortly” has never meant “longly” and the time was at hand not generations yet to come (cf. Rev. 1:3).

The Bible is Inspired of God

Lee Moses

To understand how and why God's word is "forever settled," it is crucial that one understands the inspiration of the Bible. Unfortunately, much confusion exists on the subject. This confusion exists in part because those who teach that the Bible is inspired mean different things when they say it. One person might affirm, "The Bible is inspired of God," when that person simply means, "The writers of the Bible had such good ideas, it was as if they came from God Himself." Another person making the same statement means that God gave the words of the Bible. Another means that God providentially placed ideas before certain writers who in turn wrote Biblical books based on those ideas. But one must be able to affirm, "The Bible is inspired of God" with certainty of heart and clarity of meaning, coming only from a Biblical understanding of the concept.

What is a Basic Definition of Inspiration?

The word *inspiration* only occurs twice in the English Bible. It first occurs in Job 32:8: "But there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding" (Job 32:8). The American Standard Version renders this, "...the **breath** of the Almighty giveth them understanding." The second occurrence of *inspiration* is found in 2 Timothy 3:16: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God." The phrase "is given by inspiration of God" is actually one compound word literally meaning "God-breathed." So both Biblical instances of *inspiration* allude to the **breath** of God—this should not be too surprising, as the English word *inspiration's* most basic meaning is "the drawing in of breath; inhalation." As God's breath is mentioned in Scripture, a reader's thoughts are drawn to the lifegiving power of God's breath (Gen. 2:7; Job 33:4). The Bible also equates God's breath with His spoken word, as breath is used in human speaking: "By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth" (Psm. 33:6). Thus, when Paul affirms that "all scripture is God-breathed," he is ascribing to Scripture the same Divine origin and power elsewhere demonstrated in God's (figurative) "breath."

Is the Bible's Inspiration an Assemblage of Good Human Ideas?

Some hold the notion that *inspiration* occurs whenever a writer is struck with a good idea. Thus, writers such as Shakespeare and Twain are considered particularly inspired writers, since their works are filled with novel, interesting, and insightful thoughts. English dictionaries support this notion, as definitions of *inspiration* include, "the process of being mentally stimulated to do or feel something, esp. to do something creative," and, "A sudden brilliant, creative, or timely idea" (*New Oxford American Dictionary*). Some people apply this definition to the Bible's inspiration. However, this is not how the Bible portrays the concept, and has nothing to do with how the Bible came into existence.

The apostle Peter wrote, "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Pet. 1:20-21). Here is a clear difference between Shakespeare and Isaiah. Shakespeare wrote plays and sonnets from his own imagination, perhaps occasionally borrowing ideas from others. He wrote at times what he himself chose to write, at other times what other human beings commissioned him to write. As genius as Shakespeare's ideas may have been, they always came "by the will of man." Contrariwise, Isaiah and other Biblical writers wrote "as they were moved by the Holy Ghost"—their writings never came by the will of man.

Peter described how the Old Testament prophets had written predictions of the salvation that Christians now enjoy in Jesus Christ:

Of which salvation **the prophets have enquired and searched diligently**, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: **Searching** what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. **Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto**

themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into (1 Pet. 1:10-12, *emph. LM*).

The prophets who wrote those predictions did not fully understand how those predictions would be fulfilled. This is inexplicable if their writings came from their own minds.

Neither is the Bible, as some allege, the mere product of various human editors who took prior human writings and oral traditions and redacted them to suit their own purposes.

The very nature of *revelation* demands that something previously unknown to man has been **revealed** to man. And the Bible makes clear who did this: “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son” (Heb. 1:1-2). Throughout the period of revelation, God has spoken.

Is the Bible’s Inspiration “Thought Inspiration”?

Some claim that God directly implanted thoughts into the minds of Biblical penmen, who were then at liberty to express those thoughts in their own words as they saw best. In favor of this view is that sees Divine wisdom lying behind the composition of the Bible, and also that it explains the different vocabularies and writing styles found among the different writers of the Bible. Some well-meaning soul may ask, “What, then, is wrong with this view?”

The first problem with the “thought inspiration” view is simply that the Bible does not teach it. We are not free to pick and choose which view of inspiration we happen to like. Recall that Peter said, “No prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation” (2 Pet. 1:20). Peter denies that the prophets merely explained, translated, or interpreted general thoughts that God gave them.

The apostle Paul described how God revealed previously “hidden wisdom...by his Spirit” (1 Cor. 2:7-10). Paul explained further how he and the other apostles had received “not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual” (verses 12-13). Observe especially that the apostles did not reveal those Divine truths “in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth.” If Paul and other Biblical writers had chosen the words they wrote, the thoughts behind the words may have been Divine, but the words themselves would have been “words which man’s wisdom teacheth.” Paul emphatically denied this to be the case, stating that the apostles spoke words “which the Holy Ghost teacheth.” The Holy Spirit Himself provided the Biblical words themselves.

Additionally, if the Holy Spirit only provided thoughts for which fallible men supplied words, numerous arguments of Scripture would implode. Jesus refuted the Sadducees’ denial of life after death by quoting Exodus 3:6: “I **am** [rather than “I **was**,” *LM*] the God of [physically deceased] Abraham...Isaac...and Jacob” (Matt. 22:32). How could Jesus make an argument based on the tense of a verb if a fallible man chose that verb? Similarly, Paul alluded to God’s promises to Abraham “seed”: “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ” (Gal. 3:16; cf. Gen. 22:18). If Moses had license to choose for himself whether to use the singular “seed” or plural “seeds,” Paul’s argument could not stand. But if **God** chose the singular noun, Paul has an irrefutable basis for his argument. God did and Paul does; therefore, “thought inspiration” is false.

Is the Bible’s Inspiration Only Partial?

Some would generally agree with the above statements about inspiration, but they do not believe that the entire Bible is inspired. This view creates evident problems; for example, how does one discern which portions of the Bible are inspired and which are not? If the Bible does not tell us how, who then is privileged to make such discernments? Are those people not then placed in a position of authority even over

the Bible itself?

Some may overtly express the “partial inspiration” view, while others express it more subtly in such statements as “The Bible **contains** the word of God” (as opposed to “The Bible **is** the word of God”). Some put particular emphasis on the red-letter words of Jesus in the Gospel accounts, as though the other words of the New Testament did not derive from the same Source. However, all those words do derive from the same Divine Source.

On the final night of Jesus’ earthly life, He told His disciples, “I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come” (John 16:12-13). Jesus had very few remaining “red-letter” words to speak in His life, but He had “yet many things to say.” How would Jesus bring those sayings to the apostles’ attention? He would send forth the Holy Spirit upon His apostles, who would both enable them to remember perfectly what Jesus had said in their presence and would also guide them into “all [remaining] truth” (cf. John 14:26). Thus, when the apostles later spoke and wrote under inspiration, they could affirm, “We have the mind of Christ” (1 Cor. 2:16).

The entire Old Testament is as surely inspired as is the New Testament. When David wrote his Biblical Psalms, he could say, “The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue” (2 Sam. 23:2). Again, “**All** scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Tim. 3:16, emph. LM). Paul wrote, “For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward” (1 Tim. 5:18). Here Paul quotes from both the Old Testament (Deut 25:4) and the New Testament (Luke 10:7), referring to both as *Scripture*.

The Holy Spirit could have the writer express his personal thoughts, if the Holy Spirit so chose (cf. Rom. 9:1-3; 3 John 2-4). It is true that the Bible records statements of uninspired persons, such as found in the reproofs of Job’s three friends, or in the serpent’s reassurance to Eve, “Ye shall not surely die” (Gen. 3:4). However, though such statements may not be inspired, the recording of them is, as is whatever doctrinal application the Bible may make of such statements. The psalmist exulted, “Thy word is true from the beginning” (Psm. 119:160)—indeed it is, from the opening act of God’s creative work in Genesis to the closing benediction of Revelation.

Conclusion

“For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven” (Psm. 119:89). If the Bible were simply a product of human minds, there could no “settled” about it; and there certainly could be no “forever” about it. But in the Bible, God spoke through specially chosen men, using their vocabularies and talents to make known His will to man. Indeed, “God hath spoken.” And we can be thankful that what He has spoken has been preserved for us in written form—the collection of 66 books we know today as *The Bible*.

The Bible’s Prophetic Accuracy

Jess Whitlock

Let us not think of our predictions of political elections to be on a par with God’s servants, the prophets of old. But, imagine that our nation could somehow continue for another 150 years. Could we find a prophet today to predict who would become president of the USA 150 years from now? Would he name the one to be elected and tell at least a few things to take place during his administration? Yet, this is an exact parallel to the prophecy of Isaiah in chapters 44 and 45 of his book. Isaiah called King Cyrus by name **150 years before** he became king, and told how he would allow the Israelites to return to their homeland and rebuild their city and the temple. Cyrus also helped with the materials needed for the rebuilding. Now, would anyone suggest that Isaiah was able to know these things by himself? How can we account for his prophecy and myriads more in the Bible?

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake *as they were* moved by the Holy Ghost (2 Pet. 1:20-21).

Case Number 1 - Precipitous Petra

About 100 miles south of Jerusalem we find the capital city of the land of Edom, Petra. The land is rugged and mountainous. The road into Petra is a narrow trail through El Seq; the canyon has near vertical walls. (Remember “Indiana Jones” in the “Last Crusade”? The ending scenes were filmed at Petra). The citizens were wealthy having robbed caravans passing through the region. There was a large amphitheater in Petra chiseled into the solid red rock cliffs surrounding the city and the inhabitants were noted for their wickedness. God sent forth His prophet, Jeremiah to cry out against wicked Edom:

As for thy terribleness, the pride of thy heart hath deceived thee, O thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, that holdest the height of the hill: though thou shouldest make thy nest as high as the eagle, I will bring thee down from thence, saith Jehovah. And Edom shall become an astonishment (desolation)...As in the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighbor cities thereof, saith Jehovah, no man shall dwell there... (Jer. 49:16-17).

Can you imagine how foolish the words of Jeremiah must have sounded to the inhabitants of Petra. Today Petra remains deserted and uninhabited. Weeds grow in the temple courtyards and palaces. A few wandering Bedouins might happen by from time to time, but the city remains deserted and desolate. How could the man Jeremiah have known all these things? (2 Pet. 1:20-21).

Case Number 2 – Whatever Became of Babylon?

Six hundred miles from hidden Petra flows the great Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, watering the ancient land of Mesopotamia. The grandest city of the region was Babylon, home of the “Hanging Gardens” one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. As King Nebuchadnezzar conquered nation after nation and his capital Babylon grew in power and grandeur, a wall surrounded the city 15 miles square, 350 feet high, 75 feet thick, with over 100 gates and towers. Babylon also grew in sinfulness and wickedness and at the height of its power Jeremiah proclaimed:

...for the purposes of Jehovah against Babylon do stand, to make the land of Babylon a desolation, without inhabitant...to show the king of Babylon that his city is taken on every quarter...And Babylon shall become heaps, a dwelling place for jackals...without inhabitant...Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: the broad walls of Babylon shall be overthrown, and her high gates shall be burned with fire; and the people shall labor for vanity and the nations for the fire, and she shall be weary (Jer. 51:29, 31, 37, 58).

Jeremiah was God’s prophet from circa 628 to 586 B.C., so these prophecies were uttered at the time mighty Babylon was at the height of her glory. All of this, and much more, has come to pass. Less than a century later Babylon surrendered to the army of the Medo-Persian Empire. The city then declined in importance. For over 2,000 years the city has stood virtually uninhabited and is eloquent testimony to the prophetic utterances of Jehovah! How was this possible? (2nd Pet. 1:20-21).

Case Number 3 - The Bustling City That Became a Bare Rock

One of the most notable cities of the Phoenicians had to be mighty Tyre. Her ships sailed to Spain and the British Isles, bringing back many treasures. Due to her great wickedness as a city, the prophet of God, Ezekiel must speak forth again the Word of the Lord:

Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Behold, I am against thee, O Tyre, and will cause many nations to come up against thee, as the sea causeth its waves to come up. And they shall destroy the walls of Tyre, and break down her towers: I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her a bare rock. She shall be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea; for I have spoken it, saith the Lord Jehovah... and I will make thee a bare rock; thou

shalt be a place for the spreading of nets; thou shalt be built no more: for I have spoken, I Jehovah have spoken it, saith the Lord Jehovah (Eze. 26:3-5, 14).

Ezekiel was God's messenger from c. 583 through 562 B.C. Old Tyre was besieged for months by King Nebuchadnezzar. At long last, he forced his way into the city, killing many of its inhabitants. The prophecy began to be fulfilled in his conquest. However, some of the wealthier inhabitants fled to a small island just off the coast. A new city of Tyre was built, supported by a large fleet of merchant ships. They lived in luxury there for more than two centuries. Through that time, the ruins of old Tyre remained undisturbed.

Then came Alexander the Great! He had a great force of soldiers from Greece, Thrace, Crete, Rhodes, Cyprus, and others. Alexander attacked the new city. Tyre's navy and the fact that their island city was surrounded by water made them virtually invincible to all attacks. Finally, the great military mind of Alexander came up with an ingenious plan. They would build a causeway out to the island...using the stones and timbers of old Tyre. Historians tell us that his army literally scraped up all the dust from the ruins. Using that causeway, Alexander took new Tyre, killing or enslaving all of her citizens.

To this day, Ancient Tyre remains uninhabited as a flat and barren rock. The late J.T. Marlin told me of viewing fisherman spreading out their nets to dry in the afternoon sun at this site. The modern village of Tyre is found on the old island location. The deposit of sea-sand and debris piled on this causeway with the passing of time caused new Tyre to be on the tip of a peninsula! The prophet Ezekiel was quite accurate in every detail of his prophecy.

Case Number 4 - Prophecies Concerning the Coming of the Messiah

Some of the hundreds of prophecies concerning the coming of the Jesus Christ:

- The Messiah would be born of a virgin (Isa. 7:13-14).
- The Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2-5).
- His flight into Egypt was foretold (Hosea 11:1).
- It was prophesied that He would do miracles (Isa. 35:4-6).
- The Messiah would be rejected by His own (Psa. 118:22-23).
- He would be betrayed by a friend (Psa. 41:9; Psa. 55:12-14).
- He would be sold for 30 pieces of silver (Zech. 11:12).
- Later that money would be cast on the temple floor (Zech. 11:12-13).
- His actions at His trial are described (Isa. 53:7).
- The Messiah would be crucified between two thieves (Isa. 53:12).
- Soldiers would gamble for His clothing (Psa. 22:18).
- His side would be pierced (Zech. 12:10).
- He would be buried with the rich (Isa. 53:9).
- But He would rise from the dead (Psa. 16:8-11).
- He would ascend into glory (Psa. 68:18).

Let's consider what is called the principle of probability. If we could discover that, on average, one man in ten is bald, and that one man in 100 has lost a finger, the chance (or probability), that one man will both be bald and have lost a finger is one in 1,000, and such would be calculated in this fashion: $1/10 \times 1/100 = 1/1000$.

Years ago, Professor Peter Stoner did such a study on the probability of just **12** Old Testament prophecies coming to pass by sheer coincidence. With the help of 600 college students, he investigated the data in depth with these results:

- The closing of the golden gate - 1 in 1000
- The fall of Petra - 1 in 10
- The desolation of Edom - 1 in 50
- The perpetual desolation of Edom - 1 in 100
- The fall of Babylon - 1 in 10

- Its depopulation in perpetuity - 1 in 100
- The destruction of Tyre by Nebuchadnezzar - 1 in 2
- The multi-nation attack on Tyre - 1 in 5
- The laying of Tyre's ruins in the sea - 1 in 10
- It's site becoming like the top of a rock - 1 in 2,000
- The spreading of nets on this very site - 1 in 10
- Its perpetual desolation - 1 in 20

Obviously, these figures can only be estimates, taking into account the date of the prophecy and the time of the fulfillment. What then, would be the probability of these few prophecies coming to pass by sheer chance? The staggering statistic was only one chance out of 2,000,000,000,000,000,000. That's **one chance** in more than **two quintillion**! (That's more dollars than I have in the bank)! (*Science Speaks*, 1952, Van Kampen Press, Wheaton, IL).

Imagine this, we take two quintillion silver dollars to the state of Texas. We spread them over the state and Texas is inundated with 35 feet of silver dollars. We have one silver dollar, on which we have painted a red X and mix it somewhere in the state at an undisclosed depth. Then, we blindfold Jerry Brewer and send him out to look for that one coin with the red X. He can go to any part of the state and dig down as far as he desires. Then, he must reach in that overwhelming pile of silver dollars and pick up one coin, and it must be **that** coin! Those are the odds! (By the way, when Jerry is done with this experiment, let's check his pockets).

Remember, those are the odds of **12** prophetic utterances coming to pass. The Old Testament contains literally hundreds and hundreds of such prophecies. More than **300 prophecies** concern the Messiah's coming and His kingdom. On just one day of His life (the day He was crucified) 33 separate and distinct prophecies were fulfilled. What are the odds of such coming to pass? **One** out of **8.5 quintillion**!

"Knowing this first, that no prophecy of scripture is of any private interpretation. For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but holy men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:20-21, ASV). The Bible's prophetic accuracy is forever settled.

The Bible's Scientific Accuracy

David Ray

There are so many religious options in the world, so why choose Christianity? What's special about it? Christians will certainly reference Jesus, the Son of God, over any other religious leader. But how do we even know of Jesus and His sacrifice for mankind but by the Bible?

Then we must ask, what's special about the Bible when compared to all other religious writings? Christians believe the Bible to be written by the inspiration of Deity, as it claims to be multiple times (e.g., 2 Peter 1:21—"holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost"). But to claim something to be true is not to prove it to be true. So, does the Bible give us any reasons to believe such a claim?

In my experience, many of the people who have chosen Christianity are not able, or even willing, to defend their answer to these questions. But if we can't explain why we believe what we believe, how will we ever convince anyone else that Christianity is the true and only pathway to God and eternal life? And since it is the Bible that tells us of this salvation while claiming a multitude of times to be written not merely by the hand of men, but by God Himself, we then need to be able to defend our beliefs concerning the Bible and demonstrate to the lost that it is definitely worth their time to read.

When one studies the Scriptures with an open mind, he will see many evidences of its being "given by the inspiration of God" (2 Tim. 3:16-17), e.g., its writings are accurate historically, scientifically, medically, and prophetically. In this article we will look at the Bible's scientific accuracies—facts that are supported by science now, but which the

Bible's authors knew centuries before science discovered them.

The Universe's Beginning

There are only three possibilities when it comes to the origins of something: 1) it has always existed, 2) it created itself, or 3) it was created by something or someone else.

Scripture has always known that the correct, logical answer is that the Universe was created. It teaches us so in the very first verse (Gen. 1:1), even identifying the One responsible for it. Atheism will not accept this, which leaves them adhering to either the easy but scientifically disproven view that it has always existed or the illogical view that it created itself (spontaneous generation).

The Universe is not Eternal

Science demonstrates that the universe could not have always existed. The Second Law of Thermodynamics (notice it's not a hypothesis but a law, scientifically proven to be true) says that "there is a natural tendency of any isolated system to degenerate into a more disordered state" (<https://www.livescience.com/50941-second-law-thermodynamics.html>); i.e., entropy. In other words, all energy in the Universe is running down over time and will eventually run out (cf. Heb.1:11; Psa. 102:26; Isa. 51:6). Therefore, the Universe could not have always existed or we would have run out of energy. It must have had a beginning.

The Universe did not Create Itself

Many, if not most, scientists understand and accept the evidences that prove the Universe had a beginning. This leaves the final two options mentioned above: spontaneous generation (the Universe created itself) or there exists a Creator outside of and greater than the Universe. Yet, in blatant rejection of the undeniable truths of the existence of a Creator, most instead hold to the illogical view that the Universe created itself (i.e., the Big Bang Theory, which teaches that everything exploded into existence)!

National Geographic, when describing the Big Bang, said "In the first 10^{-43} seconds of its existence, the universe was very compact, less than a million billion billionth the size of a single atom" (www.nationalgeographic.com/science/space/universe/origins-of-the-universe). That is incomprehensibly small! And it supposedly describes our entire universe, the enormity of which is equally incomprehensible. Did every speck of our universe really exist in something so small at one point in time? This doesn't seem very logical. And how did it transform into what we **know** to be our vast universe?

The article goes on to say,

It's also thought that the extremely close quarters allowed the universe's very first particles to mix, mingle, and settle into roughly the same temperature. Then, in an unimaginably small fraction of a second, all that matter and energy expanded outward more or less evenly, with tiny variations provided by fluctuations on the quantum scale.

And there you have it—the origin of our universe. But wait, this really doesn't answer our questions. First and foremost, it doesn't actually give us any answers at all as to the source of all matter in the universe; it simply says it was all "very compact." What was the source of this **compact** universe? Reducing its size from really, really big to really, really small doesn't relieve them of their obligation to answer this question. Second, it doesn't say **why** all this condensed matter "expanded" (i.e., exploded, "banged"), at "breakneck" speed, into the universe we now call home.

The fact is that **nothing** can create itself. This is the most illogical and ludicrous view any scientist could ever propose. And yet, in 2010 Stephen Hawking, the world-renowned physicist, made the following statement in his book, *The Grand Design*:

Because there is a law such as gravity, the universe can and will create itself from nothing. Spontaneous creation is the reason there is something rather than nothing, why the universe exists, why we exist. It is not necessary to invoke God to light the blue touch paper and set the universe going.

([www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Grand_Design_\(book\)#cite_note-cosmology-9](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Grand_Design_(book)#cite_note-cosmology-9))

The lengths to which otherwise educated men will go in order to avoid God are staggering!

The First Law of Thermodynamics (again, “law”) teaches us that, while energy and matter can change from one form to another, they cannot be created or destroyed. This fact, along with common sense, teaches us that something cannot create itself. If there ever were nothing in existence, then there would be nothing in existence now. Since science and common sense eliminate the second option, this leaves only Creation.

If a person is undecided his beliefs on this topic, he need only listen with an open and logical mind to the Big Bang atheist disprove his own hypothesis by explaining how all matter in the universe at one time existed in a space smaller than a minute fraction of a pinhead and somehow exploded into our vast, impressive, unending, well designed home. This is highly illogical, is never found in Scripture, and should lead any sane person to consider Creation as the only **logical** explanation.

The Bible provides the only legitimate, understandable explanation for our origins: “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”

The Dimensions of the Ark

In Genesis 6 God told Noah to build an ark that would hold himself, his family, and a lot of animals. This was its purpose—not speed, distance, etc., but simply to successfully carry its cargo. In verse 15 God gave Noah the ark’s dimensions: “The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits.” So, the dimensions were 30:5:3.

In 1844, almost five millennia later, British civil engineer, Isambard K. Brunel, built his famous, giant ship, the *Great Britain*, using the same ratio—322’ by 50.5’ by 32’ (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SS_Great_Britain). Whether or not he intended to use the same dimensions as Noah’s ark, they turned out to be the perfect ration for a huge boat built for cargo seaworthiness and not for speed. Today, the *Great Britain* is called “the great-great-grandmother for all modern ships” (www.ssgreatbritain.org/story).

What does that make Noah’s Ark??

During World War Two, shipbuilders used this same ratio to build barge-like boats to carry tremendous amounts of cargo (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liberty_ship). They used what had been established as the perfect ratio. But how did Noah know this 5,000 years **earlier**?

The Paths of the Sea

In Psalm 8 David praises God for giving mankind dominion over the animals, birds, and “the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea” (v.8). “Paths of the sea” is an interesting phrase. What did he mean by this? At that time, around 1000 BC, they didn’t know. Today we know this speaks of the ocean currents.

Ocean currents, like the Gulf Stream, are very impressive movements of water around the world in such a way that cannot be phrased any better than “paths of the sea.” But they weren’t discovered by science until the 1500’s by Ponce de Leon off the coast of Florida.

...they encountered a current so strong that it pushed them backwards and forced them to seek anchorage. The tiniest ship, the San Cristobal, was carried out of sight and lost for two days. This was the first encounter with the Gulf Stream where it reaches maximum force between the Florida coast and the Bahamas. Because of the powerful boost provided by the current, it would soon become the primary route for eastbound ships leaving the Spanish Indies bound for Europe (www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Juan_Ponce_de_León).

However, these currents wouldn’t be fully understood until the work of Matthew Maury in the mid 1800’s. A former member of the U.S. Navy and one who would study the ocean, winds, currents, meteorology, etc., he was also a student of the Bible. And it was Psalm 8:8 that intrigued him to the point that he determined to study the ocean and identify these “paths.” This he eventually accomplished, providing charts of the oceans’ currents as well as charts of the Atlantic Ocean floor between the United States and Europe. And all of this he did with a biblical perspective, believing the Bible to be

the true and accurate Word of God (www.answersingenesis.org/creation-scientists/profiles/matthew-maury-search-for-the-secret-of-the-seas/).

The world knows of the ocean currents because of Mr. Maury's work. But how did David know three millennia ago?

The Jet Stream

Part of Matthew Maury's work included his study of the jet stream, and it was the Bible that motivated him in his research. But did the Bible really know about the jet stream during the lifetime of its human authors?

Consider Ecclesiastes 1:6. Solomon wrote, "The wind goeth toward the south and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually and the wind returneth again according to his circuits." It's actually pretty hard to miss this! In the 21st century we know exactly what Solomon was referencing, seeing that the jet stream was discovered approximately 100 years ago in the 1920's. But how did Solomon know almost **3,000 years earlier**?

The Water Cycle

In the next verse (Eccl. 1:7), Solomon wrote, "All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again." This is something we take for granted now because we understand the water cycle (evaporation, condensation, precipitation, etc.). But without this knowledge, it would be understandable that a person might wonder why the oceans don't fill up and eventually inundate the land masses.

The water cycle wasn't discovered until 1580 by Bernard Palissy and later Pierre Perrault (1674), and not ultimately accepted as truth until the early 1900's (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Water_cycle). So, how did Solomon know in 1000 BC?

The Springs of the Sea

In the book of Job, the man Job and his three friends spoke many things about God, enlightening one another about His character, His reasoning, His decisions, etc. Many of the things they claimed were incorrect. So, beginning in chapter 38, God spoke up and asked Job a few questions, challenging him to answer things that no human could know, thereby putting him in his place.

In 38:16 God asked, "Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea? Or hast thou walked in the search of the depth?" Of course, the answer for Job was a resounding no. Who at that point in history had been to the depths of the oceans?

As already mentioned, Matthew Maury's work involved studying the ocean floor; and he did so because he was aware of this passage in Job. But it wouldn't be until 1973 that science would confirm that there are springs in the bottom of the ocean. The Institute for Creation Research website says the following under the heading "Vent in the seafloor where hot water issues from the earth into the ocean":

Deep diving research submarines have been constructed to withstand the three-tons-per-square-inch pressure at the ocean floor. These submarines have carried scientists into the deep. The first direct observations of deepsea springs, or their mineralized vents, appear to have been made on the Mid-Atlantic Ridge by Project FAMOUS in 1973. Spectacular hot springs were then discovered on the Galapagos Rift in the Pacific Ocean by the 23-foot long submersible Alvin in 1977. Alvin also explored, photographed and sampled hot springs on the East Pacific Rise just south of the Gulf of California in 1979 (<https://www.icr.org/article/springs-ocean>).

Science didn't catch up to the Bible for almost 4 millennia. This is **not** a criticism of science. Science can be limited by the technology necessary to study the creation, particularly the pitch-black darkness and enormous pressure at the bottom of the ocean. But the Bible authors had no such limitations because they were inspired by the Creator Himself. Passages like Job 38:16 prove this; it would've been impossible for an uninspired writer 4,000 years ago to know these things. He required (and possessed) special knowledge from an omniscient Creator!

The Innumerable Stars

Jeremiah 33:22 says "the host of heaven cannot be numbered..." But two centuries

before Christ, the Greek astronomer Hipparchus said there were 800-1080, and another ancient writer, Chang Hing, said there were approximately 2,500 (<https://apologeticspress.org/apcontent.aspx?category=13&article=519>).

In 2011 that number had climbed considerably to three hundred sextillion stars (<https://apologeticspress.org>) and today the number is even higher, being estimated to be a septillion, or 10^{24} (www.space.com). That's one million billion billion or 1,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 stars (see Psalm 19:1)! And these are not even real numbers (nobody has counted that high); they're simply estimates based on the estimated number of galaxies in the Universe times the estimated number of stars in each galaxy. The article even admits "that number is likely a gross underestimation, as more detailed looks at the universe will show even more galaxies." It sounds like we're getting closer and closer to just admitting that "the host of heaven cannot be numbered"!

Pleiades and Orion

God quizzed Job in Job 38:31: "Canst thou bind the cluster of Pleiades or loose the bands of Orion?" God told Job in circa 2000 BC that the stars of Pleiades were gravitationally bound while the stars of Orion are not. Astronomy today confirms this (cf. <https://coldcasechristianity.com/writings/is-the-astronomy-in-the-book-of-job-scientifically-consistent/>). But how did Job know so long ago?

The Earth Hangs From Nothing

In Job 26:7, Job acknowledged that God "hangeth the earth upon nothing." Consider two views. The first is that this refers to the earth's being suspended freely in space. Until relatively recently, mankind couldn't even imagine how the earth could hang in space on nothing. It wasn't until the space program in the 1950's that science was able to confirm this.

The second view of this verse is that "the phrase 'and hangeth the earth upon nothing' refutes the pagan notions that the Earth rested upon the back of a turtle or an elephant" (www.apologeticspress.org). Either view shows the scientific foreknowledge of the Bible.

Comparison with Other Religions

Do we find the same scientific accuracy in other religious writings? Consider some of the information found in the Vedas, the Hindu Scriptures of India:

- The earth is fixed, immovable, standing still.
- The earth is supported by a pillar.
- It's a thousand days' journey to heaven.
- The moon is 50,000 leagues higher than the sun and shines by its own light.
- Night is caused by the sun's setting behind a huge mountain several thousand feet high located in the center of the earth

(<https://nashidahmed.blogspot.com/2010/12/scientific-logical-errors-in-vedas.html>).

The Quran also has many scientific errors:

- Surah 13:3—The sun orbits the Earth
- Surah 6:38—All animals live in communities.
- Surah 18:83-86—Alexander the Great followed the setting of the sun and discovered that it went down into the waters of a muddy spring. This is due to the assumption of a flat earth, which has physical places into which the sun sets and from which it rises.

While these views seem ridiculous to us, they are as legitimate as any other guesses that might be proffered by a human without Divine inspiration and without the advances of modern science.

Conclusion

Scientific facts, one after another, affirm that the Bible writers knew what they were talking about centuries before the scientific community caught up. How could these men know all these things without the scientific and technological advances required

for **uninspired** men to know them? And, since all religions are allegedly from the same God and just as valuable as the other, why is it that no other religious writings display these same infallible proofs? Because there is One God, one approved religion, and one Book of communication from God to man, with its Holy Spirit inspired writers (2 Peter 1:20-21). And it tells us that there's "one Mediator between God and man, the man Jesus Christ, who gave Himself a ransom for all" (1 Tim 2:5-6). It is our prayer that everyone will consider these evidences and decide to obey the soul-saving message of the Bible, found in the New Testament.

The Bible's Historical Accuracy

Doug Post

The first verse of the Bible declares, "In the beginning God..." Without explanation, God is introduced to the reader, whether one knows Him or not, and whether one believes in His existence or not. God simply bursts upon the scene. The Bible does not provide some twelve-step program to help one come to belief in God, nor does it provide an apologetic preface for God's existence. God just **"is."** But, of course, as the Bible unfolds, we are presented with overwhelming information proving God's existence, so much so, David writes: "The fool has said in his heart there is no God" (Psa. 14:1).

Those of us who believe in the existence of God do so because of all the available evidence. First, there is the external evidence which includes nature, science, and philosophy. These elements are outside the Bible, but which have credible information, corroborating what the Bible teaches. Second, there is the internal evidence, evidence which comes from the Bible itself. However, concerning the Bible, there are essentially, two competing and contrary views regarding its nature and authenticity. One view says, "Scripture is true because I believe it is true." The other says, "Scripture is false because I believe it is false."

Each above statement or claim, whether positive or negative, is subjective, that is, each claim is unsubstantiated, not having the evidence supporting it. They are mere assertions or opinions, not facts. On the other hand, for any claim to be accepted as true, then it must have supporting or corroborating evidence. Having such evidence, then each claim or view could be stated as, "I believe the Bible because it is true," or "I do not believe the Bible because it is false." Therefore, what evidence exists for the credibility and accuracy of the Bible?

Internal Evidence—The Bible's Own Claims

The fundamental issue at hand, for any assertion, is whether it has evidence or facts to substantiate its claim. However, fair judgment of the facts must also play a role in determining a claim's validity. For instance, in the Old Testament, Jephthah made a vow, but the question is, did he keep his vow, and how was it kept (Judg. 11:30-40)? Understanding how to approach the Bible is necessary for one to reach a conclusion. The Bible, itself, says that its entirety (related facts) must be sought out in order to arrive at truth (Psa. 119:160). Since God condemns not only murder (Ex.20:13), but also human sacrifice (Deut.18:10), then Jephthah could not have sacrificed his daughter, because God would not have granted or accepted such a vow. Suggesting otherwise, however, would have God contradicting Himself, which is exactly why skeptic and atheists alike point to such passages. However, they, too, are obligated to deal fairly with the facts, and must conclude the plausibility that this is, indeed, the proper understanding.

Additionally, the Bible claims to be inspired or God breathed. Paul wrote Timothy declaring: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

The primary object of inspiration is Scripture – the Bible. All of the Bible, every word, is said to be **God-breathed** or inspired. But this also means that those who wrote the Bible, were supernaturally aided while writing down what God desired, because the

Bible also claims that those who wrote were inspired by God to write:

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost (2 Pet. 1:20-21).

The Bible claims for itself a direct relationship with God, constantly affirming its own truthfulness and supernaturally, inspired nature. Therefore, even its human authors could, in no way, corrupt God's message as found in Scripture. Accordingly, the Bible is a product of God.

When it comes to Science, the First Law of Thermodynamics states that matter, including energy, "cannot be created or destroyed." In essence, matter and energy cannot create itself. Therefore, this one Law, alone, proves the existence of God since matter and energy cannot create itself. There must be a **Cause** to their creation and existence. Science is unable to measure, ascertain, or explain this fact. Obviously, God, is the Creator, and His word explains this fact (Gen. 1).

Moreover, not only does the Bible claim for itself inspiration and truthfulness, it also claims inerrancy. Since it claims to be inerrant, then it can be trusted as being wholly true. After all, it is of Divine origin. While the Bible is not a science book, when it speaks of scientific matters it is completely accurate. When it speaks of historical matters is also completely accurate. When the Bible speaks of historical figures or places, it can be accepted as truthful.

The most fascinating evidence in all of this, is that the Bible is not just one book, but is a collection of 66 books. Together they comprise what is referred to as Sacred Writings or Scripture, or the Word of God. The Bible was written over a period of 1,600 years by 40 different writers. Yet the message, with its emphasis on Christ, is remarkably unified and coherent. Since the bulk of the writers were eyewitnesses to the existence of God, to people, places and events, the evidence of their claims cannot be ignored.

External Evidence—Scientific, Historical, and Archaeological

As previously mentioned, the Bible is not a Science book and, typically, does not deal, directly, with scientific topics as do Science books used in school. While the Bible is not a Math book, it does use some math, and when it does, it uses it accurately. For instance, Daniel uses addition and correctly concludes with the accurate answer of 70 (Dan. 9:25-27). This is truth. Therefore, when the Bible uses math, we can expect a correct answer, even though it is not a Math book. The same is true with Science. When the Bible addresses matters that Science teaches, the Bible is correct.

For instance, at one time, Science taught that the earth was flat, yet the book of Isaiah tells us that God "sitteth upon the circle of the earth" (Isa.40:22). The point here, that thousands of years before the telescope, satellites, and space travel, the prophet was aware that the earth was not flat. Therefore, when the Bible speaks about the earth it is accurate. Moreover, Job writes that God, "hangeeth the earth upon nothing." No, the earth is not being held up on the back of a mythical god, but as God describes, it hangs upon nothing.

Some scientists are on record declaring that matter, itself, is eternal, which goes against everything Science teaches:

Many have argued (and some still do) that the universe is eternal; there never was a time when it did not exist. But Moses wrote: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). But, as Dr. Robert Jastrow has pointed out: "Modern science denies an eternal existence to the Universe..." (15). This is one of the clear implications of the Second Law of Thermodynamics. Everything is "running down." It must have been, therefore, "wound up" at some point in the past (Jackson, 20).

Some scientists have argued that matter is still being created, which once again, is contrary to what Science, itself, teaches:

The book of Genesis states that Jehovah's creative activity concluded with the sixth day of the initial week (2:1-2). Accordingly, there is no creation of

“matter” being effected today. This is perfectly consistent with the First Law of Thermodynamics, which asserts that according to present processes, matter is not being created now (which further suggests that it cannot create itself). It may be altered in form (e.g., from a solid to a gas), but it is neither being created nor destroyed. Yet contrast these facts with the contention of Bertrand Russell — just forty-five years ago: “There is no reason why the world could not have come into being without a cause; nor, on the other hand, is there any reason why it should not have always existed” (7). These statements are absolutely absurd, and no self-respecting intellectual would echo them today. But the Bible is wonderfully current (20,21).

When the Bible addresses topics or issues, which Science also addresses, its conclusions are accurate. This is also true when it comes to historical people and places. For instance, the existence of King David had been called into question for many centuries. Many skeptics and atheists claimed that David was myth and downplayed the concept of the existence of an organized, ancient Israel. Of course, if David were a mythical figure, then surely their idea of a Messiah would also be mythical since the Bible claims Jesus comes from David’s bloodline. However, all of that changed in 1993 when the Tel-Dan stele was discovered wherein there was an inscription concerning Israel as the “house of David.” Evidently the inscription was made by an enemy king of Northern Israel, and the inscription, in part, says, “King of Israel, and I killed Ahaziah, son of Jehoram of the house of David.” Regarding the Tel-Dan stele history and the significance behind it:

Apparently, Hazael created the victory stele in celebration of killing these kings at the battle at Ramoth Gilead in 841 B.C. as recorded in 2 Kings 8:28-29. Hazael was mistaken in his historical narrative; while both kings did die related to the battle, Hazael was not personally responsible for their deaths. The son of Ahab, Jehoram, was wounded and went to Jezreel to get over his wounds. That turned out to be a terrible decision costing his life. Scripture reports that the prophet Elisha orders one of his students to go to Ramoth-Gilead for a conference with Jehu who was the military commander. Jehu and the student met in an upper room separate from everybody else. The messenger told Jehu that he would be anointed a king and that he was to act as an agent of divine judgment against the house of Ahab. (Jehoram was the son of Ahab and would have been king). Jehu then secretly entered Jezreel where Jehoram was recuperating from wounds suffered in battle. When Jehoram tried to escape, Jehu shot an arrow which ended up killing him immediately. When Ahaziah discovered Jehu had killed Jehoram he tried to escape as well but ended up suffering the same fate. Jehu caught up with Ahaziah and he was mortally wounded and died several days later. Jehu assassinated both the Judah Jehoram (the son of Ahab), and the king Ahaziah (from the house of David). Because they both died shortly after the battle, Hazael mistakenly believed he had killed them both” (waystofaith.net).

There are multitudes of other such archaeological finds, substantiating persons, places, and events during the Patriarchal age in the Old Testament such as the Nuzi, Mari, and Ebla tablets. Even though confirmation for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is still lacking, there is external evidence regarding the prophet Balaam, son of Beor (Num. 22:1-24:25). The Merneptah Stele (Egyptian Pharaoh, Merneptah), found in 1896, which is dated to around 1210 BC, has a sole reference to “Israel.” The Stele demonstrates that the Israel was recognized as a people in the land of Canaan. In 1846, “The Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III” was discovered. On it is the inscription concerning king Jehu of Israel (2 Kings 10:34). Of course, much more archaeological discoveries could be mentioned but this will suffice for our purposes.

The New Testament also has much external evidence supporting its historical accuracy. Such evidence is made manifest by the likes of Augustus Caesar, Tiberius, Gaius, Claudius, Nero, Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian (Barnett, 229). Then there are contemporary historians such Josephus, Pliny, and Tacitus, all providing vital

information concerning Jesus, Christians, and various places and events of the first century. In the past, critics tried to discredit Luke, accusing him of being an inaccurate historian; however, the books of Luke and Acts (both replete with references to cities, Roman provinces, and political figures) have now been substantiated by external evidence. Critics once scoffed at his reference to Lysanius as the “tetrarch of Abilene” (Luke 3:1), but archaeologists have since found two Greek inscriptions proving that Lysanius was indeed the tetrarch of Abilene in AD 14–29. Luke’s use of technical terminology, like *proconsul*, *procurator*, *Asiarch*, *praetor*, and *politarch*, has been challenged in the past, but evidence has vindicated his accuracy and the overall accuracy of the New Testament.

Additionally, an abundance of archaeology discoveries also substantiate much of the New Testament, so much so that many critical attacks against the historicity of the New Testament have been reversed. Most of the geographical details associated with the life of Jesus in the Gospels have been substantiated. These include places such as the Pool of Siloam, the Pool of Bethesda, Jacob’s Well, Bethlehem, Nazareth, Cana, Capernaum, Chorazin, the residence of Pilate in Jerusalem, and “The Pavement” in John 19:13.

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The Bible Reveals God's Eternal Purpose

Ron Cosby

Eph 3:8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, was this grace given, to preach unto the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery which for ages hath been hid in God who created all things; to the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly *places* might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Paul asserts with certainty an eternal fact. The church which Jesus built (Mat. 16:18) was according to the eternal purpose of the Father. By inspiration, he proclaims this fact while knowing the mind of the Jew who had a mistaken concept that the **physical** kingdom of David was eternal. He proclaims this fact while knowing the mindset of future generations who ignorantly exclaim, “Give me the man and not the plan” or “Jesus, yes, but the church, no.” Unbelievable! Take a closer look at what Paul teaches.

The unsearchable riches of Christ. Earlier, Paul explained what the riches were, saying, “*to wit*, that the Gentiles are fellow-heirs, and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel” (Eph. 3:6). Obviously, he is talking about the salvation of souls. Jesus did not come to save us from tyrannical governments or foreign invasions. He did not come to deliver men from poverty, nor to make them rich in this present world. His mission was not to give us better jobs, cars, houses, or clothes. He died on the cross so sinners could be forgiven of the cause of separation from the Father, sin. Paul’s statement “fellow-heirs, and fellow-members of the body” shows that the church, which is His body, was a major part of God’s eternal purpose. Within its spiritual walls is salvation.

Which he purposed in Christ. Half of the first chapter is devoted to presenting that “all spiritual blessings” are only in Christ Jesus (Eph. 1:3). Here is a challenge: Read the first half of chapter one and note the number of times inspiration uses the concept “in Christ.” Follow that up by writing down what Paul says the blessings in Christ are. Your study should take you to the conclusion that God designed His work

“to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth; in him, *I say*, in whom also we were made a heritage, having been foreordained according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his will” (Eph. 1:10-11). God wants all men to understand the outcome of the stewardship given to Paul and the apostles.

God accomplished His design when He established the church. Within this spiritual body, Jews and Gentiles are reconciled to God. Even more so, and in like manner, they are made one with each other through the death of Jesus (Eph. 2:11-16).

Make all men see. God is not hiding anything. He wants men to be knowledgeable concerning His plan (John 8:32). Paul informed his readers of the purpose of the apostles’ stewardship. They have revealed God’s plan of salvation which in other ages could not have been made known. It took time and ages and events and actions of a host of people to work out His plan. Now, through Holy Writ, it is laid open. When we read, we can indeed understand (Eph. 3:2-5). The Son could not be born and live and die and be resurrected until “the fulness of time” (Gal. 4:4). The very phrase “fulness of time” is pregnant with pre-planning.

The dispensation of the mystery. How did God plan on revealing? What could He possibly do that would demonstrate such a magnificent inner working of deity? Paul proclaims it was according to the dispensation of the mystery given to him. This simply means he is inspired (Eph. 3:1-5; 1 Cor. 14:37). With Spirit-given knowledge and abilities, he revealed the will of the Father.

Made known through the church. The church demonstrates the counsel of God which hath been systematically revealed from ancient time. As Isaiah taught in another context, there is none else but Jehovah who declares in the present the future. Jehovah does not speak in secret nor in the dark places. He wants His counsel established concerning the salvation of men (Isa. 45:21). In Christ, He brings forth His counsel. We now see His manifold wisdom in the spiritual sphere which is the church of Christ (Rom. 16:16; Acts 20:28). This is the body in which all men are reconciled. It is the same spiritual realm as the kingdom of His dear Son (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:12-13).

According to the eternal purpose. The establishment of the church was no hastily thrown together, spur-of-the-moment idea. This mystery or plan or strategy was not made known unto the sons of men during the days before Christ (Eph. 3:4-5). But it has “now,” said Paul, “been revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit” (Eph. 3:5). And Paul was one of those chosen of the Father to make the mystery known. But so is the church. Paul made the mystery known through speaking and writing according to supernatural endowments of power. The church is the public manifestation of what was revealed. Thus, God’s plan is seen in the finished sphere, the church. The word which is translated “mystery” comes from the Greek word which indicates a military plan of operations and movements. Though our fight is not against flesh and blood, it, nevertheless, is a fight, a fight for the souls of men, a fight in which God has engaged since the beginning of the devil’s thought of sin.

Promised afore through his prophets in the holy scriptures. The things that Paul has presented ought not be a surprise to any Bible student. God’s eternal purpose of men being reconciled in the church may be clearly seen in the writings of the prophets of old. Such predictions from them demonstrate the eternal purpose of God. Moses wrote of God’s good pleasure being set into motion in the Garden at the fall of man (Gen. 3:15). Two millennia later, the Great Planner informed Abraham that his seed would bring forth the redeemer (Gen. 12:1-4; 22:18). Paul connects the seed prediction to Christ (Gal. 3:16). These verses reveal a time frame of action that span from the Garden to the resurrection. Magnificent! However, there is more.

In 740 BC, Isaiah foresaw the coming “house” of salvation (Isa. 2:2-3). As we noted in Ephesians, all flesh, Jew and Gentile, could find peace with God and peace with all nations in the “house of God.” The promises of this house of redemption presented by Isaiah were being fulfilled in Jerusalem shortly after Jesus died on the cross (Acts 2). However, there is more.

One hundred to hundred fifty years after Isaiah, Daniel adds his prophecy to the multi-

ple predictions. At the end of Daniel's interpretation of the king's dream in Daniel 2:44, Daniel declares the coming of God's kingdom, and that the nations would flow into it. Therein, they would glorify God and their new king (Dan. 7:13-14).

During the days of Jesus in the first century, the Lord gives a number of utterances concerning God's great plan. He takes special notice that He would build His church (Mat. 16:16-18). He speaks of it coming in the days of the lives of those who were living on the earth when He Himself walked it (Mark 9:1). He also predicted that the kingdom would come at the time men saw the coming of the power of the Holy Spirit (Mark 9:1). The Lord addressed a closer time frame at His ascension, saying, "not many days hence" (Acts 1:5-6). These things were fulfilled in Acts 2, almost two thousand years ago, just as purposed and predicted.

God's plan was purposed, proposed, and perfected At which time, and since which time, Bible readers may read, study and understand God's eternal purpose in Christ in the church.

The Bible Reveals Christ and His Church

Nana Yaw Aidoo

We shall do two things in this article. First, we shall trace the existence of the church through the ages until its establishment. Second, we shall look at how Jesus Christ like a golden thread runs through the message of the Bible.

What is the Church?

The word "church" translates the Greek word "ekklesia," a word which literally means "a calling out." A combination of two Greek words—*ek*, which means "out of" and *klesis*, which means "a calling." *Ekklesia* to the Greek, referred to an assembly of citizens, called out by a herald that they might discuss and act on matters that concerned the state. When used by the writers of the New Testament, it refers to "... that body of people whom God, by the power of the gospel of His Son, *calls out* of the moral and spiritual darkness of this world, that they might know, love, and serve Him as His own people" (Larry Deason, *The Love of Christ in the Local Congregation*, pp. 7, 8). *Ekklesia* appears 117 times in the New Testament. Seventy-seven times it is translated *church*, 37 times, *churches*, and three times *assembly*.

The word *church* is used in two senses in the Bible. First, in a universal sense to refer to all of God's children in the world (cf. Matt. 16:18). Second, in a local sense to refer to a congregation of God's children in a given locality (cf. 1 Cor. 1:2). Other names which denote the church include; the body (Col. 1:18), the house of God (1 Tm. 3:15), the kingdom (Col. 1:13), the temple of God (1 Cor. 3:16-17), the flock of God (Acts 20:28), the Israel of God (Gal. 6:16) and the bride of Christ (Eph. 5:22-32). This lesson would be incomplete if we fail to point out the fact that the Bible speaks of only one (literally) church. Forever, God's Word is settled on this issue. Men may speak of an "invisible Church" with many branches or denominations but the Bible speaks of only one, pre-denominational and un-denominational church. (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4). There is only one church just as there is only "one God and Father of all." (Eph.4:4-6). We have no denomination in mind when we speak of "the church." When we say "the church," we have in mind the only one for which Christ gave Himself (Eph. 5:25). This is the church that is the object of our study in this article.

The Church Promised

Our burden in this article is to trace the existence of the church and we begin by affirming that the church is not a divine after-thought but was in the eternal purpose of God. (Eph.3:9-11). In the beginning when sin first entered the world, there came the promise of a system for the remission of the sins of men, a system which included the church. To the serpent, God said; "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." (Gen.3:15). The bruising of the heel of the seed of the woman evidently referred to the minor wound that Satan gave to our Lord when he influenced men to send Him to the cross. However, Jesus Christ, the seed of the woman gave a mortal wound (head

bruising) to Satan when He resurrected from the grave.

Genesis 3:15 is the first intimation of a Redeemer and His work in all of the Bible, and included in this promise is the church which He would build despite His own death (Matt. 16:16-18). Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the only person in all of history to found a religion and build His church **after** He died, and that promise is contained in Genesis 3:15 (Jerry Brewer; “Liberalism’s View of the Church.” *The Blight of Liberalism*, ed. Michael Hatcher, 2005).

Furthermore, the church is seen in God’s promises to Abraham. God Almighty said to the faithful patriarch;

...Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. (Gen. 12:1-3).

The land was Canaan. The great nation was Israel. But the third promise to bless all families of the earth through Abraham’s seed (cf. Gen. 22:18) was fulfilled in Christ (Gal. 3:16) “...and in that promise was the church, the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23; cf. Gal. 3:16) where those blessings reside (Gal. 3:26-27).” (Brewer; *ibid*).

The Church Prophesied

Further down the line in the days of Isaiah, about 700 years before the birth of Christ, the prophet Isaiah proclaimed:

And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD’S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. (Isa. 2:2-3).

Notice the similarity between God’s promise to Abraham (see Gen. 22:18) and Isaiah’s prophecy when he said “all nations shall flow to it.” Evidently, that which all nations would flow to, would be the culmination of God’s promise to bless all families of the earth through Abraham’s seed. That which “all nations shall flow to,” is “the LORD’S house” that would “be established in the top of the mountains.” The Lord’s house is the church (1 Tim. 3:15) and thus, Isaiah’s prophecy was about the divine creation known as the church. It would be established “in the last days” and in “Jerusalem.” Around the same time that Isaiah gave this prophecy, Micah also gave a similar prophecy. (see Mic. 4:1-2).

Two hundred years after Isaiah and Micah had prophesied about the Lord’s house, Daniel in interpreting a dream by the pagan king, Nebuchadnezzar, also prophesied about a coming kingdom. In the dream, Nebuchadnezzar saw a statue with a head of fine gold, breast and arms of silver, belly and thighs of brass, legs of iron and feet that were part iron and part clay. This statue was broken into pieces by a stone that was cut out without hands (i.e. of divine origin) and which became a great mountain that filled the whole earth. (Dan. 2:31-35). Daniel interpreted the dream and noted that the head of gold represented Nebuchadnezzar or the Babylonian empire, the breasts and arms of silver represented the Medes and Persians, the belly and thighs of brass represented Alexander the Great or the Grecian empire, the legs of iron and feet of iron and clay represented the Roman kings and the stone that was cut without hands represented God’s kingdom (i.e. the church) that would be set up in the days of the Roman kings (Dan. 2:36-45). In another vision about the kingdom, Daniel noted that someone like “the Son of Man” ascended to “the Ancient of days” and was given an indestructible kingdom. (Dan. 7:13-14). This was fulfilled in the ascension of Christ, the Son of Man (John 3:13), and in the events of the first Pentecost after His ascension. (Acts 1:9-11; 2:1-36). Thus, the church which existed in promise now existed in prophecy.

The Church Imminent

Now in the days when the Roman kings ruled the world (Luke 3:1), John, the forerunner of Jesus Christ (Matt. 3:3; Isa. 40:3), came preaching that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. (Matt. 3:2). After John was put in prison by Herod, Jesus Christ also began preaching that the kingdom of heaven or of God was at hand. (Matt. 4:17; Mark 1:14-15). Not long after this, Jesus Christ picked some men to be His apostles, and gave them a message to take to the house of Israel. He said to these men; “And as ye go, preach, saying, the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Matt. 10:7). In Caesarea Philippi, alone with His apostles one time, Jesus Christ said He would build His church, which He called “the kingdom of heaven.” (Matt. 16:18-19). Furthermore, He said some of His apostles would be **alive** to see “the kingdom of God come with power.” (Mark 9:1).

From the foregoing, it is evident that during the preparatory ministry of John the baptizer and the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ, the kingdom or the church which Daniel prophesied would be established in the days of the Roman kings was imminent. It was imminent because both these men preached that it was “at hand.” Two thousand years after John and Jesus Christ, false teachers continue to teach that the kingdom is “at hand.” We wonder whether Paul had 2,000 years in the future in mind when he wrote this of his death; “For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is **at hand**.” (2 Tim. 4:6). And more, the theory that the kingdom or the church existed in the time of John and Jesus is unquestionably false. Pray tell, why John and Jesus Christ would preach that the kingdom was “at hand,” if it already were in existence? Pray tell, why Jesus Christ would teach His disciples to pray for the kingdom to come, if it existed in His time (Matt.6:9-10)? Pray tell, why Jesus Christ would promise to build a church that was already in existence (Matt.16:18)? Pray tell, why the disciples of Christ were expectant of an already existing kingdom (Mark 15:43)? And finally, pray tell why in the shadow of Christ’s ascension, the apostles still enquired about the kingdom (Acts 1:6)? The kingdom or the church did not exist in the time of John and Christ. Rather, it being prepared, was preached with a sense of nearness or imminence.

The Church Perfected

After His death, burial and resurrection, Jesus Christ in the space of forty days, appeared to His disciples and taught them things that pertained to the kingdom of God. (Acts 1:3). In the last of these appearances, He charged His apostles to wait in the city of Jerusalem till they be endued with power from on high. (Luke 24:47-49). After the ascension of Christ, the apostles returned to Jerusalem, where they waited ten days until the day of Pentecost. And on that fateful day, the “power from on high,” which Christ promised the apostles came. The inspired historian wrote;

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

Now watch carefully. In Mark 9:1, Jesus Christ said the kingdom would come with power. That is to say, the kingdom and the power would come at the exact same time. In Acts 1:8, He also said that the power would come with the Holy Spirit. Therefore, if on the day of Pentecost, the Spirit came, and with Him came the power, then it follows that God’s eternal purpose, the church, which through the ages was promised and prophesied and was in the time of John and Jesus Christ imminent, had come. Let us notice some of the prophecies about the church that were fulfilled.

- It would begin in Jerusalem (Isa. 2:2-3; Acts 2:5).
- It would be established in the last days (Isa. 2:2; Acts 2:17).
- It would begin in the days of the Roman kings (Dan. 2:44; Luke 3:1).
- Christ would ascend, then the kingdom would come (Dan. 7:13-14; Acts 1:9-11).

Friends, every prophecy about the church (you name it), was fulfilled with splendid accuracy. From this point onwards, the church is spoken of as an organism in existence. The saved were added to it (Acts 2:47), fear came upon it (Acts 5:11), it was persecuted (Acts 8:1), among other things. Moreover, after Acts the second chapter, the disciples no longer prayed for the coming of the kingdom, neither did they expect it any longer. Rather, we see people already in the kingdom (Col. 1:13; Rev. 1:9).

Notice if you would that according to Isaiah, "...all nations shall flow unto..." the Lord's house or church. Friends, that could only be possible, if the door into the church were opened. Thus, Peter, who was the bearer of the keys of the kingdom or church (Matt. 16:19), had to open the door into the church for "...all nations" to "flow unto it." This he did when in response to a question by his auditors (Acts 2:37), he said; "...Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for (unto—ASV 1901) the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38). Luke records that; "And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:40-41). The Lord's church, the kingdom, is in existence and has been for two millennia and only those from among the nations who repent of their sins, confess their faith in Christ and are baptized unto the remission of their sins "shall flow unto it." "And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16).

Jesus Christ: The Golden Thread of the Bible

The Bible is God's gift to the world for the saving of the souls of men. Thus, no man can be saved separate and apart from the Bible. But as Jesus Christ, is inseparably linked with the salvation of men's souls, then the Bible is necessarily a book about Him. When we say Jesus Christ is the golden thread of the Bible, we mean He is the Bible's focus, "the one all-pervading subject of the Word of God as a whole." That this is so, is easily seen in the following verses.

And he said unto them, these are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me (Luke 24:44).

Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, we have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph (John 1:45).

Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me (John 5:39).

The Bible's one great subject and theme is Jesus Christ and an appreciation of this fact would, as E.W. Bullinger noted, help us "... understand words, and hints; apparently casual expressions, circumstances, and events, which in themselves, and apart from Him, are meaningless." Take for example, Genesis 22. Was it by chance that Isaac the son was taken on a three-day journey by his father, Abraham, with wood laid on him to be sacrificed on a mountain? Do we not see in this account, a foreshadow of the death of Christ, the Son, with the journey representing three days in the grave and the wood representing the old-rugged cross?

Seeing that it is not difficult to see and understand that Jesus Christ is the focus of the New Testament, we shall briefly look at how Jesus Christ like a golden thread runs through the message of the Old Testament.

Christ in the Pentateuch

He is the seed of the woman (Gen. 3:15; Gal. 3:16), the paschal lamb (Exo. 12:11; 1 Cor. 5:7), the sin offering, offered outside the camp. (Exo. 29:14; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 13:11-12), the fiery, brass serpent, set upon a pole and lifted up. (Num. 21:8-9; John 3:14) and the prophet from among His brethren and like unto Moses. (Deut. 18:15; Acts 3:20-23).

Christ in the Historical Books

He is the captain of the Lord's host (Josh. 5:13-15; Heb. 2:10), the Kinsman-Redeemer

(Ruth 3:9; Rom. 8:29; Heb. 2:11), the son of David, who would build a house for God and forever sit on David's throne (2 Sam. 7:12-13; Acts 2:30), the wise King who attracts men from the uttermost parts of the earth to the one true God (1 Kings 10:1; Matt. 12:42), the chief ruler from the tribe of Judah (1 Chro. 5:2; Matt. 2:6) and the golden scepter of mercy in the hand of the Almighty King (Esth. 4:11; John 3:16).

Christ in the Wisdom Books

He is the incarnate redeemer (Job 19:25; Matt. 1:20-21), the good Shepherd (Psa. 23; John 10:11), the strong tower into which the righteous run and are safe. (Prov. 18:10; Acts 4:12) and the bride's beloved, the altogether lovely (Song. 5:16; Eph. 5:22-32).

Christ in the Major Prophets

He is the Messiah who suffers (Isa. 53; Acts 8:32-35), the Lord our Righteousness (Jer. 23:5-6; 1 Cor. 1:30), the Son of God (Dan. 3:25; Mark 1:1) and the Son of man (Dan. 7:13; Matt. 26:64).

Christ in the Minor Prophets

He is the son out of Egypt (Hos. 11:1; Matt. 2:15), the one who would baptize with the Holy Spirit (Joel 2:28; Mark 1:8; Acts 2:33), the everlasting ruler from Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2; Matt. 2:4-6), the stronghold in the day of trouble (Nah. 1:7; 2 Tim. 2:19), the Branch who would build the temple of God and be both priest and King (Zech. 6:12-13; Heb. 8:1) and the messenger of the covenant (Mal. 3:1; Heb. 10:9).

Conclusion

Though not exhaustive, this brief study proves that our Lord Jesus Christ is indeed "the one all-pervading subject of the Word of God as a whole." This is He of whom it is written; "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." (Heb. 5:8-9). If we would believe and obey the things He taught, then with confidence we can say, "we have found him...Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

The Apostolic Office

Jerry C. Brewer

The apostles were to be forever the teachers of the world. It was necessary, therefore, that what they taught was infallible. That did not mean they were infallible in their personal conduct, as will be seen in Peter's actions at Antioch, but that what they taught was the infallible word of God. Jesus promised that they would be infallibly guided when they were brought before magistrates. "But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you" (Matt. 10:19-20). And on the night He was betrayed, Christ promised that He would send the Comforter—the Holy Spirit—to guide them into all truth and to recall to their minds all He had taught them (John 14:26; 16:13).

Christ also metaphorically referred to their apostolic authority as His spokesmen when He said, "Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt. 19:28). That period which Christ called "the regeneration" referred to the gospel dispensation in which He would sit upon David's throne and the "judging the twelve tribes of Israel" by the apostles would be concurrent with His reign. Their words would be the standard by which the people of God—called metaphorically, "the twelve tribes of Israel"—would be judged and regulated until Christ delivers the kingdom to the Father (1 Cor. 15:24). Hence their authority in the church would extend throughout the gospel dispensation by the word which they delivered in the first century. That word which is the very Word of God, is unchanged and unchangeable and through it the apostles of Christ wield authority as judges of "the twelve tribes of Israel"—the church—today.

They who wield this authority from Christ are a special class of men, as the word *apostle* indicates. Like many New Testament words, there is no special religious signifi-

cance inherent in it. It is a combination of two Greek words—*apo* which means “away (from something near)” and *stello*, meaning “remove one’s self, withdraw one’s self, to depart” (Strong, 14; Thayer, 587). Rendered into English, the word apostle means “one sent,” i.e. one sent on a particular mission with authority and credentials to perform that for which he is sent. Therefore, one who was an apostle of Christ was one sent by Christ for a particular purpose and endowed with authority to accomplish that purpose.

That concept is described by another word—ambassador—exclusively applied to Christ’s apostles by Paul himself. “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God” (2 Cor. 5:20). An ambassador is one endowed by a sovereign power to speak in that power’s behalf with the ambassador’s words carrying the same weight as if the sovereign head of state himself were speaking.

In his second epistle to the Corinthians, Paul also referred to himself and the other apostles as “earthen vessels” (2 Cor. 4:7). In that letter, Paul also defended his apostleship, saying they had been given the “earnest of the Spirit in our hearts” (2 Cor. 2:22). This “earnest of the Spirit” is an apostolic term that refers to no one today, and is connected with Paul’s statement that “we have this treasure in earthen vessels” (2 Cor. 4:7). At one time, the gospel was in the inspired man and that’s Paul’s meaning in using the term “earthen vessels” to describe the apostles. But now we have God’s word in the inspired Book. Consequently, there are no “earthen vessels” alive today. Those were the apostles who had the “earnest of the Spirit.”

That Paul referred to apostolic inspiration in the use of these terms can be seen from his use of pronouns in the Second Corinthian letter when he said, “Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God: who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts” (2 Cor. 1:21-22). That the words “anointed,” “sealed,” and “earnest” apply to Paul and the other apostles is seen in the contrasting pronouns, “us,” “our,” and “you” in this passage. The apostles were anointed in Holy Spirit baptism to guide them into all truth (John 16:12-13). The “earnest of the Spirit” was the truth in the inspired man, and the “seal” of the Spirit were the miraculous manifestations of the Spirit in them to confirm their preaching. When Paul said, “we have this treasure in earthen vessels,” he didn’t refer to the preaching of men today, but to the truth that was in the apostles through Holy Spirit baptism. He uses the pronouns “us” in 2 Corinthians 5:5, “we” in 2 Corinthians 5:11, “us” in 2 Corinthians 5:18, and “we” in 2 Corinthians 5:20, in reference to the apostles as “ambassadors” for Christ.

In all of these passages, Paul refers to inspiration in himself. He is not describing men today. There are no living “ambassadors for Christ” nor “earthen vessels” today. Those terms applied exclusively to men in the age of inspiration. The application of the terms “earnest” and “seal” to the Holy Spirit’s work belong to the apostolic period when the gospel was being revealed in parts and portions and define two necessary aspects of the gospel scheme of redemption—revelation and confirmation.

Purposed from eternity and hidden beneath the types and shadows of the old covenant, the scheme of redemption was a mystery that is now revealed.

...how that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words; whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ,) which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit (Eph. 3:3-4).

The word mystery in the above passage does not mean “mysterious” or “mystical.” It means unknowable through human reasoning and wisdom.

The word mystery in Revelation comports with the same meaning of the word as used elsewhere in the New Testament - that is, the spiritual truths not discoverable by human reason; understandable, but hidden from human knowledge until revealed. The word has the connotation of secret doctrine, hence prior to revelation it was a hidden thing; but when revealed, it was

brought within human intelligence and understanding. ...The word mystery did not mean mysterious. It meant that which could not be known until it was made known, or revealed, and it meant the gospel plan of salvation. The doctrine of the New Testament is, in this sense, called a mystery (Foy E. Wallace, Jr., *The Book of Revelation*, p. 82).

Undiscoverable by human wisdom, God's plan could be known only by revelation which required inspiration, and inspiration required confirmation. The scheme of redemption was revealed in words, (1 Cor. 2:10-13), and confirmed by signs and wonders. (Heb. 2:1-4). Inspiration was the means God used to reveal his plan and miraculous gifts of the Spirit were to confirm that those through whom it was revealed spoke the word of God. This was the function of the Holy Spirit whose work of revelation and confirmation is expressed in the terms "seal" and "earnest." The "earnest of the Spirit" relates to those gifts of partial revelation of which Paul spoke in 1 Corinthians 13 and is used only in 2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5 and Ephesians 1:14. From the Greek word *arrhabon*, it is defined as, "a pledge, i.e. part of the purchase-money or property given in advance as security for the rest: - earnest." (Strong, 16). That which was given as an "earnest" was not the Holy Spirit, but that which the Spirit gave and that was partial knowledge of God's word. The earnest of the Spirit constituted a partial revelation until the "redemption of the purchased possession" which was the completion of divine revelation. Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. (1 Cor. 13:8-10). The partial revelation of the gospel, that was imparted to Christians in the first century, was an earnest or pledge of the full revelation to come. That partial knowledge would cease when those parts were gathered into the whole, which Paul styled "that which is perfect." The revelation we now possess in the New Testament is the sum of the parts extant in the apostolic age. The word "perfect" in 1 Corinthians 13:10 means "completeness" and when the parts of the mystery were gathered into the whole, the full price was paid of which the earnest was a pledge. The Holy Spirit was not the earnest in the hearts of men in the first century, except in a metonymical sense where the cause was put for the effect. When Paul said God had "given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts," he referred to that which the Spirit revealed, not the Spirit himself.

When Paul said God had "given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts," (2 Cor. 1:22), he distinguished between himself and the Corinthians. The pronoun "you" in this passage refers to the Corinthians and the pronouns "us" and "our" refer to Paul. The anointing of the Holy Spirit was Holy Spirit baptism which the apostles received. He made the same distinction in the Ephesian epistle:

In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory (Eph. 1:11-14).

The Ephesians were sealed with the gift of tongues and given the earnest of prophecy when Paul laid hands on them after they were baptized. (Acts 19:1-6). Paul explains the purpose of the earnest and seal of the Spirit in the Ephesians in the following statement:

Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened... (Eph. 1:15-18).

The earnest of the Spirit was revelation which came through Holy Spirit baptism, and

the seal of the Spirit was the confirmation of that revelation. When gifts of revelation were imparted through the laying on of the apostles' hands, they were accompanied by miraculous powers for confirmation. The genuineness of the earnest of the Spirit, or the gospel that resided in inspired men, was attested by the Spirit's seal of "signs and wonders and divers miracles" upon them. From the Greek *sphragizo*, the word "seal" is defined as, "to stamp (with a signet or private mark) for security or preservation...to keep secret, to attest... The stamp impressed (as a mark of privacy or genuineness), lit. or fig. : - seal." (Strong, 70). This seal or sign was a visible attestation of the authority by which inspired men spoke. Those who claim this seal for Christians today cannot produce any visible sign of it. But what is the purpose of a seal of authority? The great seal of a state attests to and confirms the genuineness of documents issued by the state's authority and is visible to all who read them. The seal of the Spirit were the signs worked by inspired men of the first century and visibly attested to their authority from God. The seal of the Spirit was not some invisible thing placed upon them for God's benefit. Why would God have to attest ownership of Christians to himself? Does he not know them that are his without having some sort of mark placed upon them? The visible seal of the earnest of the Spirit was what Paul called "the signs of an apostle." (2 Cor. 12:12). That was the sign or seal of his apostleship.

Thus, the apostles of Christ were special ambassadors sent by Christ to carry His message to the world. In so doing, He endued them with authority to speak in His name by sending the Holy Spirit upon them (Acts 2:1-4) and giving them miraculous powers as credentials of their calling. The apostles were, therefore, special representatives of Christ, personally called and commissioned by Him, and through whom the word of God was revealed and preached in the world. Paul had the same authority and credentials possessed by the other apostles (2 Cor. 12:12) and was not inferior to them in any way (2 Cor. 11:5). Like the other apostles, he was an "ambassador," a "witness" of Christ, an "earthen vessel" containing the truth of God, and he could impart the "seal and earnest of the Spirit." Paul was an apostle in every sense described by these terms. There has not been a living man to whom those terms applied since the apostles walked the earth and, despite Catholic and Mormon claims, the apostles of Jesus Christ had no successors. The apostolic office which Paul and the others occupied was, and remains, unique.

Note: This article is reprinted from *...Unto the Churches of Galatia*: A Commentary on Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, Brewer Publications, Elk City, OK, 2004.

Are You Reading?

Lester Kamp

For more than fifty years, brother V. E. Howard asked repeatedly in his radio sermons, "Are you listening?" I would like to rephrase that question slightly and ask, "Are you **reading**?" How many of you have ever read the Bible through from cover to cover? How often do you read the Bible?

Do you bring your Bible to class with you on Sundays and Wednesday nights? Have you noticed how few have their Bibles in these classes? If you have ever taught such a class and have made an effort to get the students in your class to bring their Bibles, you know how difficult this task is. I wonder how many of us in the church today are reading our Bibles outside of the church buildings.

I wonder how many of us read the Bible even when we prepare for class and how much we rely on supplemental material instead of the Bible even when we teach. I want to ask you, "Are you reading (the Bible)?"

The Bible must be read diligently by every member of the church. "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15).

Nothing threatens the church today more than Bible ignorance! When we begin to rely on the writings of men (e.g. commentaries, workbooks, teacher's guides, and other

books) more than on the Book of God, we can easily be led astray. We need to be like the Bereans “in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11). Let us look at four reasons why we should read the Bible diligently.

1. It is our Owner’s Manual. Every product comes with an owner’s manual which tells how the product is to be used. God made man. God breathed into man and he became a living soul (Gen. 2:7). God inspired (breathed into) a book, the Bible, which “is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

When we violate our owner’s manual (1 John 3:4), we will cause problems for ourselves (Gal. 6:7-8) and will ultimately be destroyed (Rom. 6:23).

2. The Bible satisfies our hunger and provides for our spiritual health. Jesus stated, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4). A person who gives attention to food for the body and neglects his soul has deprived himself of that which is most important. When a person is born again (John 3:5), he has a natural hunger for spiritual food (1 Pet. 2:2). The Bible promised that this natural hunger will be satisfied (Matt. 5:6). As Irving Jensen stated, “Hunger is a sign of health. When we neglect the Bible, it is because we are not hungry for the things of God. Not being hungry, we cannot, therefore, be healthy, spiritually” (*Enjoy Your Bible*, 13).

3. The Bible is needed because of our responsibility to teach. Parents are supposed to teach their children about God and His Word (Eph. 6:4; Deut. 6:7). We cannot teach that which we do not know. Further, the faithful have the responsibility of teaching others “who shall be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2). In addition, we are responsible for teaching the lost what they must do to be saved (Matt. 28:19-20). To teach we must study the Bible ourselves (2 Tim. 2:15).

4. The Bible is the Book by which we will be judged. We know in advance the standard of our judgment (John 12:48). Our eternal destiny will be determined by whether or not we have lived by that standard (2 Cor. 5:10). We can prepare ourselves for judgment by reading the Bible and following its instructions.

The Bible is important to every child of God, “his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night” (Psa. 1:2). The psalmist realized the importance of God’s Word. He wrote:

O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day. Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts...How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way (Psa. 119:97-104).

Are you reading?

Loving the Word of Christ

Nathan Brewer

Did Jesus hide His saving message from some of the people but reveal it to others? In Matthew chapter 13, Jesus teaches many lessons in parables. Parables are special lessons that use everyday situations to illustrate spiritual points.

In verses 3 through 9, Jesus teaches about a sower who goes forth sowing seeds. Some of the seeds fall by the wayside and the birds eat them. Some of the seeds fall on soil with lots of rocks in it. They germinate and spring up, but the sun scorches them and they wither away.

And some of the seeds fall in soil that has lots of thorns. The thorns choke out the

seeds and they die. But finally the sower sows seed in good ground. The seeds in the good ground produce a bountiful harvest. When He finishes the lesson, the disciples ask Him why He is teaching in parables.

In verses 11 through 16, Jesus explains that He is speaking in parables so that those who want the truth will understand His message, but those who don't want the truth will remain in the dark. In fact, Jesus says that this fulfills a prophecy from Isaiah 6:9-10:

By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; Lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them (Matt. 13:14-15).

Jesus gave the same message to all of the people, but some of them understood it while others did not. The condition of our hearts is what determines whether we understand Jesus' teaching.

That is exactly the point of the parable that Jesus told about the sower who sowed the seeds in different kinds of soil. Jesus goes on to explain the parable to his disciples in Matthew 13:18-24. He says the seed that fell in the wayside soil represents those who hear the word of the kingdom but don't understand it, and that word is quickly taken out of the hearer's heart. The stony soil represents someone who hears the Gospel and receives it gladly, but when persecution comes he falls away.

The soil with thorns represents someone who hears the word but allows cares of this life—things like work, family and money—to choke it out. Someone like this becomes “unfruitful.” But the good ground that the seeds fell into—the soil that finally produced an abundant crop—represents someone who understands the word and lets it bear fruit in his life.

In a parallel passage, Luke 8:15, Jesus says that the one who understands the word is one who has an honest and good heart. The first three kinds of soil represent people who ultimately refuse the word because of the condition of their hearts.

Jesus goes on to say in Luke 8:18, “Take heed therefore how ye hear.” Our understanding of what Jesus teaches depends on the condition of our hearts. If we are honest and want to know the truth, we will investigate and find the truth. If we don't want the truth, or if we don't care, we will remain spiritually deaf and blind and that will cost us our soul. Jesus said that when some of the people refused to hear and understand His message, they fulfilled prophecy. That prophecy said the hardhearted would refuse to be healed and converted. Those today who close their ears to the truth of the Gospel will remain in their sins. That means they will ultimately be consigned to spend eternity in hell, away from all that is good and holy.

There is a lot of disagreement about what the Bible teaches, and because of this many people have decided that it's impossible for people to understand it alike. But Jesus explains in the parable of the sower and the soils in Matthew 13 why many don't understand the Bible. It isn't the Bible's fault. The problem is with the people. While there is honest disagreement among sincere people over a few matters, Jesus and the apostles are plain about what to do to be saved, how to worship God, which church is actually the church of Christ, and what activities are immoral and thus forbidden. The New Testament plainly lays out these matters. Those who refuse to accept the truth on these matters are shutting their eyes and ears, just like Jesus said. And this results in people hearing the saving truth but rejecting it and remaining in their sins.

Do you love the truth? Are you willing to accept the truth regardless of the consequences? These are requirements for being saved and going to heaven.

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Attitudes Toward the Word of God

Thomas Allen Robertson

In writing to the young preacher Timothy the apostle Paul exhorted him saying,

But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:14-17).

This passage clearly states that the scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation. Yet, many read the Bible and do not learn what to do to be saved because they fail to come to an understanding of the will of the Lord. That there are so many different denominations in the world all teaching different plans of salvation, plans for worshiping God and rules for living before God is a sad proof of the fact that not all men read the Bible and then come to the same understanding of what they read. But that does not change the fact that the Bible is able to make man wise unto salvation.

The Point of Difference Over the Bible

One of the more obvious facts of our nature is that our acceptance of any truth is determined by our attitude toward it. The minds of some men in the denominational world are so set that they are not open to discover any new truth in the word of God, or to come to a better understanding of facts they already know. Many are like the old man was about the fish story. He said, "I wouldn't believe that if I knew it was true."

But since the division and difference that is in the religious world is very real, we as professing Christians are obligated to look into it and see just what is the point of difference. And as we begin to look into the matter one of the first things we learn is that the religious groups of today are fairly well agreed on the things that are in the Bible and the points of difference and division are on things not in the Bible. For example; We agree that Nicodemus came to Christ by night (John 3:2). But we may differ as to why he came by night for the Bible does not say. We agree that immersion is acceptable baptism (Rom. 6:4). But we differ over sprinkling and pouring because the Bible says nothing about them. Once more, we agree that it is right for the disciples of Christ to be called, and to call themselves, Christians (Acts 11:26). But we differ when other names not found in the word of God are used.

As we mentioned, our acceptance of any truth depends on our attitude toward it. Hence, differences often grow out of differing attitudes toward the Bible rather than out of different interpretations of the Bible itself. The man who regards the Bible as complete and infallible admitting of no private interpretation, as the Bible claims in 2 Peter 1:20-21, will have an entirely different attitude toward it than the man who regards the Book as only a fragmentary history, or in some other way.

The Roman Catholic Attitude Toward the Bible

1. The basic attitude of the Catholic Church toward the Bible is that it is not sufficient as a rule of faith and practice. "The Bible itself teaches that the Bible does not contain all that our Lord did and (consequently) taught...Since the Bible is incomplete, it needs something else to supplement it; i.e., the spoken or historically recorded word which we call Tradition" (*Catholic Religion Proved by Protestant Bible*, pp. 14, 15, Catholic Truth Society of Oregon).

2. A secondary attitude of the Catholic Church toward the Bible is that the Bible cannot be correctly understood except by the interpretation of the Catholic Church through her priest. "The Bible teaches that individuals are not of themselves competent to interpret the scriptures...The Bible teaches **who** are the official interpreters of God's law and God's word...As in our country the official interpreter of the Constitution and the Laws is the Supreme Court and the Judges, so in the church the official interpreter of God's law and Christ's teaching is the head of the church, aided at times by his assistants" (Ibid. pp. 15, 16).

3. A third attitude of the Catholic Church toward the Bible is that when the Pope speaks “ex cathedra” (from the chair) he has authority to change, modify or suspend any particular teaching of the Bible. Also, that he has authority to enact, decree, and bind on the church any new law not contained in the Bible. These last two points are confirmed by the withholding of the chalice from the laity, and the decree passed November 1, 1950 making it a matter of faith that Mary had bodily passed to heaven. Previous to that time it had not been a matter of faith that all Catholics had to believe.

Thus, we see that in the Catholic Church the Bible is third down the line in matters of authority. The Bible is authority if it has not been suspended or superceded by the Pope, or if it has not been modified by tradition.

The Modernist's Attitude Toward the Bible

If one were to ask the average modernist if he believed the Bible is inspired he would probably go away with a wrong conception of the modernist's attitude toward the Bible. Because the modernist will say boldly, “I believe the Bible is inspired.” (Incidentally, he will also say he believes that Christ was the Son of God on the earth). And unless you ask him how he believes the Bible is inspired you will not get the truth of his attitude. When questioned further on this point the average modernist will tell one that he believes the Bible is “inspired of God” in the same way that any great piece of literature is inspired—Shakespeare for instance. If pushed far enough the modernist will tell how he believes the Bible is filled with erroneous and contradictory statements of man's search for God. In other words, the Bible is not God's revelation to man but a history of man's search after God.

The Denominational Attitude Toward the Bible

As we look at the denominational world as a whole we find that with almost one voice they say, “We believe the Bible is inspired of God, and is an infallible rule of faith and practice.” That sounds good but they go on to say, “The Bible is correctly interpreted by our creeds, and anything contradicting them is necessarily false.” To illustrate this we have this question as posed in one of the leading creeds of our day, “Do you sincerely receive and adopt the confession of faith of this church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures?” (*Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.*, p. 382, Par. XII, Question 2). If one looks further into the matter he will find that they do not believe that strict observance of Bible teaching is necessary to the eternal salvation of the individual. This is often expressed in the idea that all that matters is just so a man is honest and sincere and gives his heart to God.

The Proper Attitude Toward the Bible

The proper attitude toward the Bible is that it is inspired of God and that it alone will be my rule of faith and practice. While the Bible does not claim to contain every word ever spoken by Christ and the apostles (if it did it would be very repetitious because the same words were spoken over and over to different audiences). It does claim to contain the entire system of faith necessary to the salvation of the soul of man. Jude said the faith had been delivered (Jude 3)—that it existed in a body of facts to be believed and commands to be obeyed. Paul said that the scriptures were able to make us wise unto salvation (2 Tim. 3:15). Again, he told Timothy to study to show himself approved unto God rightly dividing the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15). Peter said that God had “given unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue” (2 Pet. 1:3).

Not only did the apostles recognize the written word as sufficient to save man, and a standard to be adhered to, they warned against any departure therefrom or addition thereto. Paul said,

But though we or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed (Gal. 1:8-9).

Peter said, “Moreover I will I endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance” (2 Pet. 1:15). John said,

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).

Thus we see that in the Bible the Bible is regarded as an all sufficient rule of faith and practice. There is therefore no room for a “living magisteria,” continuous revelations, or creeds written and devised by men. If a man made creed contains more than is in the Bible, it contains too much. If it contains less than is in the Bible, it does not contain enough. And if they are the same as the Bible, they are not necessary. What men need to do is to reject all modern day authority and enactments of men and turn to the Bible and follow it exactly and completely and be saved thereby.

Salvation As Set Forth In The Bible

The New Testament is able to make man wise unto salvation and the way set forth there is simple—so simple that a man cannot err therein without help. The New Testament establishes that in order to be saved one must believe in God (John 14:1; Heb. 11:6). Believing in God one must believe in Christ as His Son (John 14:1; John 8:24). Believing in Christ one must repent of his sins (Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30). Having thus changed his mind to serve God, one must then confess faith in Christ before men. (Matt. 10:32; Rom. 10:10). Having made the good confession one then must be baptized into Christ thus being cleansed from all past sin (Mark 16:16 Rom. 6:3-7; Gal. 3:26-27). For when one gets into Christ he is a new creature (2 Cor. 5:17). Having been baptized into Christ one must then live a godly life working out his salvation with fear and trembling (Matt. 28:20; Phil. 2:12; 2 Pet. 1:5-11). Friends why not obey the gospel of Christ and then live by the word of God and you shall be saved throughout all eternity. The Bible only makes Christians only.

Do we Have What the Apostles Wrote?

J. Early Arceneaux

The question is often asked: “How do we know that the New Testament has the very writings of the apostles and their co-laborers? How do we know that they have substantially what they wrote?” Some contend that we do not know, and cannot. Infidels have been very zealous in propagating this assertion. There have been so many corruptions of the New Testament, they say, so many additions, so many subtractions; that even if the apostles did write by inspiration, we still don't know that we have what they wrote.

We need, however, have little worry on that point. The Lord would hardly have taken the trouble to inspire men to write a book, and then not take the trouble to see that it was handed down. Scholars, some years ago, investigated this wild charge of the infidels very carefully; and revealed that in 300 years there were one hundred times as many corruptions in Shakespeare as there had been in 1800 years in the New Testament manuscripts!

Copyists Uninspired

Actually, when books were copied there were bound to be some errors. The copyists were not inspired. Their manuscripts, however, correct each other, and help the scholars by comparison with one another to determine where an error has been made.

One fundamental fact that some professed Bible students need to learn is that a very imperfect translation of the scriptures can convey the truth to us. We have the highest testimony on earth to the fact. Christ and the apostles quoted from a very imperfect translation of the Old Testament out of Hebrew into Greek. They quoted from the Septuagint version—the Greek translation. This accounts for the fact that sometimes the quotations from the Old Testament appear to be quite different from the words that we read in our Old Testaments; for our Old Testament was translated out of the Hebrew into the English.

Now if Christ could use an uninspired and imperfect translation, we can too, and not suffer too much damage. If you have any doubt on that point we might mention this one little incident: One printed English Bible was called the “Vinegar Bible.” This odd

name arose from the fact that at one place in the gospels where the word “vineyard” occurred, they made it read “vinegar.” That didn't deceive anybody. Everybody understood what had happened. Typesetters or proof readers made the mistake. (They often make them).

Date Of Books

Another thing that skeptics have been very much concerned about is to move every Bible book as far from the accepted composition date as possible—as far away as they can from the year or period in which the books are generally supposed to have been written. With reference to the New Testament books, as we shall see, they think if they can get folks to believe they were not written in the first century, but rather in the third or fourth, they can weaken faith and gain a foot-hold on which to stand and attack the Bible.

The main burden of this lesson is to show conclusively and by irrefragable testimony and evidence that the Book we read today is substantially identical with the writings of the apostles.

An Old Slander

It might be of interest to call your attention to the fact that there are more than 1,700 manuscripts of the Greek New Testament, or some part of it. It is a very interesting fact too, that the oldest manuscript of the New Testament in existence is complete; it has every book complete. From these ancient manuscripts, of course, our New Testament is translated; and regardless of whether we read it in the Greek original or the English translation, we are reading the same book.

Not only have infidels charged the Book with being corrupted in its text, but one religious sect (the Mormons) borrowed this old infidel slander, and gave it circulation in the so-called “inspired” *Book of Mormon*. This old slander, as propagated by the infidels, is that the New Testament was compiled about the year 325 A.D. They declare that this was the business of the Council of Nice, and that it happened on this wise: All the hundreds of books claiming to be the New Testament scriptures were piled together promiscuously on the floor; a table was set in the midst of them, and the learned bishops prayed to God that the inspired book would jump up on the table! According to the infidels ludicrous telling of the story, 27 books jumped. The only answer such a ridiculous charge needs is this: Those bishops were not fools. A man need not be classified a fool to be a believer—even a bishop believer.

The Mormons put this old slander into circulation in their *Book of Mormon*. In order to make place for this monstrous perversion of truth, they charged that “that great and abominable church” (the Catholics) had taken out many precious things, including a great many of the “covenants” of the Lord. One of the Mormon's inspired (?) men, Orson Pratt, said, “We do not know that one single verse in the New Testament came down to us without change. And they have hundreds of them in the *Book of Mormon* absolutely identical with the same verses in the King James translation!

Any man who tries to write a book and deceive people into thinking that it was written 300, 500, or 1,000 years before, will always slip up. The writer of the *Book of Mormon* did. He said he translated the *Book Mormon* out of the Egyptian language, and that actually the book was 2,000 years old—maybe more. Yet this 2,000 year old book quotes at length from the writing of William Shakespeare and from the King James translation of the Bible! The signature of the imposter is on almost every page. He left the print of his cloven hoof for all to see.

However many things we may charge against Catholicism, we must defend them from this slanderous Mormon accusation. They did not make the changes charged against them. The oldest Greek manuscripts of the New Testament are older by far than the Catholic church. Nobody has changed the dotting of an “i” or the crossing of a “t.” That is one thing the Catholic church is not guilty of!

The Nicene Council (325 A.D.) published a list of the 27 books we have in our New Testament. Before the Council met there had been some rather hot controversy about a few of the books in the list. Some thought they ought to be there; some thought they should not. It is well for us to know that the Council, in publishing its list of 27 books,

did not accept just any book that was suggested. They had to know that the book came either from an apostle or from the co-laborer of an apostle. If Paul wrote it, or John, or Peter, or James, or Jude; or if some man closely associated with one of the apostles, as for example Luke was with Paul; if this was the origin of the book, it was recognized as having the necessary background and authorship. Otherwise, it was not even considered. For a while there was a hot controversy over 2 Peter, 2 John, 3 John, Jude, and Revelation. But once the question of authorship was settled, all question or dispute over these books was at an end. The doctrine of the books was not controverted, only the authorship.

A few years ago here in Texas a very sad thing happened for one man who tried to repudiate Mark 16:16 on the ground that it is not in the two oldest manuscripts of the New Testament. He made quite an argument on that score; but he back-tracked mighty fast when he was shown that every manuscript on earth that omits Mark 16:16 also omits the whole book of Revelation! And Revelation was the book in which this character lived, and moved, and had his being. The great Fort Worth debate became an utter debacle for this notorious premillennialist and his doctrine. Repudiating a few verses of Mark's gospel completely robbed him of the use of the whole book of Revelation. J. Frank Norris was the Baptist blunderer who made this mistake. He should have been a more careful student of the history of the manuscripts. For the last few verses of Mark have never been questioned by any reputable scholar as to their doctrine and inspiration. The only thing that has been questioned was whether Mark wrote them or not. And the evidence is such now that there is little controversy even over that.

Catholic vs. Protestant Bibles

Sometimes the question is asked, Why did Protestants leave out some books that Catholics have in their Bible? The question is hardly proper. The right question should be, Why did the Catholics put some books into their Bible which are not in the Bible as it was originally written?

But how do we know these extra Catholic books ought not to be in the Bible? For the very simple reason that they were never included, even by the Jews themselves, in the Old Testament. Of course the Catholics have made no additions to the New Testament canon; all of their apocryphal books have been added to the Old Testament. And we know these books should not be in the Bible because they were not in the Bibles used by Christ and the apostles, to which they gave their sanction and approval. Thus, the Lord recognized as inspired the Bible which excluded these apocryphal books. The Catholic church is not greater in authority than the Son of God.

Let us trace the human linkage which brings our Bible up to the Council of Nicea. Eusebius, the father of church history, was present at that historic meeting in 325 A.D. Jesus Christ was born in the year 1 of our calendar. Actually there is a little inaccuracy there, as Christ was really born about four years before the time we begin our dating. This was due to an error of calculation made in the year 532 A.D. when our present calendar was adopted. We now live in the year 2020; every atheist and infidel on earth writes that date on a letter when he wants to locate it in time. That simply means that no fact in all history has yet occurred to eclipse the birth of God's Son into this world.

Jesus lived through one-third of a century, let us say to the year 33 A.D. The apostle John died in the year 100 A.D. He was contemporary with Christ during his lifetime, and outlived him by two-thirds of a century. Polycarp was a disciple of John, and was born in 69 A.D., living till he reached the age of ninety years. Justin Martyr and Irenaeus were both contemporaries of Polycarp, the former of them being martyred in 165 A.D. and the latter living on until 202 A.D. Tertullian, the great Christian scholar was born 160 A.D. and died in 230 A.D., just thirty years before the birth of Eusebius the church historian. Thus there were less than half a dozen men between Eusebius and Christ. These were the men who along with hundreds like them lived, wrote down, and copied time and time again the words of the New Testament. They preached it night and day. They had every opportunity in the world to know exactly where these books came from. And they did know! That is why they were so positive in their contention for their inspiration.

The Old Testament Books

Just a brief word about the Old Testament. Since the Old Testament was a completed volume several centuries before one word of the New Testament was written, we have the strongest possible evidence that one mind was superintending and directing the writing of both. This is clearly seen in the attitude of the New Testament writers toward the old. Jesus and the apostles used it, read it, revered it, and quoted from it as being absolutely and unquestionably the word of God.

The Old Testament was translated out of the Hebrew into the Greek in the year 280 B.C. (the Septuagint Version). This is the Bible Jesus and the apostles used. This is the one from which they quoted. This is the one they recognized as being inspired of God. Naturally that Hebrew Bible had to exist for some little time before it could be translated into the Greek. So we are safe in saying that it was completed centuries before the New Testament was written. Catholics miss their chance completely in this respect. If they were going to add books to the Bible, they should have added them to the New Testament, not the Old. For we have the authority of Jesus himself as to the canon of the Old Testament. There can be no appeal from that.

There is no “church ordinance” in the sense in which denominationalists use the expression. The church is not a legislative body; it has no right to issue decrees, rules, laws, etc. Christ commands; the church obeys.

“What Saith The Scriptures?”

Harrell Davidson

Is it Scriptural to Partake of the Lord’ Supper Outside of the “Corporate” Assembly Worship?

This question comes about, but is not a new thought at all, due to the pandemic that is scattered in almost every county of the world. Many of their arguments have been sent to me for consideration and all have used First Corinthians 11 to make one or more one of their arguments. Scriptures taken out of their context becomes a pretext. The following is taken from *Davidson’s Notes on the New Testament the Book of First Corinthians*:

“In studying Scriptures, we need to study within the context. What is the condition? They were disorderly! Disorder was based upon a failure to understand an underlying and important principle. I am confident that this is based upon the liberty that we have already been talking about. Some thought that they were free due to the liberty that belongs to Christians and did not have to abide by customs at that time and verse 16 talks about customs. For instance, there were things in Colosse and in Galatia that were peculiar to them. Neither of them had this problem but had other conditions. This needs to be kept in mind as we study any book of the Bible. There was a general problem that Paul was dealing with in Corinth and this has a bearing on what he says in this chapter. He first discusses the covering which we will not discuss in this piece.

Beginning in verse 17 he comes to a discussion of one thing that involves two other things. Remember that in the beginning of the book he discussed the division that took place in Corinth. This has been in the background even in chapter 10 and 11. It was in the discussion of eating meats in chapter 8 and his personal liberties in chapter 9. Now, this comes out again. It comes out in that it is expressed in a certain way—the way they were eating. There are two meals involved in 1 Corinthians 11. There is what is known as the love feast. Second Peter 2:13 and Jude verse 12 speaks of this meal. Thus, it has apostolic approval as far as the meal is concerned, but not the abuse that had come to bear upon it. This was a meal where Christians gathered, the rich brought so they could share with the poor. This needs to be kept in mind if we are going to understand the situation in chapter 11. The wording in the passage shows two meals. One was a demonstration of the care one for another especially the rich for the poor. Sometimes it was called a feast of charity that showed the nature of it. In Acts 2 the

early church had all things in common. This enabled those who had plenty to share with those who had need. Out of this is what selling property in Acts chapter 4 is about. Later on, this practice was stopped. The second was the Lord's Supper that was to be separated from this meal.

Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse. For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it (1 Cor. 11:17-18).

They were coming together not for the better, but the worst. Verse 18 shows why. There was division in Corinth and this is the first problem that he dealt with. The division in Corinth was being manifest in the love feast. Instead of eating together, sharing one with another, a party spirit had raised its head and some would eat and leave the others out. I think the language is clear to distinguish between this meal and the Lord's Supper.

“For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you” (1 Cor. 11:19). Division tests people. It did then and it does now. Whenever division occurs the real test comes to our faith in the Bible, our will to do what is right in what we stand for and the attitudes that the Gospel has molded into our lives. There evidently were false teaches and 2 Corinthians will show this—those who even believed that Paul was a false apostle. This will be manifested (made known) and those false teachers exposed. We need to realize that in the church none of us is perfect. We do not want to practice sin and we need to deal with this in the proper way and manner. We must be careful how we deal with this. He had pointed out that they were puffed up.

“When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper” (1 Cor. 11:20). A better rendering would be “it is impossible to eat the Lord's Supper. Note verse 21: “For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken.” Underscore the phrase **his own supper**. That identifies this supper as being distinct from the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper is never referred to as *his own supper*, speaking of Christians. It is the Lord's Supper and not ours. It is clear that there is a difference in the two under consideration and we need to keep this distinction clear. “His own supper” obviously refers to the feast of charity. This was their own supper that they were eating. The Lord's Supper would not supply the need for hunger. You could not take the unleavened bread and make a meal out of it and be full. However, here is a meal that was intended to meet the needs of hunger to all who needed it especially the poor. I do not doubt that the word drunken is literal and means exactly that. Remember that they are influenced by paganism.

“What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not” (1 Cor. 11:22). “Have houses to eat and drink in.” Eat what? This love feast! Why do I know that this is the case? “Or despise ye the church of God?” He did not say ye despise the Lord's Supper or the Lord. Why? “**Shame them that have not.**” Who was this? This was the poor. Why would he say this relative to the Lord's Supper? It is obvious that this is the love feast, a common meal and there was a problem in eating it. What was the problem? Verse 18 says that it was division among them. How were these divisions being manifested? There would be a group, due to the divided condition of the church, that would eat the common meal and would not share it with others. Instead of it being a love feast that was shared with everyone, they were being divided, and this was a denial of the unity for the church. Therefore, instead of the love feast being as it should have been, showing care and concern for one another, it had become the means of showing the divided condition in the church at Corinth.

Now let us do some supposing! Suppose that when we have a fellowship meal, we have a Sunday breakfast or brunch prior to our services. And, suppose that we have some parties here in the church—some groups that are alienated or separated one from another. Suppose that over here is party number one. They come and sit over there somewhere because they do not want to have fellowship with others. They eat and

leave everyone else out. Party number two comes along and they eat their breakfast and the two groups have not had fellowship with each other.

Now, this preceded the Lord's Supper in Corinth and that is the reason why he now introduces the Lord's Supper because it denies the very situation that existed in the common meal with the division in the common meal or else why would he say that some had and others had not? The division in the church was being exhibited in this meal. Out of that he introduces the matter of the Lord's Supper. There may have been some who were confusing it and mixing it with a common meal. I do not believe that this is the prime thrust of what he is talking about. The prime thrust is a denial that the Lord's Table could be preserved under the conditions that existed there. The division that existed there made it impossible for them to partake of the Lord's Supper. How in the world could they set their minds where they ought to be with such a divided condition? You see the utter impossibility of such. Attitudes must be right in order to partake of the Lord's Supper.

It is a picture of, a symbol of, the unity of the Lord's church. Where division exists, it is impossible to partake the Supper. I have known of brethren who were alienated from each other who would sit in the same building, partake of the Supper, and go out two different doors not speaking to each other thinking that they were alright. Had they understood the situation at Corinth they would have realized that this was impossible and they could not do it. Thus, he is introducing the Supper to show that we are to be one. Now, you know why he said in verse 18 there was division among them. They had their little groups here and there and could not sit at the Lord's Table. How could they come out of these groups and gather around the Lord's Table that says unity, love, care and concern? Now he will show how, in that condition, they could not partake of the Lord's Supper.

For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body (1 Cor. 11-23-29).

What does it mean in discerning the Lord's Body? Go back to chapter 10 where this was first introduced. Read verses 16-17. The very bread itself looking to the body of Christ that was given or symbolic of the body that Christ gave "*discerning the body*" (ASV). To properly partake of the body that was broken for sin which alienates, divides, and creates sins and schisms. To see that is to also see the unity of the church. The failure to see the relationship between the Lord's Supper and unity is to miss some of the fundamental teaching of the Scriptures. When we sit around a common table it is an indication of a common aim, a common goal, a common care, a common Lord and a common desire to serve. There are some things about the Lord's Supper in this chapter that we have failed, by and large, to emphasize, as we ought.

I have 8 things that we ought to remember in observing the Lord's Supper. (1) It commemorates Calvary. What do I mean by this? The atonement—how that Christ died for our sins! It means that through what took place on Calvary we are made as one with God, reconciled with God and made friends with God because sin alienates. Being one with God we are made one with another. A recognition that without Calvary I am lost. (2) It is a communion. This has to do with a common sharing. This means fellowship or partakers with. Paul said in chapter 10 that we are partakers of this one body. It is a common sharing that we have in Christ and this tells us that we are united. Why then in Corinth could there be division? (3) It is a reminder of a new covenant. Notice that Christ said, "this cup is the New Testament in my blood." It tells us that the

Law of Moses has been abolished.

The word *new* comes from a Greek word that means “new in kind and quality.” It is a covenant of kind and quality that was dedicated by a better blood. Moses’ law was dedicated by the blood of animals, but not this covenant. (4) It demands concentration. Let a man examine himself. The mind is to concentrate on what this is about. Why examine self? What about my attitudes? Have I been guilty of causing division? How have I lived? Have I lived a penitent life? Do I keep my mind on what all this is about? If the Corinthians had concentrated on what the Lord’s Supper was all about, they would not have had the division. (5) It is reminder of care one for another. The Lord’s Supper tells us of God and Christ’s love for us. While telling us this, it is a reminder that we are to love one another like Deity loved us. This means care for! How could they ignore the poor if they had understood that the Lord’s Supper was a reminder that God cares and as such we ought to care. We must not ignore the fact that there is a benevolent attitude in it. (6) Contention, which is division, is to be avoided. When we partake of the Supper we ought to ask, “Am I contentious and have a divisive spirit?” If so then I need to repent of that. We cannot be contentious and divisive and partake of the Supper with God’s approval. We would not have factions if we realized that we are all one and we cannot be contentious and be one in Christ. We cannot eat and drink worthily with this kind of spirit. I must examine my heart. (7) We have a common aim and common goal. Our very being around the Lord’s Table should suggest that we are all living for the same purpose—a common cause. We are committed to the Lord and all that the Table signifies. Do we think that we have hand in hand and heart in heart; that we are all working for a common cause? (8) There is the common expectation that He is coming again. To partake of the Supper is to say that I believe with all my heart that He is coming back. All these things are involved partaking of the Lord’s Supper. It is not just a ritual that we go through—it has meaning and purpose.

“For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep” (1 Cor. 11:30). I challenge you, find me a child of God that partakes of the Lord’s Supper, keeping in mind the principles that we have just talked about, and show me a weak Christian! You will not find one! When the Supper means this to us it puts conviction in the soul. It indicates what life is all about. It shows why we are here and where our priorities are. Thus, we can see that at Corinth they were not partaking properly, and you see the condition of the church thus far in this letter. All of these things would have brought about unity.

“For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged” (1 Cor. 11:31). Listen to what he is saying and make the application.

“But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world” (1 Cor. 11:32). Therefore, the purpose of it is to learn from it.

“Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another” (1 Cor. 11:33). Put this back up here in what was taking place in the beginning of this study starting in verse 17. They were not waiting for the other, but rather had a party spirit. That spirit had invaded the church in Corinth and they did not want to eat with each other.

“And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come” (1 Cor. 11:34). In other words, if you are that hungry eat before you come. In reference to the common meal eat something before you come so you will not be desirous to eat before everyone else does, or, in your little party or little group. Now, what have we had? The common meal, the love feast and then the Lord’s Supper! The primary thought of what he had to say was due to the divided condition that they had in Corinth. He is showing them that they could not be a part of the division and partake of the Lord’s Supper.”

We began hearing the term “corporate worship” several years ago among the liberal element. The position in this framework is that some are taking the position that there is only one thing that is done as worship inside “corporate worship” meaning the

assembly and that all other acts of worship are personal or private. They take the position that our giving **only** is “corporate”, and that it is not given to the Lord but to the “church.”

How can one be in any more error? Is not the church the Lord’s church? He said “I will build my church” (Matt. 16:18) and it is referred to as that through the Scripture or as “My kingdom” indicating that the ownership is the Lord’s and His only. The position is further postulated that every **other** act is **personal**.

The participants in the discussion are in serious error because when they assemble on the Lord’s Day **all** phases of our worship **are personal**. By that we mean that while all participate it is thus on a personal basis. For instance, if one does not sing and make melody in the heart (cf. Eph. 5:19) he does not violate all others participating. One may not take the supper properly but this in no way compromises the worship of all others as some believe. Carry this on through each avenue of worship and see the point.

Another believes and postulates that there is “no Scriptural not one” justification for partaking of the supper outside the assembly and tries to force First Corinthians out of context. Thus, they argue, that if the “whole church” is not come together the supper cannot be partaken of Scripturally. We are surprised a little that the brethren did not think of, maybe purposefully, of Jesus statement in Matt. 18:20, “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”

Staying with the context of Matt 18:20 and using the phrase “in my name” is the key. I think also of Col 3:17 “by the authority of” also. It is the case that when two or three come together in the name of the Lord He is present with them if they violate no other Scripture. The argument is lame also for when Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper it was not in the midst of the church. The argument that one cannot partake of the Lord’s Supper unless the whole church comes together in “corporate worship” is very biased and anti and his argument is false on the face of it. For instance, there is a prisoner—a Christian—who wishes to worship. We (one or more) go and engage in all avenues of worship with him. Is this not acceptable? It is also the case, like Corinth, that brethren can assemble unscripturally and that being the case the Lord is not with them. May we sing and make melody in our hearts outside the assembly, or pray? We bow our heads to give thanks as well as nightly prayers and not one of these is in the assembly.

Think of this, if the entire (whole) church must be assembled in order for us to worship we would probably never have another worship for there a seldom a time that “**every**” member is present.

During the pandemic, my wife and I get dressed for worship and we offer our worship to God which is the very best that can be done with the situation we have health wise, but we look forward to the assembling with the saints as soon as possible.

It is strange to me that this argument centers around only the Lord’s Supper as if the supper was the only act of worship that we are to engage in. Are we ready for one to announce before the Supper that “we come to this part of our worship and it were not for this none of us would be here?”

Finally, get your dictionary and look up the meaning of the word “corporate” and you will see that is not something that would refer to the church notwithstanding those that would try to force it on us.

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

The Bible Will Save the World

Benjamin Franklin

The Bible contains the true religion, or there is none. There is light in the Bible to save the world, or the world is lost. Our only choice is between the Bible and nothing. Judaism is abolished. Mohammedanism has no claims in internal merit or external evidence. The fruits of all Paganism show that it is evil, and only evil, continually. Infidelity has nothing for the world. While it would take Christianity from us, it has

nothing to propose. It is no system—no doctrine—teaches nothing and defends nothing. Its only province is to stand and deny. It finds fault with everything, starts doubts, destroys confidence, fills the world with fears, and spreads an eternal gloom over the prospects and hopes of all nations.

Reason and the light of nature have been tried longer and more effectually than any system in the world. At least four thousand years have the pagan nations been trying what they could do for our race without a revelation from God. In all the experiments yet made, with no guide but reason and the light of nature, the tendency has been downward. Deterioration has been the universal result, without the light of the Bible.

We then cling to the Bible, and the religion it reveals, as the only hope of the world. If it fails, all must fail, and all must be lost. But it is folly of the most stupid order to speak of the Bible failing. Its Author is emphatically the friend of man. Its holy lessons are all for our good. All who have been led by it, are thankful they ever knew it. It has never deceived one or misled one. No one has ever lamented being led by it. The more solemn and affecting the circumstances around us, and the greater the trials in which we are placed, the more comforting and precious are its holy consolations to the soul. It encourages all that is good; discourages and condemns all that is evil.

It is our guide and comfort through the journey of life; nor does it fail when we are sinking in death. No one who believed it before, in a dying hour denies and repudiates the Bible. But many determined infidels have recanted and repudiated their infidelity when sinking into the eternal state. That which they talked in health, that which dwelt upon their tongues in their mad career through life, they themselves condemned, in the most awful and solemn moments of life, and with their dying lips repudiated. How shameful and preposterous, that a man should live such a life of folly and inconsistency as to be compelled in his dying moments to condemn all his past life, with all the sentiments he had cherished and inculcated, and warn all men against them!

Biblical Mentality, or Mainstream Mentality?

Gary L. Grizzell

The **Biblical** Mentality is the mindset which:

- 1) Seeks to abide in the doctrine of Christ (the New Testament) and bids Godspeed only to true teachers of God's Word, while refusing to bid Godspeed to false teachers. (see proof here: 2 John 9-11).
- 2) Believes that one who teaches God's Word must produce New Testament authority in preaching the gospel (Col. 3:17).
- 3) Insists on anyone who professes to preach the Word concerning salvation, Christianity and religion to speak as the oracles of God teach. (1 Pet. 4:11).

Mainstream Mentality today, as is being described in this article, is a thought process which:

- 1) Professes to abide in the doctrine of Christ (the New Testament) but contradicts itself by going beyond the doctrine of Christ and bids Godspeed to false teachers, in violation of 2 John 9-11.
- 2) Professes to believe that one who teaches God's Word must produce New Testament authority in preaching the gospel, but when it comes to his personal prejudices it ignores the name (authority) of Christ. In so doing such mentality runs rough shod over particular instructions found within the doctrine of Christ. Thus, such a mentality violates the principle found in Colossians 3:17.
- 3) Seeks to give the impression it is solely interested in preaching the Word concerning salvation, Christianity and religion, but in practice is given to ignoring the oracles of God to suit its personal prejudices and desires (1 Pet. 4:11).

The word *mainstream* refers generally in our society to "a prevailing current or direction of activity or influence" (*Merriam Webster Dictionary*). Specifically, in this article the word *mainstream* is used to describe an unscriptural mentality, which thought

process has been determined by a prevailing current influence manufactured by false teachers.

Someone rightly defined “culture” as group habit. The culture of mainstream “Christianity” equals man-made thinking, which is in direct opposition to the plain scriptural teaching of the Word of God (specifically, the New Testament of Christ).

Is there New Testament authority to label a certain mentality as a mainstream mentality? Absolutely. How's that? Such is authorized by the principle of implication, which is one of the three ways the New Testament authorizes.

Jesus stated of those with such a faulty mentality, “But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Matt. 15:9). Here is an example of the corrupt mainstream thinking of certain false teachers in the Lord's day. The attitude of the Pharisees in this context was mainstream, the prevailing current thinking, in the first century among that religious sect of the Jews. In this case those in error were binding where God's Word did not bind.

However, those who loose where God's Word does not allow loosing are also guilty of following a mainstream mentality! In fact there are more of the latter category than the former. For example those false teachers of this stripe (of unscriptural loosing clique) teach that water baptism is optional and advocate that one is saved from his sins by faith only (in contradiction to 1 Pet. 3:21 and Jas. 2:24). Of course the false teachings among this group vary as they practice unity in diversity (in contradiction to 1 Cor. 1:10).

The Elephant In The Room

Where is there New Testament authority for a television preacher to encourage those in his viewing audience to go to the church of Christ nearest them in their community?

What good does it do teach the correct plan of salvation to a man, then send the lost soul to a corrupted church leadership in his community? Where is the logic in that? Where is the scripture authorizing a preacher to do that? It does not exist.

Here is the problem with such a practice: The speaker is ignoring the great apostasy among us today. He is closing his eyes to the three major “isms” which exist among apostate church leaderships, to whom no lost soul in the viewing audience deserves to be directed: 1) anti-ism, 2) liberalism, and 3) ugly-ism (unchecked meanness in the leadership, usually because of the toleration of a Diotrefes). By pretending the apostasy does not exist, the hireling preacher with his mainstream mentality continues to send sheep to the wolves. Jesus said to beware of wolves, not send sheep to them (Matt. 7:15). If a sincere preacher has been misguided, he needs simply to repent (Luke 13:3).

I offer the following applicable quotation from my chapter drawn from a past lecture-ship book dated 1998:

Last, elderships and individual Christians who know and respect God's Word will not drain the Lord's treasury to support the misguided programs of those who ignore the apostasy among today's churches of Christ. Those of this stripe sabotage their own efforts. These are like the Jews of old who had a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge (Rom. 10:2). They zealously advocate to sinners that they hear, believe, repent, confess the name of Christ, be baptized for the remission of sins, and then join the church of Christ of your choice. Thus, they are guilty of incredible folly. The only ones who are guilty of greater folly are mindless supporters who viciously oppose those who point out the obvious imbalance in such! Just how hard is it to understand that not all who erect a sign in front of a meeting house reading “The Church Of Christ” are actually committed to a respect for Bible authority? Some who advocate to join the church (of Christ) of your choice today would condemn Billy Graham (insert: when he was alive) for telling multitudes to join the church of your choice. Yet, today, in many congregations which profess to be the Lord's church the doctrines of the denominational theologians reign! To stand against the hard-headed liberals in churches is to

hasten one's exit. Now, who would deny this documented fact? To deny it is to show further one's ignorance of the situation.*

Unless you have personal knowledge of a particular leadership in the viewers' geographical areas, then do not blindly encourage your viewers to go to the church of Christ in their communities. One possible solution is to have them instead contact you for more information about a congregation where they might visit. Then, if necessary when they call, tell them you will research their area and get back with them as soon as possible. If you are not willing to do that, then you are not qualified to have a television program in order to preach the gospel.

If a preacher chooses to have the unscriptural mainstream mentality, then think of the corrupt fruit of his short-cut, doctrinally compromising behavior. If the mainstream preacher sends the viewer to an eldership who bind where God's Word does not bind, that preacher has taken a chance on producing someone who thinks like that wayward eldership. Likewise, in sending the viewer to a liberal leadership, he will most likely produce a liberal. If you send him to a leadership given over to ugly-ism, that soul will either adopt that as normal Christian behavior of the church or become confused and discouraged.

No, there are no perfect church leaderships/churches to which to send viewers, but God **does require** an obedient leadership who respects Bible authority. "Well, we cannot be all-knowing, you know," someone might object. No, one cannot be omniscient about what is going on in all the churches, but this is not to be used as an excuse for not even trying to have a safeguard strategy in what is stated to non-Christian viewers about fellowship matters. (Eph. 5:11).

We are at war with Satan and his ministers, who give the appearance of being angels of light (2 Cor. 11:14-15). So we are not to ignore the enemy and his phony workers, but instead fight the good fight of the faith laying hold on eternal life (1 Tim. 6:12). When teaching others after delivering a gospel lesson, at the end of the lesson simply neglecting one's duty by ignoring the unpleasant thought that there is a great apostasy among church leaderships is just wrong. Encouraging the viewers to go to just any building which has a sign in its front yard saying, "Church Of Christ," is to be under the anathema of God (Gal. 1:8 [see the word "accursed"]). Such a practice implies that it is scriptural to encourage truth-seekers to connect with and follow false teachers (in contradiction to 2 John 10-11). Placed in a proposition form one can easily see that such is but "another gospel" (Gal. 1:8).

**Christian Fellowship*, 1998, Michael Hatcher, Ed. 1998. Chapter entitled, "Fellowship And Giving" by Gary L. Grizzell, p. 235, specifically p. 248.

"The Whole Armor Of God"

Jerry C. Brewer

Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places (Eph. 6:11).

The child of God must be spiritually clad in the **whole** armor of God. The "whole armor of God" is not that which God wears, but the armor He provides for the Christian to wear and every item of it is designed and formed by His word.

Like that of the Roman legionnaire, the Christian's armor is designed for combat—both offensively and defensively. But, unlike the Roman soldier, we fight the battles of a spiritual kingdom (John 18:36); our combat is not "against flesh and blood" but is a spiritual warfare. Therefore, the armor is spiritual in the Christian's war against the powers enumerated above. Those powers represent Satan's kingdom and his power of persuasion through the avenues of temptation—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life (1 John 2:15-17; Jas. 1:13-15). These are the things the Christian soldier wars against and in his lifelong warfare it is the whole armor of God that pro-

fects his soul and destroys the enemy. Five of the items are defensive, one is offensive, and all are rooted in the word of God.

The Girdle of Truth

The question Pilate asked of Jesus, “What is truth?” was answered in the Lord’s prayer in Gethsemane, “Thy word is truth” (John 17:17). That was the same truth Jesus used in deflecting the assaults of Satan in His temptation when He said, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4). The girdle of truth protects the Christian from those same temptations, but he must know and love that truth as David, who said, “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee” (Psa. 119:11).

The Breastplate of Righteousness

This righteousness is that which comes from the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul said, “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). “The righteousness of God” of which Paul writes is not an attribute of God, but the means by which He makes men righteous—His **standard** of righteousness for mankind, which is the gospel.

Jesus said the Christian’s righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 5:20). His meaning is not that a Christian should be more righteous than they, but that the standard by which he is **made righteous** must be a higher standard than theirs. Like their modern denominational counterparts, they ignored God’s standard and set their own. Paul said, “Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they, being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God” (Rom. 10:13).

The Jews were not ignorant that God is righteous. They knew that. But Paul said they were ignorant of the gospel and in not submitting “themselves unto the righteousness of God,” they had not submitted to the gospel standard by which men are made righteous. The breastplate of righteousness is acquired by obedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Feet Shod With Gospel of Peace

It’s ironic that part of the Christian’s armor called, “the gospel of peace” is among items of warfare. The feet of the gospel messengers were described in Isaiah 52:7, which Paul quoted in Romans 10:15: “How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things.” The gospel of peace is that message which brings peace, but not peace with the world or Satan. Juxtaposed against this concept is Jesus’ statement in Matthew 10:34: “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.” Yet, at the birth of Jesus, the angels announced, “...on earth peace, good will toward men” (Luke 2:14). There is no contradiction in these statements. The sword (conflict) Jesus spoke of in Matthew 10:34 is explained in the next two verses as conflict within families that would be divided because of His teaching. The peace the angels announced is peace between man and God which comes through obedience to the gospel, and explained by Paul: “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1). Peace through justification by faith comes when one becomes a child of God and Paul explains how we are justified by faith. “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:26-27). Baptism into Christ is justification by faith, thereby making peace with God.

The Shield of Faith

Faith is the shield of the Christian soldier to deflect Satan’s assault, and that faith comes through the word of God. “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). It was the word of God which moved the worthies listed in Hebrews 11 to act. By faith, Abel offered (Heb. 11:4), Enoch walked with God and was

translated, Noah built the ark and saved his family (Heb. 11:7), Abraham obeyed God's call (Heb. 11:8) and offered up Isaac (Heb. 11:17). Faith is understanding God's word and doing what His word directs, and the Christian soldier's faith is increased by study of God's word (1 Pet. 1:3-8) In this manner, the Christian's shield deflects the "fiery darts of the wicked."

The Helmet of Salvation

The helmet protects the head. It was the head of the serpent that Christ bruised by His resurrection (Gen. 3:15), dealing Satan a death blow. The Christian soldier's head is protected from a spiritual death blow by his helmet of salvation and that helmet is supplied through the word of God. Paul said the gospel is, "the gospel of your salvation" (Eph. 1:13).

The gospel is the means of salvation (Rom. 1:16-17) and it is by the gospel that God calls men to Himself. "...God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. 2:13-14). Without this helmet, the Christian is vulnerable to Satan.

Salvation is in Christ (2 Tim. 2:10) and in Christ is the saving efficacy of His blood (Eph. 1:7). Outside of Him man is hopelessly lost (Eph. 2:1-2, 11-12), and in that state, one has no helmet of salvation.

The Sword of The Spirit

This is the sword the Holy Spirit forged—the inspired word of God. It is wielded by the Christian soldier and it will prick the hearts of sinners who receive it (Acts 2:37; Heb 4:12). It is often said that the Spirit uses the word in conversion, but that is false. The Christian wields and uses that sword. When Peter preached on Pentecost, the Holy Spirit inspired him, but Peter wielded the sword of the Spirit to prick the hearts of his hearers. That same sword is wielded by the Christian soldier today in converting men to Christ. The gospel is the sword of the Spirit.

Conclusion

Every item of the Christian's armor is rooted and grounded in the word of God. When we are clad in that armor and use it properly, and add prayer, supplication, watchfulness and perseverance (Eph. 6:18), no power of Satan can overcome us. Faith is the victory which overcomes the world (1 John 5:4) and that faith comes only through the word of God.

The "Streamlined" Variety

Cled E. Wallace

It seems to be generally conceded that there is something radically wrong with a big parcel of what passes for modern religion. The remedies and operations suggested point to the fact that some of the professional experts are quacks or near-quacks. Religion is an inviting medium for quacks—low, medium, and high class.

Along comes a "Rev. Johnson" of the Methodist persuasion to Memphis, "down in Dixie," and gets himself in the headlines in addition to tickling the fancy of a "nosy" news reporter, and this is not intended as a scornful dart aimed at reporters. Being "nosy" is part of their business. Streamlining the tale down to its lowest common denominator—this is "a streamlined era" in which we live, and the youth of our time are destined to ignore religion and let it go to everlasting shebang, if we do not streamline it and speed it up to the swing-time of light fantastic toes of our streamlined juveniles.

After reading a column or so along the line, the idea seems to be to disguise religion with a jazzy or some such highly entertaining make-up and lead "youth" into believing it is having a hilarious time instead of getting old-time religion. This is really not new enough to be news nor profound enough to be religion.

Considering the principles involved, it rates along with the soap-box oratory of a corn-cure quack who extols the virtues of his new and exclusive enemy of corndom. "Ladees and gent'lmun, you suffer needlessly. One drop of this magic oil will do the trick. You

don't even have to take off your shoes or wash your feet. Just drop a wee bit of it on your shoe and it will hunt the corn and chase it to regions where it can never return." A drop of modern religion, diluted with a cup of entertainment and externally applied cannot cure what is the matter with either modern youth or age. It is a quack remedy for sin which can result in nothing more than polishing up the outside of the cup a bit. "Rev. Johnson" and his type of "streamlined" house cleaners are hasty and superficial. They neglect the closets and do not trouble themselves to sweep the corners or under the beds.

Why not "streamlined religion"? We like streamlined trains, automobiles, duties, and are so fast in other ways that the very word has magic in it, and even the devil passes unchallenged nearly everywhere "in this streamlined age," for, behold, he, too, is streamlined. It may be taken for granted that if anything can be done to religion—Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, or pagan—that can be palmed off for streamlining, it will speed quickly into the graces of "this streamlined era," which is highly and hilariously allergic to the very suggestion of it.

I am jumping on this as a ready-made occasion to emphasize some divine warnings which the streamlined tap dancers in religion have overlooked or ignored. All efforts to "streamline" God's commandments have led men to a rejection of God in all ages. Cain started it—no, his mother did, by lending her ear to the crafty suggestion of the devil. Cain follow suit by presenting a more **reasonable** offering to God than the bloody sacrifice He commanded.

The Israelites angered God by streamlining the government for more modern and acceptable effectiveness. Samuel was "old" and old fashioned. His sons were not what they should have been. They demanded and got what they wanted, and the streamlined nation sped smack into rebellion and ruin, king and all.

Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned: and turn away from them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Christ, but their own belly; and by their smooth and fair speech they beguile the hearts of the innocent. For your obedience is come abroad unto all men (Rom. 16:17-19 ASV).

A lot of this streamlining talk is "smooth and fair," but too often leads to a giddy mind and a full "belly" and absence of any true conviction of sin and full reliance on Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. "The way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23).

Now do not misunderstand or misjudge me. Man has a right to invent, build, improve, and streamline things. He has a heritage in his exploration and subjugation of nature and its forces to his legitimate uses. The first steamboat was a tubby, ugly, and unwieldy thing, but it was a triumph in its day. I prefer the grace, speed, and beauty of the modern mistresses with pretty names which glide swiftly through ocean lanes. The trains which first ran races with horses and buffaloes are relics, albeit worthy stepping-stones in the march of progress, which developed streamlined streaks of speed which stride along stretches of soil at great velocity. And, they have taken wings and roar through the clouds above them at hundreds of miles per hour with scores of human beings seated in their bowels. Man is streamlining his inventions, and a little self-boasting may be pardoned.

Why should not religion be streamlined? The gospel is the divine work of God designed to restore the marred image of God, a sin-scarred horror in degenerate man. It came from heaven, perfect, lines and all. The original, certified gospel is only marred and perverted when men seek to improve it. The gravedigger of Shakespeare could as well touch up the effects of a Michaelangelo masterpiece as a modernist or theologian could improve the Sermon on the Mount or Peter's sermon on Pentecost. The Gospel claims inspiration. If these claims are valid, it is God's power to save, a perfect remedy for sin. What men inject into it is a poison virus. "For I make known to you, brethren, as touching the gospel which was preached by me, that it is not after man. For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came to me through revelation of Jesus

Christ” (Gal. 1:11-12 ASV).

Forces were at work in Paul's day, forces of compromise and disloyalty, which gathered momentum through the centuries and resulted in the modern mess which quack doctors in religion propose to streamline. Streamlining a perversion is a tragedy so great that a waste of time is an anticlimax. Even if it is suggestive of reform, such a reform is not what the situation calls for. We do not need a reformation of Catholicism, Protestantism, Judaism, or paganism. We need a complete restoration of the original Gospel and the original church, and “the pattern of sound words” is found in the New Testament.

Denominational parties, human creeds, speculative theories in conversion, and other fields are unauthorized plants which the Father “hath not planted.” They do not need pruning; rooting up is the most effective treatment that can be administered. They are human, added things which have not come “by the revelation of Jesus Christ.” “The simplicity and the purity that is toward Christ” (2 Cor. 11:3 ASV) is streamlined enough. Any religion today which needs streamlining owes its bulky awkwardness to the traditions of men. Its ideas and nomenclature arose this side of the New Testament after the days of inspiration were over.

The things that men must believe and do in becoming Christians and “the apostles' doctrine” they should continue in are streamlined enough as found in the New Testament. The one thing that needs to be done is to reject all humanisms, parties, creeds, and speculations and go directly to the New Testament and accept its unfailing wisdom. It came from God.

The Claims of the Bible

Foy E. Wallace, Jr.

The Bible claims to be the word of God. And not that only; it claims to be the inerrant word of God, the infallibly and verbally inspired word of God. “All Scripture is given by inspiration”—*theopneustia*, God-breathed words. “Unto us God revealed” these things “through the Spirit...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. 2:10-13 ASV). Divine thoughts and divine words to convey them is Paul's statement, with emphasis, of the verbal inspiration of the Bible.

Who says it is not the inerrant word of God? The devil (Gen. 3:3-4) and worldly-wise men of today (Rom. 1:22); but we are warned against such and should shun them, for they cannot be converted (2 Thess. 2:10-11) and may destroy faith in you “through philosophy and vain deceit” (Col. 2:8).

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Email Address: txjch@att.net

“The Thing That Hath Been...”: The Cycle of Apostasy



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