

The Gospel Preceptor

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

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Children of God by Faith

Nana Yaw Aidoo

Shortly after Paul left Galatia, the Christians in that sub-region imbibed the doctrine of the Judaizers, who taught that the Gentiles were not truly saved unless they kept the Law of Moses (Gal. 1:6; 2:3-5). As Paul set forth the arguments that make up the entire book of Galatians, that it is sinful for a Christian to keep any element of the Law of Moses, he made a statement, which is our focus in this article. He wrote; “For ye are all children of God by faith in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:26). From this verse, it is made clear that all who are translated from the world into Christ Jesus, become “children of God by faith.” Thus, to be “in Christ” is to be a “child of God by faith” and there is not a “child of God by faith” who is not “in Christ.”

Paul then proceeds to tell the Galatians (and us, by implication) how to get “into Christ.” Read with me: “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:27). No one can misunderstand this text for it is evident that Paul is teaching that we enter into Christ at the point of baptism, when he wrote, “...baptized into Christ...” It is not taught by inspiration that we believe into Christ, neither is it taught that we pray into Christ, though faith is necessary in order to be saved and prayer is an important Christian duty. Another passage for comparison is Romans 6:3.

Therefore, if all who are translated from the world “into Christ” are—or become —“children of God by faith” and if all who enter “into Christ” do so at the point of baptism, then it follows that one is not a “child of God by faith” unless he is “baptized into Christ.” To the honest person, this conclusion is inescapable. Thus, those who teach that we are made “children of God” through “faith **alone**” (see Jam.2:24) or by saying a “sinners’ prayer” to ask Christ into our hearts (see John 9:31) are like the Judaizers, teaching another gospel (Gal. 1:8-9).

Someone might ask, “Which baptism is the apostle referring to? Holy Spirit baptism or Water baptism?” In answering this question, it needs to be noted that there is only “one baptism” (Eph. 4:5). Therefore, whichever one it is, would of necessity render the other, useless. Thus, it seems strange to me that those who maintain that the baptism the apostle refers to is Holy Spirit baptism, still go ahead and administer water baptism too. This is inconsistency in the highest.

In the Great Commission, Jesus Christ commanded that disciples be made by baptism (**not** baptism alone) (Matt. 28:18-19). Thus, the “one baptism” of Ephesians 4:5, is the **same baptism** of the Great Commission. This baptism was to be administered by humans. Did the apostles ever administer Holy Spirit baptism? None of them did. As a matter of fact, no human on earth ever administered Holy Spirit baptism. Of Christ, John the baptizer said, “I indeed have baptized you with water: but He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost” (Mark 1:8). When this happened, Christ had ascended to heaven. Thus, we see that when the apostles were baptized with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4), Peter confirmed that it was Christ in heaven who was Himself the administrator (Acts 2:32-33).

Again, unlike the baptism of the Great Commission, which was commanded, Holy Spirit baptism was not a command but a promise (Acts 1:4-5). It ought to be evident to

us all that promises cannot be obeyed but commands can. However, we see that water baptism was both commanded and administered by humans (Acts 8:36-39; 10:47-48) just like Christ authorized, and so it follows that the “one baptism” is nothing but water baptism. Notice also, Ephesians 5:26. Therefore, the one who is a “child of God by faith” is the one who has been baptized (immersed—see Acts 8:36-39) in water unto the remission of sins (Acts 2:38), the point at which he **enters into Christ**.

Moreover, it needs to be noted that the one who is in Christ and is a “child of God by faith,” cannot be in Christ just in part but must be in the “fullness” of Christ. The Bible teaches that the fullness of Christ is the church. Read this carefully; “And hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all” (Eph. 1:22-23). The “church, which is His body,” is “the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.” Thus, to be in the “fullness” of Christ, one must be in the church.

Then again, to be “in Christ” is to be “in the church” because the same thing that puts one into Christ is the same thing that puts one into the body, which is the church. Paul wrote, “For by one Spirit are we all **baptized into one body...**” (1 Cor.12:13, Emph. NYA). Some contend that this text teaches Holy Spirit baptism. That cannot be, for the Holy Spirit is not said to be the element of baptism but the agent of baptism—**by** one Spirit. The reader should pay attention to Ephesians 5:26 and Ephesians 6:17 to see how the Holy Spirit plays the role of agent in baptism. Therefore, if all who are in Christ are “children of God by faith” and if to be “in Christ” is to be “in the church,” then it follows that one is not a “child of God through faith” unless he is “in the church.” Once more, this is an inescapable conclusion.

Friends, there is not a single person this side of the cross, who is a child of God, who has not been added to the church (Acts 2:47) which Christ purchased with His blood (Acts 20:28). The Lord does not add people to denominations (1 Cor. 1:10-13) but to His church (Matt. 16:18)—the church of Christ (Acts 20:28; Rom. 16:16). Denominations do not make up the church of Christ. The church of Christ is not an invisible church made up of the various denominations of the world. The church of Christ is pre-denominational, anti-denominational, and non-denominational. Whereas each denomination claims to comprise just a part of God’s children and thus men can be saved without being a part of their particular denomination—which teaching renders each denomination useless—the church of Christ comprises all of the saved in the world (Acts 2:47) and one cannot be saved unless he is a member of it. There is literally only one body—or church—(Col. 1:18; Eph. 4:4), just as there is only “one God and Father of all” (Eph. 4:6). And he who cares about his soul will verify whether this is so (Acts 17:11).

In conclusion, when one obeys the Gospel (Heb. 5:9; 1 Pet. 4:17), by believing in the Gospel (Mark 16:15-16), by repenting of his sins (Acts 2:38), by confessing his faith in Christ (Matt. 10:32; Acts 8:37) and by being baptized unto the remission of his sins (1 Pet. 3:21) so as to be translated from the world “into Christ” or be “added to the church” (Acts 2:47; 5:14; 11:24b; Col. 1:13), as sure as God’s word is truth, that person becomes a “child of God by faith.”

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

Are You Watching the “Signs”?

David Ray

Because of all the current events negatively affecting our world, a friend recently posted on Facebook that everyone should be aware of these “signs” and change their lives soon, obeying the gospel before it’s eternally too late. I appreciate and agree with the overall point that this friend was making. Indeed we, as members of the Lord’s church, need to be reminding people of the reality of the coming judgment and encouraging them to respond accordingly (as well as ensuring, by our continued obedience, that **we** are ready; cf. 2 Peter 1:5-11). But we also need to be aware that there are **no signs** of

Christ's return, the end of the physical world, and the final judgment of God.

No passages were presented in the Facebook post, but one can easily guess which ones were most likely in the mind of the author. Probably the most common passage cited in order to point to current events as being signs of the end of the world would be Matthew 24:1-35. In verse two of this passage, Jesus declared regarding the temple that "there shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." The disciples afterward asked Jesus "when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" They assumed that Jesus was talking about one event (i.e., they thought that the destruction of the temple would certainly mean the end of the world and Christ's return, a logical thought at that time). But Jesus makes it clear that these were two different events as He answered them separately.

In verses 1-35 He answered their first question, "when shall these things be?" (i.e., the destruction of the temple). Today we know (or at least we should know) that this did **not** refer to the end of the world, but to the Roman attack on, and destruction of, Jerusalem and the end of the Jewish nation which occurred in A.D. 70. We should also know then that the signs Jesus gave pointed to this event's coming, **not the end of the world**. He even said that it would be fulfilled within one generation (v. 34). Sadly, this context is continually missed by well-meaning folks like my Facebook friend (and outright ignored by false teachers and preachers) who misapply these signs to the second coming, comparing them with current events and concluding "the end is near!"

From verse 36 through the end of chapter 25 He addressed their second question, "what shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the world?" There are two main lessons we need to learn from His answer. First, there are **no signs**, so we do not know when it will happen. "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only" (25:36). Mark's account adds "neither the Son" (Mark 13:32), making it clear that while He was on earth even Jesus didn't know. How could Jesus have given signs for the second coming if He didn't know when it was? It's amazing that since that time a multitude of false teachers has claimed to know what Jesus didn't, making prediction after prediction of the date of His return. Every one of these predictions has failed, showing every one of these prognosticators to be false prophets (cf. Deut. 18:22).

The second point to Jesus' answer is that He could return at any time; and since there are no signs to warn us of that time, we must be prepared for it to be **at any time**.

- "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come" (Matt. 24:42).
- "Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh" (Matt. 24:44).
- "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh" (Matt. 25:13).

How do we "watch"? Obviously not by staring at the sky. Jesus answered this in 24:45-46: "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing." When He returns we need to be found "so doing" (i.e., doing His will, cf. Matt. 7:21-23).

We need to stop seeing current events as signs of the end of the world. Not only have all these alleged signs happened a multitude of times throughout history and will continue to happen ("there is no new thing under the sun"—Eccl. 1:9), but Jesus gave **no signs** to mark His second coming. Consider also that both Paul and Peter taught that when Jesus returned it would be "as a thief in the night" (1 Thess. 5:1-3; 2 Peter 3:10), i.e., with no warning! Focusing on signs can result in the incorrect conclusion that His coming, while possibly near, is not today, causing us to believe we have more time to repent than we may actually have.

The time is now! His return could be today or a thousand years from today, but no current event has anything to do with this. Are you prepared **now**?

Understanding the Bible

Dub McClish

Nothing is more obvious than that men who profess belief in the Bible do not understand it alike. Some believe this is inevitable or even good. If so, why does the Bible command that we “all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you” (1 Cor. 1: 10)? We are to “walk by the same rule” (Phi. 3:16), so it must be possible for us to understand what the Bible teaches.

The greater question may be, “Why do men not understand the Bible alike?” The Bible provides several answers.

- **Ignorance**—Because of ignorance of their “Bible” the Jews crucified Jesus, and Saul persecuted Him (Luke 23:34; Acts 3:17; 1 Tim. 1:13). Earnest Bible study is necessary to overcome ignorance. One can hardly understand what he does not know.
- **Deception**—Many are victims of false teachers (Mat. 7:15). Jesus warned: “Take heed that no man lead you astray” (Mat. 24: 44). Blind teachers and their students will be lost (15:14).
- **Human traditions**—Religious traditions were more important than the Bible to the Jews of Jesus’ time (Mat. 15:6). Human traditions are many and varied, whether unauthorized by Scripture or mere optional preferences that are bound as law, they prevent men from understanding and following the Bible. Such things as infant “baptism,” instrumental music in worship, “Easter,” et al., are unauthorized human traditions, rather than Biblical practices. The times of worship assemblies, the order of worship in our assemblies, etc., are not specified, thus “traditional,” and to bind them is to confuse God’s Law with the preferences of men.
- **Prejudice**—Jeremiah wrote of those in Jerusalem “that have eyes, and see not; that have ears, and hear not” (5:21). The Jews of Jesus’ time had their minds “made up” that the Messiah would establish an earthly kingdom like David’s, so they rejected His teaching concerning His spiritual kingdom, the church (Mat. 16:18–19). Vast millions make the same mistake today in their biased and mistaken millennial “hopes.”
- **Convenience**—Jeroboam enticed his nation to stay at home and worship his idols, saying, “It is too much to go up to Jerusalem” (1 Kin. 12:28). Roman Catholicism popularized effusion (pouring of water) in place of immersion for baptism beginning in the twelfth century because it was more “convenient” than immersion. Most Protestant churches find it “inconvenient” to serve the Lord’s Supper each Sunday. The Truth is often set aside for sake of convenience.
- **Sincerity alone**—We must be sincere in our devotion to God, but sincerity alone was insufficient for Cornelius; he still had to hear and obey the Gospel to be saved (Acts 10:33; 11:14). Yet many have been led to believe that if one is sincere in his convictions, it makes no difference what they believe or practice in religion. If sincerity is all that matters, why do we even need the Bible?

All of the foregoing factors are obstructions to understanding the Bible. Those who pervert the Scriptures do so to their own destruction (2 Pet. 3:16).

The Church In God's Eternal Purpose

Jerry C. Brewer

The revelation of the scheme of redemption to man, which God had purposed from eternity began in both foreshadowing and precept in Genesis. After Adam and Eve sinned, they clothed themselves with fig leaves and tried to hide from God.

And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons. And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the

day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden (Gen. 3:7-8).

Confronted with their sin, they were rebuked and cursed by the Lord and Genesis 3:21 says, "Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins and clothed them." They had devised their **own clothing** from fig leaves, but God clothed them with animal skins. That foreshadowed man's spiritual clothing—that he was **helpless to cover his own sins** (Jer. 10:23). Animals had to shed their blood for man's physical clothing, as Jesus Christ would shed His blood to clothe the obedient in righteousness (Eph. 1:7; Acts 20:28).

In pronouncing the serpent's curse, God said, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between her seed and thy seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Gen. 3:15). Contained in this germinal promise, was God's plan which comprehended Christ's Virgin Birth, His struggle with the powers of hell, His death, burial, resurrection, His exaltation to the throne of David, and the salvation of Jew and Gentile in one body. Foy E. Wallace, Jr. wrote, "The Genesis record introduces 'the seed of woman'—one who was not to be the offspring of man. Here is the germ of all prophecy. As the oak is in the acorn and the eagle in the egg, all Messianic prophecies are here in germ" (*The Certified Gospel*, 16).

But God's plan—the church—existed in His eternal purpose long before the shedding of blood for salvation was foreshadowed, or a Saviour of the seed of woman was promised. Whatever God—or man—builds, first exists in purpose and the church of Christ existed as a blueprint in God's mind from eternity. Out of God's mind, His eternal purpose was unfolded to man in promise, prophecy, and preparation, and ultimately reached perfection on Pentecost, as recorded in Acts, chapter two. That purpose was detailed in his epistle to the church at Ephesus by the apostle Paul.

Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; *even* in him: 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 (Eph. 1:3-11).

The spiritual blessings, to which Paul refers in verse 3, are **all** found **in Christ** and enumerated in the succeeding verses, which he concludes by saying we were predestinated to those, "according to the **purpose** of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will" (Eph. 1:11, emph. JCB). That eternal purpose is further defined in chapter three.

For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: 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; That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the

unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all *men* see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly *places* might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord (Eph. 3:1-11).

The “mystery” in verse 3 is the plan God purposed in His eternal counsel—salvation in the church. Foy E. Wallace, Jr. explained the word *mystery* in Ephesians 5:23 this way:

We have that same word in Romans 16:25 where the apostle said that the mystery was kept secret since the world began, but now is made known unto all nations for the obedience of faith. It is the same word mystery there, same English term, the same original term—*musteerion*. It means that God had a plan that was kept secret in that it had not been made known in the Old Testament. The mystery was kept secret since the world began. That means the plan of salvation existed in type and in promise and in the prophecy of the Old Testament but was in an unfulfilled, undeveloped and unfolded state, therefore it was kept secret, until the time came to make it known, to reveal it to man. That brings up again the meaning of that word, mystery. The original term signified a strategy—and it became a military word in that time. The generals of the armies did not reveal their military strategy to the enemy. The term mystery does not mean something mysterious, ...It did not mean something that one could not understand—it meant something one could not know until it was revealed. The general of the army did not reveal the military mystery, the military secret, we would call it, until the time came to execute it (Wallace, *Number One Gospel Sermons*, 45)

Regardless of whether it is God's or man's—a plan is first purposed in the mind. The plan of salvation (*mystery*) which began in God's eternal purpose was hidden through the ages, until God revealed it. That mystery, which Paul says was revealed through the “holy apostles and prophets,” is that, “the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ by the gospel” (Eph. 3: 5, 6). He further indicated this in Ephesians 2, contrasting the Ephesians' former condition as, “without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world” (Eph. 2:12), with their present condition:

...but now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometime were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace: and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. ...Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and the household of God (Eph. 2:13-17, 19).

God purposed **all** spiritual blessings in Christ (Eph. 1:3), and that means **in the church**, for one cannot be in Christ without being in His church. Paul said those blessings are, salvation (Eph. 1:4), being a child of God (Eph. 1:5), God's acceptance of us (Eph. 1:6), redemption from sins through Christ's blood (Eph. 1:7), and an eternal inheritance (Eph. 1:11). God purposed to choose those who are **in Christ** to partake of these blessings. In His eternal purpose, God determined (predestined) that the eternally saved would be only those **in Christ**. That is **Biblical** predestination, which has no connection to that set forth by John Calvin. Divesting man of free will and perverting the Biblical concept of grace with its twisted theories of predestination and election, Calvin's theology renders man a mindless entity in the hands of a sadistic God.

Calvinistic election is attributed to God's arbitrary predestination of individuals. While the Bible teaches the children of God are the elect (1 Pet. 2:9), it speaks of a class of persons, not individuals. Calvinism says the elect are

those who were individually selected to salvation (“a certain number”) and the non-elect are those eternally condemned individuals, both of whom were predestined to those ends before the world began. Predestination and election are Biblical terms, but Calvin perverted them in formulating his doctrine. According to Calvin, electing individuals to salvation, before the world began, God thereby predestined certain persons to salvation and others to damnation.

Holding that God’s grace is only for the elect, Calvinism says certain individuals were **arbitrarily** chosen as recipients of it. Biblical predestination is concerned not with **individuals**, but the **locus** of salvation for election of a certain class of persons. That’s the thrust of Paul’s teaching in Ephesians 1:3-11.

As God predestined creatures with gills to life in water, so those in Christ were predestined to eternal life in Him. God does not choose individuals to enter Christ, but says that all who do are classified as His elect. A creature of free will, man chooses to obey or disobey God and when he chooses God, he is thereby elected to salvation in Christ Jesus. God’s elect is constituted of all who elect to enter Christ through obedience to the gospel, (Rom. 6:3-6) (Brewer, p. 3).

Those who choose God are then His chosen people, but He chooses only those in Christ, and the only way to be His chosen people is to enter into Christ through baptism (Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:26-27). Since the church is the fullness of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23), it is impossible to be in Christ without being in His church.

Thus, the church, which God purposed from eternity, promised to the Patriarchs, foretold through His prophets, prepared by John and Jesus, and established in Acts 2, is the locus of salvation and is His divine scheme of redemption. The “kingdom,” “the church,” “the body of Christ,” the “one new man” are all terms applied to the same institution (Matt. 16:13-19; Eph. 1:22-23; Eph. 2:15) and all refer to God’s eternal purpose.

In Ephesians 1:9 the apostle called this plan the mystery of his will, and in chapter 6:19 he called it the mystery of godliness—referring to the scheme of redemption. There are not less than fifteen passages in the New Testament where this word mystery refers to the gospel plan of salvation. Now, with that word mystery in your mind, we return to our text in the last verse of Ephesians 5 where Paul said, “This is a great mystery. but I speak concerning Christ and the church.” It means that this is the great plan God has revealed concerning Christ and the church. I once said that the church is *a part* of God’s plan of salvation—I do not put it that way now—I put it this way: The church is God’s plan of salvation. Everything connected with salvation is encompassed within the divine institution of the church, for which Jesus died, for which he shed his blood, and by which he purchased our salvation with his blood. The church encompasses and encircles everything that is connected with the salvation of man. The church is the divine plan (Wallace, *ibid.*, p. 47).

Conclusion

One cannot be in Christ without being in his church and one who is in the church is in Christ. It is instrument of salvation for which Christ was the lamb foreordained to be slain before the foundation of the world (1 Pet. 1:18-19), and within the kingdom are all the spiritual blessings of heaven, (Eph. 1:3). It was purposed from eternity and is destined for eternity.

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Bible Questions Deserve Bible Answers

Editor's Note: Brother Whitlock sent this article to me, accompanied by this note: "Every other month the local paper prints an article written by me; which I have entitled "Bible Questions Deserve Bible Answers." ...A good friend of mine is employed at this paper and today had to send me a note: "Hi Jess! Just wanted you to know that both of the owners and the editor here at the newspaper agreed to pull your article for this week. They don't want to offend their "Cowboy Church friends." They said there's no way to corroborate your statements about that church. So..I am sorry, but that's the decision that was made above my head."

The fact that the paper's publishers are Baptists, as well as devoted worshipers of Political Correctness, probably had a great deal to do with their decision. "No way to corroborate your statements about that church?" They could have checked with the Baptist General Convention of Texas, or *The Cortez Journal*, but that would mean exercising journalistic integrity, which they obviously lack.

Jess Whitlock

QUESTION: Mr. Whitlock, what exactly are "cowboy churches" and what can you tell me about their origin?

ANSWER: "Cowboy Churches" have been around for about 50 years in the Western states; but there has been an uprising in the past 20 years. Look into Texas, Oklahoma, Colorado, and Wyoming. It is estimated that close to 1,000 groups are meeting presently under the auspices of the "American Fellowship of Cowboy Churches." That's according to the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

The roots of this movement go back to religious ministries that have targeted rodeo events and related happenings. Let me say now there is nothing wrong with meeting in a barn, a metal building, or an old-style western building. I have preached in tents, under shade trees, and on the side of a mountain. The location is not what matters in worshipping God.

The majority of Cowboy Churches of my acquaintance have a "gospel band," which contradicts the Word of God (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; et al.). Baptisms are generally done in stock tanks, and I have baptized prisoners in stock tanks behind prison walls. But, baptisms in the Cowboy Churches are **not** for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:21). The few lessons I have heard are what might be called "sermonettes given by preacherettes" to make one feel good about self. One Bible subject that is seldom, if ever, heard in their services is "repentance." The subject of "repentance" is found in the Bible over seventy times! (see Luke 13:3-5; 2 Pet. 3:9; Acts 2:38). So, if you drink, keep on drinking; if you cuss, keep on cussing; if you gamble, keep on gambling; if you dance, keep on dancing; if you are unfaithful to your mate, keep on cheating; et al. Some of these Cowboy Churches have Saturday night hoedowns, and the liquor flows freely; so join in the fun!

The Cowboy Church in Sanger, Texas is called "The Riding for the Brand Cowboy Church" and you can read about that "church" in Titus 5:19, (look it up). Their Bible studies sometimes feature reruns of Andy Griffith and John Wayne movies! The "country-western musicians" of Cortez, Colorado announced, "We're gonna' sing about Santa Claus tonight..." ("Saddle-Up" taken from the *Cortez Journal*). Most Cowboy Churches are formed for their entertainment, and not a serious study of God's Word. I have challenged a couple of cowboy churches to meet in public debate, but so far, no takers!

Lessons in Respecting God's Authority

Nathan Brewer

God rejected Cain's sacrifice. Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, lost their lives. So did a man named Uzzah. Why? Because they acted without God's authority.

Cain sacrificed some of his crops to God and Abel offered livestock, but God did not accept Cain's offering (Gen. 4:1-4). The writer of Hebrews explains that Abel's sacrifice was offered by faith, implying that Cain's was not (Heb. 11:4). Since Abel offered by faith, and since Romans 10:17 says faith comes by hearing God's word, we can deduce that Abel sacrificed as directed by God. Cain ignored God and offered what he wanted to, and God rejected his offering.

Nadab and Abihu were sons of Aaron who served as priests. As part of the Jewish worship priests burned incense. On one occasion Nadab and Abihu offered incense using "strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not" (Lev. 10:1). God responded to their sin by striking them dead with fire of His own (Lev. 10:2).

Uzzah was a well-intentioned Jew who met an untimely death when he disobeyed God's command not to touch the ark of the covenant. Inside the ark were the tables of stone containing the ten commandments, Aaron's rod that budded and pieces of manna God gave the Israelites while they wandered in the wilderness. It was one of the holy things of the LORD that could not be touched without incurring death (Num. 4:15). The ark had a ring on each corner, and the Levites were to place two staves through the rings so they could lift and carry it without touching it.

Trouble came when they decided to transport the ark by placing it on a new cart. As David led the jubilant party bringing the ark to Jerusalem, the oxen pulling the cart stumbled. Uzzah grabbed the ark to keep it from falling, and God struck him dead (2 Sam. 6:1-7).

These Old Testament examples serve as warnings for us today (1 Cor. 10:1-12). If we ignore God's law or make substitutions in worship and service, we stand spiritually condemned. Paul states the necessity of having divine authority in all religious matters in his letter to the church at Colosse: "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him" (Col. 3:17). To do something in the name of Jesus means to do what He has authorized. It is significant that in the passage just cited Paul refers to Jesus as Lord. This identifies Jesus as our ruler. Since Jesus has all authority (Matt. 28:18), what we teach and do in religious matters must be authorized by Christ.

Christ authorizes in the New Testament (Heb. 1:1-2). Therefore, if our service and worship are not found in the New Testament, we are acting without divine sanction. Although there's a common misconception that we can do anything we want and claim it is for Jesus, unless **He has authorized it** we are only doing it to please ourselves. Jesus has told us what He wants, and it is up to us to do it.

Cain, Nadab, and Abihu worshipped God incorrectly. Uzzah thought he was serving God by steadying the ark. They might have meant well, but they sinned and God punished them. If we attempt to worship and serve God apart from Christ's authority, we will pay with our souls.

Thoughts About the Song, "Jesus is Coming Soon"

Lee Moses

The song "Jesus is Coming Soon" has long been a popular song of worship among the denominations as well as in many churches of Christ. The lyrics were clearly composed from a Premillennial perspective, most clearly seen in the second verse of the song. Apparently seeing the error taught by this verse, the editors of Songs of Praise chose to omit this verse. However, this did not omit all error from the song. The error in "Jesus is Coming Soon" begins with the very title.

What does the phrase “Jesus is coming soon” mean to most people? When running the phrase on an Internet search engine, the results yield nothing but pure Premillennialism. The websites listed include such organizations as “Lamb and Lion Ministries” (a misapplication of the peaceable kingdom of which Isaiah spoke, a prophetic reference to the church) and the “Rapture Ready Club.” These websites make the claim “Jesus is Coming Soon,” and then attempt to support this claim with what they believe are signs that His coming is imminent (just about to happen). After 35 websites featuring Premillennialist advocates defending the premise that “Jesus is coming soon,” the 36th website features a refutation of the notion that we can know absolutely that Jesus will be coming anytime soon. What all these websites share in common is that they believe the statement “Jesus is coming soon” says enough in itself:

1. They believe the statement to mean Jesus is coming within a time frame that ends just as it says—soon. They believe the statement is clear and that visitors to their website would not think that “soon” might be subject to individual opinion.
2. They believe the statement to be an affirmation of Premillennial doctrine of some stripe.

The statement “Jesus is coming soon” is a statement not backed by Biblical truth and a teaching condemned by the apostle Paul. He wrote to the church at Thessalonica,

Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means...” (2 Thess. 2:1-3a).

Anyone who told the church at Thessalonica that the coming of Christ was “at hand” was guilty of deception. What does “at hand” mean? When John the baptist and Jesus preached that the kingdom was “at hand,” they meant that it was “soon to come.” And it did come soon, within a few years. But when someone taught that Christ’s coming was “at hand,” or “soon to come,” he taught falsely. This false teaching had caused the brethren to be troubled, and Paul wrote that those who troubled the brethren in Thessalonica would receive recompense from God for what they had done (2 Thess. 1:6).

When we sing spiritual songs in the worship assembly, we are teaching (Col. 3:16). What are we teaching? If we are saying, “Jesus is coming soon,” we are teaching:

1. That Jesus will be coming within a short period of time, denying the possibility that it might be hundreds or more years until He comes.
2. What most will assume to be Premillennialism.
3. The same teaching that troubled the church at Thessalonica.
4. A teaching characteristic of a group which was to receive tribulation from God for troubling the church at Thessalonica.

In light of the above, it is clearly poor judgment, to say the least, to select “Jesus is Coming Soon” as a song to include in a worship assembly. There are far too many songs that teach truth to feel an obligation to sing songs that teach error.

Pride

Gary L. Grizzell

“The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek *after God*: God is not in all his thoughts.” (Psa. 10:4).

What Does The New Testament Say About Pride?

There is a kind of pride in our everyday usage that is good as when we refer to having a proper self-respect, self-value or self-image. However, our concern in this article is about the other kind of pride, a nonproductive pride, of which the Bible speaks repeatedly.

Jesus listed pride along with terrible sins like wickedness, theft and murders. “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications,

murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness” (Mark 7:21-22). Pride here refers to “haughtiness, arrogance” (*Strong’s*).

One of the reasons a novice—one newly planted—is not to be appointed an elder in the church is his susceptibility to being lifted up with pride. Pride is described as the reason for Satan’s fall. So, lest the novice fall like the Devil, he is not to be placed into the eldership. “Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil” (1 Tim. 3:6).

The “pride of life” is of the world and not from God.

Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and **the pride of life**, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.” (1 John 2:15-17, *emph. GLG*).

Christians are told not to love the world with its 1) lust of the flesh, 2) lust of the eyes, and 3) pride of life. These are not of the Father. Obedient children wish to have what is from their good Father. That which is of the Father is the word of God (instruction), forgiveness of sins, and eternal life. This pride of life causes individuals to remain in control of their lives, instead of turning their wills over to God’s will. But, “If any man will do his will” the blessing will follow (John 7:17).

Examples Of Individuals Who Allowed Themselves To Be Destroyed Because of This Wrong Kind Of Pride

Adam and Eve. And when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, and that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make *one* wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat” (Gen. 3:6). Eve, the first sinner, saw the unauthorized tree was “to be desired to make one wise” and wanted to be like God, but not in a good way, knowing good and evil. In essence, Satan said that God is holding out on you, and you will be gods in competition with Him if you eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Eve imagined herself as God’s equal!! For her desire to usurp deity, one of her punishments was submission to the man—“he shall rule over thee” (Gen. 3:16; see 1 Tim. 2:11-14). Adam ate of the unauthorized fruit because he desired to do his own will, having listened to the bad counsel of his wife (Gen. 3:6). Back of it all was the pride of life! Today, men sin because they wish to do their own wills rather than God’s will. Jesus said, “He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it” (Mat. 10:39)

Men in Noah’s Day.

And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.” Men in Noah’s day chose to do their own will instead of God’s will and thus suffered the consequences of their own doing. “And GOD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every imagination of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually (Gen. 6:12-13).

This grieved God greatly. When men today choose to have the pride of life, rejecting God’s revealed will, the New Testament of Christ, God is grieved. (Mark 3:5; 2 Pet. 3:15, 2 John 9-11).

Those who built the Tower of Babel. “And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top *may reach* unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth” (Gen. 11:4). Out of the pride of man, the pride of life, men chose a project which would keep themselves together. However, God wanted men to scatter and replenish the earth. After the flood the Bible says, “And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.” (Gen. 9:1). Today, the pride of life keeps little men in high places in

the church from supporting faithful preachers from going into other places on the earth in preaching the gospel to the lost.

Haman.

Then went Haman forth that day joyful and with a glad heart: but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate, that he stood not up, nor moved for him, he was full of indignation against Mordecai. Nevertheless Haman refrained himself: and when he came home, he sent and called for his friends, and Zeresh his wife. And Haman told them of the glory of his riches, and the multitude of his children, and all *the things* wherein the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the princes and servants of the king. Haman said moreover, Yea, Esther the queen did let no man come in with the king unto the banquet that she had prepared but myself; and to morrow am I invited unto her also with the king. Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate (Esther 5:9-13).

Haman was truly the man who was hanged on his **own** gallows. He was the son of the prime minister of Ahasuerus, the Persian king (Esther 3:1). He also was the enemy of Mordecai and the Jews, God's people. He was happy for awhile. He ate with the king and queen alone. He was scheduled to eat privately with them again. He was promoted above the princes and servants. But (vs. 13) he said he could not be happy as long as that man, Mordecai, was allowed to maintain his integrity by not bowing to him. It was the king's commandment for people to bow to Haman.

And all the king's servants, that *were* in the king's gate, bowed, and revered Haman: for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai bowed not, nor did *him* reverence" (Esther 3:2). However, Haman's pride got the best of him when "...Harbonah, one of the chamberlains, said before the king, Behold also, the gallows fifty cubits high, which Haman had made for Mordecai, who had spoken good for the king, standeth in the house of Haman. Then the king said, Hang him thereon. So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then was the king's wrath pacified" (Esther 7:9-10).

Of the seven things the Lord hates, the list begins with "a proud look" (Prov. 6:16).

Today, in the church when a Diotrefes, who loves to have the preeminence, arises, one is reminded of the sin of pride as seen in Haman and of God's disapproval of such-like characters.

I wrote unto the church: but Diotrefes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth *them* out of the church" (3 John 9-10).

Inspired of the Holy Spirit, the apostle John promised that "if I come, I will remember his deeds..." Does not God weep in secret places when His people refuse to heed the teaching of the New Testament? "But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for *your* pride; and mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the Lord's flock is carried away captive" (Jer. 13:17).

Pharoah. "And the LORD said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh: for I have hardened his heart, and the heart of his servants, that I might shew these my signs before him" (Exo. 10:1). Note that the passage tells us that God hardened Pharoah's heart (God did the hardening). Another passage states the same basic fact of God doing the hardening of the heart of prideful Pharoah: "And Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh: and the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, so that he would not let the children of Israel go out of his land" (Exo. 11:10). It is not a contradiction that the Bible says Pharoah hardened his own heart (Pharoah did the hardening). Note the following passages:

But when Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart, and

hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said (Exo. 8:15).

And Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also, neither would he let the people go” (Exo. 8:32).

And when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunders were ceased, he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart, he and his servants ” (Exo. 9:34).

The end result of the pride of life seen in Pharaoh is found here: “For the horse of Pharaoh went in with his chariots and with his horsemen into the sea, and the LORD brought again the waters of the sea upon them; but the children of Israel went on dry *land* in the midst of the sea ” (Exo. 15:19).

There is a Biblical principle of proper interpretation of the text which notes that *God is said to do that which He allows*. God allowed wicked Pharaoh to harden his own heart due to his being lifted up with pride. Therefore, it is said both ways. In the Christian Age today it is possible to reject the Gospel of Christ and thus harden one’s own heart. Let us be careful to receive the Word with all readiness of mind as seen in the first century Bereans:

And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming *thither* went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so (Acts 17:10-11).

The New Covenant warns us:

Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness (Heb. 3:8).

But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin (Heb. 3:13).

While it is said, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation (Heb. 3:15).

Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts (Heb. 4:7).

King Nebuchanezzar. Thinking too highly of himself and taking credit which is due only to God, the king was to be taught a lesson.

At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon. The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty? While the word *was* in the king’s mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, *saying*, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee” (Dan. 9:29-31).

The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles’ *feathers*, and his nails like birds’ *claws*. And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom *is* from generation to generation (Dan. 4:33-34).

The king learned his lesson and after being in his right mind stated words which should be heeded today by those who are lifted up with pride: “Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works *are* truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase” (Dan. 4:37). Today, we are to recognize and respect that Jesus is **the** authority in matters pertaining to salvation, Christianity and religion. Our Lord stated, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth” (Mat. 28:18). “And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the

beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all *things* he might have the preeminence” (Col. 1:18). There are **not** two heads to the body, but **one**, Who is Christ. The pride of Nebuchadnezzar, of which he repented, may be reflected upon by those who would exalt any so-called earthly head to the church today. “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope” (Rom. 15:4).

A different king, King Hezekiah, serves as a good example of how God honors one who repents of his pride. “Notwithstanding Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the Lord came not upon them in the days of Hezekiah” (2 Chron. 32:26).

The Solution For Pride Is Found In Appreciating Passages Bearing On The Subject

“For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith (Rom. 12:3). Truly, as someone once said, *The ground is level at the foot of the cross*. You are not on a higher level than I and I am not on a higher level than you, regarding human worth in the sight of God.

We are all from Adam, the first man (Gen. 1:26-27). That image was marred by sin in Adam’s life in the beginning and today men are sinners because all have personally sinned (Rom. 3:23). As someone once said, “We are not all guilty of the same sins but all are guilty.”

Jesus, The Son of God, is the greatest example of humility. With the cross in clear view the Bible says, “And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou *wilt*” (Mat. 26:39).

Those who choose to go to heaven to be with God, the Creator, will obey the Gospel of Christ and thereby be new creatures in Christ. “Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Cor. 5:17).

In overcoming the pride of life (which is but a stubborn will that would not submit to the Will of God in the New Testament), we are followers of the second Adam—Christ—Who will one day give us a heavenly body. “And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam *was made* a quickening spirit” (1 Cor. 15:45).

Having taken heed to the preaching of the Gospel, “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...” (Acts 2:38). We are thankful for God’s spiritual blessings and say with Paul, “Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ” (Eph. 1:3; read the rest of Ephesians chapter one to find these spiritual blessings listed by the Holy Spirit).

As a new Christian one has new priorities and a new direction:

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, *who is* our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory (Col. 3:1-4).

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What Do You Seek In A Church?

Ralph L. Starling

“Join the church of your choice” is a common expression today. This is a right granted to man by God. Never has God forced man to obey him. From the beginning man was made a free moral agent; he was granted the right to choose for himself either good or evil. He has the right to join any church he may desire.

One must remember, however, that any reward received from service must come from the one served. If a man serves sin, he receives the consequences of sin. If we serve God, then the blessings of God and everlasting life shall be the reward.

Your Own Way?

Are you looking for a religion in which you can have your own way? That very desire has created many religions, and, no doubt, will continue to create them. The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, “the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their conscience seared as with a hot iron” (1 Tim. 4:1-2). He again reminds him that,

in the last days perilous times shall come, for men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof (2 Tim. 3:1-5). And he warns that “the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrines; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears. And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables 2 Tim. 4:3-4).

If you are looking for a church or a religion in which you can have your own way, you do not want the religion of the New Testament. You have no use for that book for it explicitly says that we are to hear Jesus Christ. “And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water and, lo, a voice from heaven, saying, ‘This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased’” (Matt. 3:17). Later, on the mount of transfiguration, “behold a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold a voice out of the cloud which said, ‘This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.’” Peter, still later, quoted Moses as saying, “A prophet shall the Lord, your God, raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; Him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever He shall say unto you” (Acts 3:22).

Furthermore, this book, the New Testament, does not give one the authority to have his own way in matters of religion, for the All-Wise God has placed all authority in Jesus Christ. To conform unto any other authority, is to rebel against God.

Man is forbidden to follow any way religiously other than that which has been pointed out by the apostles, that is the gospel of Christ. Hear Paul:

There be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven preach unto you any other gospel 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).

Worldly Prestige?

Perhaps you are looking for a church or a religion that would offer worldly prestige or power. Many people choose their churches with this as the paramount objective. For the most part, perhaps this desire is held secret, but sometimes it is openly admitted. All too often people moving into a new community look out among the religious organizations of that community the one that is the most popular, or most socially inclined, with little or no thought at all as to whether or not this church is doing God's will.

That this was a very prevalent condition of religious people in the time of Christ is pointed out by Matthew:

Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, saying, “The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. All therefore they bid you observe, that observe and do, but do not ye after their works, for they say and do not” (Matt. 23:2). Now notice:

But all their works they do for to be seen of men. They make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, and love the uppermost seats at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and

greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi (Matt. 23:5-7).

If this is the type of religion you seek, the Bible is not the book for you. The religion of the Bible requires humility. “He that is greatest among you shall be your minister” (Mark 10:43) and, “whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased, and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted” (Matt. 24:12).

The religion of the New Testament requires a life consecrated to Him, not to ourselves. To choose our religion for worldly prestige and position is to place religion on a selfish basis indeed—a basis of self-exaltation. Instead, religion should be for the purpose of exalting the Lord Jesus Christ, that through Him men may be raised up in the last day. Paul expresses it in these words, “I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live. Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:20-21).

A True Life For Christ?

If it is your desire to be a Christian, a truly consecrated follower of Christ, the Bible is the book for you. It was given for people with this very attitude. John says, “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). How foolish to hope for salvation from any other source! Peter says; “There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). If you are actually seeking salvation, then this Book tells you the way.

How then do we put on Christ? Paul gives the answer, “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:27). This step that puts us into Christ is preceded by faith, repentance, and confession of his name. Thus through obedience to the gospel we become Christians; we receive with meekness the engrafted word.

Now what do you seek in a church? Your own way? Prestige and social positions? Or, are you truly seeking the salvation Jesus offers? If the latter, then the Bible is the book you want, and it is yours in its entirety. Learn to love it; read it often; meditate upon its truths. Allow it to make you into the likeness of God's Son. Obey its every command.

Removing Popular Difficulties

Cled E. Wallace

When the plain teaching of the New Testament is presented, all sorts of difficulties arise in the minds of people, and these are suggested by the character of their environment and training. Paul's teaching on unity and the oneness of the church is shocking to one who has been taught that “one church is as good as another” and that church membership should be considered merely a matter of preference.

Winds of doctrine blow about the world in currents directed “by the sleight of men, in craftiness, after the wiles of error,” (Eph. 4:14 ASV), and even the taught must beware of them. A man must be rooted and established in the faith to resist them. Delightful people, cultured in general ways, can accept the most absurd delusions in religion. The sudden light of truth has a dazing effect on some of them, and when they ask questions they often betray an almost unbelievable ignorance of the simplest facts of truth.

Such questions, however, often furnish a cue to the gospel preacher and enable him to remove popular difficulties that discourage obedience to God. The problems of religion are not to be settled by human experience or a resort to human reason, but by revelation. A lack of confidence in the word of God and a tendency to substitute “I think so” for “God says so” keeps the seal of Satan freshened up on many a soul.

It is a great help to a preacher to know what people are thinking about. If they become interested enough to ask questions, he readily finds out. In a recent meeting, two very intelligent and cultured young women jointly submitted some questions. It is true that the questions do not reveal much familiarity with the New Testament teaching, but, then, be it remembered that some rather brilliant men in Athens called Paul “this bab-

bler” and mocked at his teaching on the subject of the resurrection (Acts 17:16-32). Such questions from such a source only emphasize the importance of sticking to “first principles.” It is safe to assume that few, even of the educated, know much about the gospel. I here submit some of the questions with some suggestions and answers:

1. “What church lets babies 'join' the church?”

Catholics, Methodists, and Presbyterians are among popular bodies in this country who practice so-called “infant church membership.” The New Testament teaches only believer's baptism. The command of Jesus was to teach them and baptize those who accepted the teaching (Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16). So it is said that “many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized” (Acts 18:8). “But when they believed Phillip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women” (Acts 8:12).

There is no command or example in the New Testament even pointing in the direction of infant baptism. The modern practice of sprinkling water on infants is wrong on two counts. The act is wrong because baptism in the New Testament is immersion, and the infant is not a proper subject. He is incapable of faith and needs no repentance, for he is not responsible, not a sinner.

The origin of the practice is interesting. Baptism was originally for the remission of sins and was so considered after the heresy of total hereditary depravity took root in religious thinking. It was thought that the depraved little fellows needed baptism to keep them from going to torment. The modern practice is just a hang-over from this ancient superstition. It is utterly without scriptural warrant. It is tragic that thousands of devout people seem willing to accept something done to them when they were babes in arms as a substitute for their personal obedience to God. Baptism is a command of God to be obeyed from a believing and trusting heart.

2. “Where is the Scripture (or Scriptures) that says Christ was buried in baptism?” (One says He came 'up out of the water.')

What proof can you give that the application of water in any form can help the soul? Is baptism the main point, or is it the salvation of the soul?”

The question betrays a too common aversion toward immersion as baptism, or that baptism can possibly be a condition of remission of sins. The New Testament clearly teaches both. The fact that the term “buried” is not used in connection with the baptism of Jesus extends no assurance to the effusionist.

It is said that Jesus “was baptized of John in the Jordan. And straightway coming up out of the water...” (Mark. 1:9-10). The marginal reading is *into* the Jordan. The term *baptized* as used by Mark certainly signifies that Jesus was immersed. An appeal to any standard Greek-English dictionary shows this. It was Paul who referred to the baptism of himself and those to whom he wrote as a burial. “Therefore we were buried with him by baptism into death...” (Rom. 6:4). John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist Church, said that this referred to “the ancient custom of baptizing by immersion.” The word itself and all the circumstances of its observance point infallibly to the specific act of immersion.

Sprinkling and pouring for baptism did not arise out of any scriptural demands. By a process of reasoning, the conclusion was reached that baptism could not “help the soul,” that it was a non-essential and that changing the form of its administration could do no harm. Scriptural baptism demands immersion. The authority for sprinkling and pouring is definitely and solely **human**. Jesus did not command, nor did the apostles practice anything of the kind. The Lord commanded immersion. Men authorize **something else or nothing**. Better obey the Lord.

The salvation of the soul is certainly the main point. Jesus died “for our sins.” He is the Great Physician and certainly knows what the soul needs. His prescription is found in the New Testament. What does a **man** know about the soul and what it needs? To rely on human wisdom or reasoning will prove fatal. How do we know that **faith** can “help the soul” apart from what the Lord says about it? The Lord says, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved...” (Mark 16:16). People on Pentecost who cried out what to

do were told to repent and be baptized for remission of sins (Acts 2:38). They would not have received remission of sins had they reasoned that baptism could not “help the soul” and refused to obey the Lord. He is Lord and has authority to specify conditions upon which He can and is willing to pardon sinners.

A man who refuses to obey is a rebel, **whatever his reasons may be**. Naaman did not understand how water could help leprosy, but he had to dip in Jordan to be healed (2 Kings 5). The Israelites might not have understood how marching around the walls of Jericho could cause the walls to fall down (Josh. 6). They fell down **by faith** (Heb. 11:30). Faith in God leads to obedience. Obedience consists of doing what the Lord says. He commands baptism and promises forgiveness. We have no proof whatever “that the application of water in any form can help the soul” of an unbeliever. When his trusting, penitent heart leads a man to be baptized, he is baptized into Christ Jesus, into His death (Rom. 6:3-4). It certainly helps the soul to come into Christ. There is no proof that a man can come into Christ without being baptized.

How God Answers the Sinner's Prayer

J.D. Tant

No subject in the Bible has come in for greater abuse, and is more misapplied than the subject of prayer. Especially during our summer meetings, you will find men in all the walks of life praying most earnestly for things impossible to obtain, and many things they do not expect to get, and for many things that would wreck the universe if God should hear and answer their prayers.

In all this confusion the seeker after truth may ask himself the question, “Is it right to pray for salvation? Two theories along this line have been advanced. If one can be true the either, is in harmony with the word of God? One claims the sinner may approach God through the medium of prayer—God in one place and the sinner in another, and the line between the two takes the place of prayer; that the sinner and the church may pray together; that God will hear and answer their prayers, and save the sinner from his sins. Under this theory comes the mourners' bench system of getting religion which has been so popular for the past 100 years.

The other claims that God is the moving cause in man's redemption; that God's love is demonstrated by Christ coming to die for us; that Christ selected the twelve apostles and sent them out after being baptized with the Holy Ghost; that they preached the word of truth and established the church of Christ. From the sinner's standpoint, it is claimed that he must hear, must have faith, must repent, must confess Christ, and must be baptized for the remission of sins. This, they claim, completes the scheme of human redemption, and by anything short of this no one can expect salvation.

Which way does the Bible teach? I select two examples of prayer in the Bible. God heard and answered both and saved them. There is no man today, wanting salvation who cannot apply this answer to himself and be saved, just like they were.

- Cornelius was a praying man (Acts 10:2).
- He was praying to know what to do to be saved, as the language of the angel shows.
- His prayer was heard—went up as a memorial before God. He saw an angel and talked with him. Upon this experience of grace, Cornelius could have joined almost any sectarian church, for they would declare he was saved. Yet the Lord did not accept that experience, but told him to send for Peter, who would tell him words whereby he and his house should be saved. All things were fulfilled. Peter got there to answer his prayer. Now can we not apply the answer of Peter to ourselves, and do as Cornelius did, and be saved? But what did Peter tell him to do?

Peter preached the gospel to him, and fulfilled the mission of the Spirit. Which taught that God had ordained through the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe (1 Cor. 1:21).

Cornelius heard him, and Paul taught that faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the

word of God (Rom. 10:17).

Cornelius believed the preaching of Peter, as was demonstrated at the trial of Peter who argued that God had made choice of him that the Gentiles should hear the word of the Lord and believe (Acts 15:6-9).

Cornelius repented of his sins after believing in Jesus. for we hear the apostles rejoicing that God to the Gentiles, had granted repentance unto life when Peter related the circumstances to them (Acts 11:18).

Cornelius confessed the Son of God for Peter went to tell him what he must do to be saved, and Cornelius believed with all his heart. Paul taught that what we believe in our hearts we must confess with our mouth, "for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. 10:8-9).

Cornelius was commanded to be baptized (Acts 10:48). Why? Because Peter went to answer his prayer for salvation to tell him what he must do to be saved, and Jesus had taught, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). Peter could not promise him salvation until he obeyed.

Thus we find one man praying for salvation, and a servant of God sent to answer his prayer. This man was saved by the gospel, and, in being saved by it, he had to hear, believe, repent, confess Christ, and be baptized by His authority. Is it safe for us to expect salvation on anything less?

We now take up Paul's salvation. Cornelius represents the best of moral men on one side, and Paul the chief of sinners on the other. Yet both of these men were religious men, which shows that a man may be religious, and at the same time not be a Christian, but may be even persecuting the church of God, as Paul was doing.

1. Paul was a praying man when Ananias went to him (Acts 9:11).
2. Ananias went to tell him what to do to be saved (Acts 9:6).
3. When Ananias got there he preached to him the gospel, which Paul claims is the power of God unto salvation to all who believe (Rom. 1:16).
4. Paul was commanded to be baptized and wash away his sins, calling on the name of the Lord (Acts 22:16).

But was that all that Paul was commanded to do?

1. Paul heard the teaching of Ananias.
2. He believed; for he was saved by the gospel, and afterwards taught that no one could come to God without believing (Heb. 11:6).
3. Paul repented; for he taught that God commands all men to repent (Acts 17:30).
4. Paul confessed Christ: for he taught that with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.
5. Paul was baptized to wash away his sins; for Peter commanded on Pentecost to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38).

Thus we have examined these two cases of conversion, and found them saved in answer to prayer, but that neither was saved according to the sinner's prayer system of salvation. Then, dear reader, which way will you accept? One is from God, the other is from man; one is doing the will of God, the other is open rebellion in His sight; one is salvation at the end of obedience, the other is deception which prevents obedience.

You may ask me if I don't think it is right to pray for sinners. Certainly I do, for Paul teaches that I should pray for all men everywhere (1 Tim. 2:1). But do you think God will come down in converting power and save them directly in answer to prayer? A thousand times, **No**; for Solomon has said: "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination (Prov. 28:9). The law says: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16), and no believer in the word of God can expect or pray for salvation in any other way.

Then if God has offered salvation through obedience to his word, let us **not expect salvation** through praying a "Sinner's Prayer."

Bible Faith

Olin Hicks

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen.” (Heb. 11:1 ASV). Faith is belief, confidence, or trust in some person, fact, or thing. Jesus used the words *faith* and *belief* interchangeably—“Be ye not faithless, but believing” (John 20:27). All faith is based upon testimony of evidence—no evidence, no faith.

Because of His great love wherewith He loved us, God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that “whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). Jesus Himself emphatically says, “Except ye believe that I am he (the Christ, OH) ye shall die in your sins” (John 8:24). But God has not required that men believe that Jesus is the Christ without ample evidence to convince them. John says the things recorded in the gospel “are written that ye might believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God: and that believing ye might have life in his name” (John 20:30-31).

Today, faith in Christ comes by the evidence recorded in the New Testament—“So then faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17.) Since God has provided ample evidence to produce faith, men are required to believe that Jesus is the Christ and submit to His will, and will be condemned if they do not. “He that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16). For this reason, the gospel is to be “made known in every nation for the obedience of faith” (Rom. 16:25-26). Jesus said, “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature; he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:15-16).

Not only is faith dependent upon evidence for its existence, but also for its essence, character, and content. Faith is conditioned by its evidence and partakes of the essence of that testimony. If the evidence is fantastic, grotesque, or false, so will be the faith it produces. If the evidence is true, so will be the faith it produces. Untrue testimony=baseless faith; human testimony=human faith; divine testimony=divine faith. Like evidence, like faith.

Men speak of kinds of faith, but such a distinction is not found in the Bible, and science knows of no separate and distinct kinds of faith. The Bible speaks of degrees of faith—“great faith,” “weak faith,” “dead faith,” etc., but **not** kinds of faith like “historic faith,” “saving faith,” etc.

It is the **thing believed** that determines whether we shall be saved. Faith in a lie will not save a man. Faith in some man-made doctrine will not save, though that faith may be as firm as any man's belief in the truth. “If Christ be not raised, then your faith is vain,” (1 Cor. 15:17) Paul says. Hence it is essential that the truth be preached. For this cause, Paul warns against false teachers, pronouncing a curse upon anyone, man or angel, who preaches “any gospel other than that which we (Apostles, OH) preached” (Gal. 1:8-9). It is not faith in just any sort of gospel that will save, but faith in the true and unadulterated Gospel of Christ. It makes all the difference in the world what men believe.

Salvation is not dependent upon **a** faith, but upon **the** faith. For that reason, Jude exhorts Christians to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3).

Will Christ Reign 1,000 Years on Earth?

B.L. Douthitt

The Present Reign of Christ

The reign of Christ demands the establishment of the kingdom of Christ. There can be no reign of Christ separate and apart from the kingdom of Christ. To establish the kingdom of Christ is to establish the reign of Christ.

The day of Pentecost (Acts 2) marks the establishment of the kingdom of Christ. The beginning of the kingdom of Christ on earth, in the city of Jerusalem, on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of our Lord was the fulfillment of many prophetic state-

ments (Dan. 2:44; Zech. 1:16; 6:12, 13, 15).

As there can be no **reign** of Christ apart from the kingdom of Christ, and as the kingdom was established on Pentecost, therefore the day of Pentecost marks the beginning of the **reign** of Christ on the earth, and every Christian reigns with Christ, the King, in His kingdom now.

After the coming of the kingdom of God on Pentecost, people were said to be **in** the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ (Rev. 1:9). The kingdom was here on the earth in the time of the apostle Paul, and men were translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. Paul wrote, "Who hath delivered out of the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son" (Col. 1:13). To deny that the kingdom was set up on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ, and the present reign of Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords, contradicts every fact and truth that has any bearing on the subject throughout the entire Bible.

Jesus is now in heaven on David's throne reigning over His spiritual kingdom. God's people in the kingdom of Christ are an "elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation" (1 Pet. 2:9). "A royal priesthood"—kings and priests reigning with Christ, their King. Paul says, "For if by one man's offense death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:17). Christians receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness in this life. Therefore they **reign with Christ** in this present life.

This present reign of Christ will continue until the last enemy is destroyed, then he will deliver up the kingdom to God.

Then cometh the end when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (1 Cor. 15:24-26).

This is the **end** of things.

The Thousand Years

The theory of a millennium and a reign with Christ on earth is a great system of doctrine called "premillennialism." The theory is based upon a false application of Revelation 20:1-10. A thousand years is mentioned six times in Revelation 20. The whole structure of millennialism depends upon a false application of this scripture.

We read in verse 6, "...but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." With some, an earthly reign of Christ for 1,000 years becomes the leading thought of the Bible. It is the **keystone** of the whole structure. The very heart of the doctrine of a literal thousand year reign is assumed, not stated.

The system of doctrine called premillennialism has many essential elements and Revelation 20:1-10 is made the heart of the Bible's prophetic teaching by millennialists. Following is a list of some of the essential elements of millennialism:

1. The second coming of Christ.
2. An earthly reign of Christ.
3. David's literal throne in Jerusalem.
4. Jerusalem the capital city and religious center of the world.
5. National conversion and restoration of fleshly Israel to Palestine.
6. Restitution of all things.
7. Tabernacle of David.
8. Rebuilding the temple.
9. One thousand years between the resurrection of the righteous and the wicked.

All of these elements are **wanting** in Revelation 20.

Revelation 20 does not mention a definite period of time of one thousand years called the "millennium," during which time there will be an earthly reign of Christ with His saints. Just remember that a literal time measure of 1,000 years between the resurrec-

tion of the righteous and the wicked, the very heart of the doctrine of an earthly reign of Christ, is not mentioned from the first chapter of Genesis to the close of the book of Revelation. It is simply in the realm of man's opinion. The keystone of the whole pre-millennial structure is wanting in Revelation 20.

Let us consider prayerfully two passages of Scripture in regard to the subject under consideration.

First, John 5:28-29. "Marvel not at this: for the hour cometh, in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."

John says, the **hour** cometh in which all that are in the graves (both righteous and wicked) shall hear his voice and come forth. Now, by what authority does one say there will be an age of 1,000 years—a millennium—between the resurrection of the righteous and the wicked? According to John, the righteous dead and the wicked dead are raised at the same time.

If one says that the "hour" of the passage does not necessarily mean that the righteous and the wicked shall be raised at the same time, that is merely a "**dispensational hour**," then you destroy the theory of a "first" and "second" resurrection, and the structure falls. Let us keep in mind that the writer of Revelation 20 also wrote John 5:28-29. Does Revelation 20 clash with, or contradict, John 5:28-29? No, for John does not say in Revelation 20 there is to be a period of 1,000 years between the resurrection of the righteous and the wicked. The inspired apostle absolutely leaves no room for a millennium and a reign with Christ on earth between two resurrections.

Second passage, Matt. 16:27: "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then shall he render unto every man according to his deeds."

In this passage we are told plainly that Christ will render unto every man according to his deeds. Rendering unto **every** man must include both the righteous and wicked. When will Christ render unto every man according to his deeds? Answer: When He comes in the glory of His Father with His angels. Note the word *then*. That means when He comes. This should be final with all lovers of truth. Christ could not render unto every man when He comes, if He only raised the righteous dead and then reigned for a literal time period of 1,000 years on the earth before the resurrection of the wicked to render unto them according to their deeds.

We have found in this study that Christians are now reigning with Christ, the Head of the church, and in view of the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, we should "give diligence that we may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless in his sight" (2 Pet. 3:14).

Some Errors Of The Church Of The Nazarene

Forrest D. Moyer

S.T. Ludwig, General Church Secretary, set forth some of the tenets of the Nazarene church in his article, "What The Church Believes," on page 7 in the Sept. 12, 1949, issue of the *Herald of Holiness*. He began his article in this way:

The Church of the Nazarene is a product of the twentieth century. Nineteen hundred and eight is the birth year of the denomination. It was born to meet today's spiritual needs. Compounded in the crucible of our day, it sprang from the prayers and aspirations of ministers and laity who wanted a warm-hearted church home where the Bible was believed and taught and where its precepts would be proclaimed as the guide for daily living.

Since it is vitally important to believe and teach the Bible, let us examine this teaching in the spirit of love and in the light of the gospel Jesus said, "Upon this rock I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18). The Apostle Paul stated that "there is one body" (Eph. 4:4), and that the body is the church (Eph. 1:22-23). It is this, one body, the one Christ built, that he is going to save (Eph. 5:23). If the Church of the Nazarene is the one church

that the Lord built, then we should all desire to be a member of it. By their own admission “the Church of the Nazarene is a product of the twentieth century.”

Well, when did the church of Christ begin? Jesus told His apostles to “tarry in Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high” (Luke 24:19). This they did and on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ, the Holy Spirit came upon them. The first Gospel sermon that we have recorded was preached by Peter on that day in which he told them to “repent and be baptized” (Acts 2:38). Then they that received his word were baptized (vs. 41) and the Lord added them to the church (Acts 22:47). Hence, the birthday of the Lord's church was on the day of Pentecost, A.D. 33. “Nineteen hundred and eight is the birth year” of the Church of the Nazarene. According to their own teaching the Nazarene Church is not the church of the Lord. It is 1,875 years too young to be the church of Christ!

All will recognize the fact that unless any organization has the right foundation it cannot stand. The church of our Lord was founded upon the solid rock (Matt. 16:18). Peter told the people, “And this is the stone which was set at naught of you builders, which is he, come the head of the corner” (Acts 4:11). Paul climaxed this statement by saying, “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3:11). The Nazarene Church is not built upon the right foundation, therefore it shall fall. The “holiness” movement was started by a group of men “interested in promoting the Wesleyan doctrine” (*Manual, Church of the Nazarene*, issued 1919, page 15). The Nazarene Church is founded upon the doctrines of men and not upon Christ. It cannot stand!

Mr. Ludwig continues, “Recognizing that the right and privilege of persons to church membership rests upon the fact of their being converted, we require only such avowals of belief as are essential to Christian experience.” Nowhere in the New Testament do we read of a person's being saved, giving his “Christian experience” and then having the “right and privilege to church membership.” On the contrary, the same thing that saved people in the New Testament also made them members of the church. We read that the Lord added to the church “day by day those that were saved” (Acts 2:47). By obedience to the gospel we are saved and added to the church. The Nazarene Church teaches that a person must be saved, then he can join the church.

In his article Mr. Ludwig quotes the following from the *Manual of the Church of the Nazarene*: “We believe that man is born with a fallen nature, and is, therefore, inclined to evil, and that continually.”

Like other Calvinist groups, the Nazarenes teach that through Adam sin was transmitted to the whole human race. In their manual they admit that Adam was in a pure state when first created, The word of God teaches that **all** people become sinners in the same way that Adam did—by transgressing the law of God. “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4). Adam sinned by transgressing God's law that was given to him; we become sinners by transgressing God's law to us. We are not sinners because of Adam's sin but because of our own sins. “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). The prophet Ezekiel stated, “Thou wast perfect in thy days from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee” (Ezek. 28:15). Hear him again: “The soul that sinneth it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father...” (Ezek. 18:20). No, man is **not** born in sin. He becomes a sinner by transgression of the law.

My fight is not against the people of the Nazarene Church. I stand opposed to the doctrines which they teach that are contrary to the doctrines of Christ. Realizing that unless we abide in the teaching of Christ we will perish, I beg you in heaven's name to consider the teaching of God's word without bias or prejudice. Lay aside the commandments and doctrines of men; take your stand for the truth and right. If you are engulfed by Nazarenism, a “plant that our heavenly Father hath not planted,” we plead with you to “come ye out from among them and be ye separate.” Obey the simple terms of the gospel of our Savior, become a member of the church of our Lord which was established on Pentecost, A.D. 33, upon Christ, the solid rock, and live as directed by “the perfect law of liberty,” remembering that “the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32).

On the Road Again

The editor was on the road again during July. We were with the Northpoint church in Denton, Texas for a Gospel meeting July 5-9. It was a fine meeting with visitors on Sunday morning and three evenings, as well as great support by the Northpoint brethren. Philip Smith is Northpoint's evangelist.

On July 12, we began work as the regular preacher for the church in Willow, Oklahoma where our faithful brother, Jim Foster, has preached for 24 years. Brother Foster has retired from full time located work. However, he will preach at Willow on the last Sunday morning of each month when we travel to Chillicothe, Texas to preach there. We continue to travel to Yukon, Okla, to preach there two Lord's Day evenings and were with the those brethren July 12 and 19.

“What Saith The Scriptures?”

Harrell Davidson

The question this month is, **“What did Christ mean when he said the kingdom is being taken by force” (Matt. 11:12)?**

Thanks for your interesting question. Our Lord had referenced John the Baptist when He made this statement and the fact that all Jerusalem and Judaea went out to be baptized by John confessing their sins (cf. Matt. 3:5-6).

Mark's record says, “And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins”. When one considers all of the region mentioned this was a phenomenal event—occasion. We do not take literally that “all” means that every person went and was baptized by John in the Jordan river. As sure as there were many prophecies regarding the coming of Christ into this world by the virgin birth, there were also many prophecies regarding the one that would introduce Christ to the world.

Jesus had mentioned John's greatness in the preceding verses and pointed out that though John was great those who would enter the kingdom were greater than John. Thus, to enter the kingdom was/is the greatest blessing known to mankind. Had it not been for the suffering Servant—Christ, there would have never been a kingdom and John was the first person in the New Testament era that had that awesome responsibility of introducing Him (cf. Matt. 11: 7-12).

Jesus had finished giving His disciples charges in sending them out and turned His attention to this matter. He did not mean that an army or such was taking the kingdom but that there was so much anticipation regarding it that some was trying to force themselves into it.

J.W. McGarvey wrote in the *Fourfold Gospel*,

Jesus here pictures the kingdom of heaven as a besieged city. The city is shut up, but the enemies which surround it storm its walls and try to force an entrance--an apt illustration which many fail to comprehend. The gates of Christ's kingdom were not opened until the day of Pentecost (Ac 2:22-36), but men hearing it was about to be opened sought to enter prematurely, not by the gates which God would open when Simon Peter used the keys (Mt 16:19), but by such breaches as they themselves sought to make in the walls. Examples of this violence will be seen in the following instances: Joh 6:15; Mt 20:21; Lu 19:11,36-38; 22:24-30; Ac 1:1-6:15. The people were full of pre-conceived ideas with regard to the kingdom, and each one sought to hasten and enjoy its pleasures as one who impatiently seizes upon a bud and seeks with his fingers to force it to bloom. The context shows that John the Baptist was even then seeking to force the kingdom.

This is the correct concept we think. Thanks for your question.

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

Learning and Believing

Gene Hill

Why do people believe what they believe? If it is as Paul says in Romans 10:17, “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God,” then it must follow that we believe any given thing because of what we have heard and learned from whatever source we have encountered.

We may be ill informed or even lied to as in the case of the sons of Jacob having lied to their father about the supposed death of Joseph by a wild animal (Gen. 37:18-36). Jacob believed no less strongly about the alleged death of his son Joseph than if he had seen his son’s body for himself.

We may be zealous for a system of belief that is outdated and superseded by another system as was Saul of Tarsus. He could honestly state he had acted in good conscience in the dogged and murderous persecution and assault on the church (Acts 7:58; 22:15; 23:1; 24:16; 26:9-11). It may even be the case that we have distorted the belief system on our own and are acting accordingly (John 5:36-39).

What then is the solution to this problem? The first step would be a willingness to seek truth (Matt. 6:33; Acts 17:11). We must be willing and honest in wanting to do right, then when we find truth, we will make it ours (Matt. 11:28-30; 13:8, 23, 44-46).

The next reasonable step would be a serious effort to verify that which we have learned or of that which we have become aware (Acts 15:1-21; 17:11; Gal. 1:6-12). Our standard is God’s Word taken in context (John 12:48). Some subjects may be more difficult than others to discern the correct position in which to believe, but believing that God’s Word is knowable and understandable ought to be motivation enough to seek answers (1 Cor. 1:10; Eph. 1:1-7).

Third, it is the case that we can put what we learn into action (Phlp. 4:8; 1 Pet. 1:13-16). God has given us a law which can be known (John 8:31-32), obeyed (Heb. 5:8-9, and followed (1 Cor. 11:1; Phlp. 3:17; Heb. 13:7). Simple belief, however, is insufficient (John 1:12; Mark 16:16). Humble, obedient action is what God requires (1 Pet. 1:22; Acts 22:16).

Biblical belief is based upon factual knowledge and then sound reasoning. The right sort of action flows from a heart that humbles itself before the Lord (Matt. 12:33-37; Jas. 4:7, 17). When we have the right mind, our heart is under spiritual control (Rom. 8:1-2, 12-14; Col. 3:5ff).

Once I have the facts in hand, studied them in a satisfactory manner and drawn the correct conclusions, I will possess the correct beliefs to ensure my faithful walk in the light (1 Cor. 15:1-4; Col. 1:5; 2 Pet. 1:3-11).

Baptism is Essential for Salvation

Doug Post

As we read through the New Testament, we see how many Christians were converted to Christ by means of faith and baptism (Mark 16:16). The question we want to answer, however, is baptism essential for salvation? Of course, this question has existed for many centuries. In fact, whether baptism is essential for salvation has been the greatest issue facing “Christendom” since Gnosticism in the second and third centuries. Why is baptism so controversial? Because it is a “heaven or hell” issue.

Most of the religious world, claiming to be associated with Christ, reject the idea of baptism being essential for salvation. Most religious groups believe a person is saved the moment they believe (mental assent) before, and without, baptism. However, they

also teach that those of us teaching baptism's necessity, are adding to the finished work of Christ on the cross. So, we are said to be guilty of perverting the gospel (cf. Gal. 1:6-9). Moreover, if baptism is **not** necessary for salvation, then there will be many more souls entering into heaven than not, and those of us who teach its necessity are doomed. However, if baptism **is** necessary for salvation, then there will be many more souls condemned for refusing and/or rejecting baptism.

The following is the overwhelming "majority" view of the religious world concerning baptism:

"No, water baptism is not necessary for salvation. But you might ask, "If the answer is no, then why are there verses that say things like ...baptism that now saves you..." (1 Pet. 3:21) and "...Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins..." (Acts 2:38)? These are good questions, and they deserve a good answer so we will look at these verses later. But for now, the reason baptism is not necessary for salvation is that we are justified by faith (Rom. 5:1; Eph. 2:8) and not by faith and a ceremony (Rom. 4:1-11).

So, here we see the majority view of how a person is saved – by "faith only" (mental assent). However, the majority view is divided into several other groups.

- Some teach the Holy Spirit, supernaturally, provides the necessary faith, as a gift (because they cannot produce said faith on their own due to their inherent human weakness), and once they are given this faith, they are saved that very moment, **before and without baptism**, and can never fall from grace.
- Then there are those who teach the Spirit must illuminate the mind, to understand God's word, the Bible, and then they receive their faith via the word of God (Rom.10:17), and when they do, they are saved that very moment, **before and without baptism**.
- Still, others teach that when one hears the gospel message, and through their own will, determination, and volition, accepts and trusts it, then they are saved that very moment, **before and without baptism**.

However, the "minority view" teaches salvation by faith, but **not** by faith only (Jas. 2:19-26). Rather, when one hears the gospel message,, and through his own will, determination, and volition, accepts and trusts it, and then repents of his sins, as well as confessing Jesus as Lord and Savior, and then is immersed (baptized) in water for the forgiveness sins, **then** one is saved, having obeyed the Lord by making the correct application of His word.

At the heart of the divide over baptism is one particular passage: "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). This one passage alone proves baptism **is** essential for salvation.

Most of the controversy over this passage has to do with the little Greek word, *eis*. This little word means, "*to or for, in order that, on account of, to obtain, unto, towards.*" While having various shades of meaning, the word *eis* always looks forward and is always used prospectively. However, to get around the force of this word, as well as the force of the verse, some scholars, while correctly providing the lexical meaning of the word, decided to add another little nuance to its meaning. They put forth the unfounded assertion that the word *eis* may also look backwards or retrospectively. In others words the word can mean "*because of.*"

Of course, no evidence was provided for such an assertion and the Scriptures hardly support such a claim. Every time *eis* is used, it is used **prospectively** of something. For instance, Paul writes: "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:10). Here we see "believeth **unto**" (*to or for, in order that, on account of, to obtain, unto, towards*) righteousness. One does not come to believe because he is already righteous, rather one believes **unto** (*to or for, in order that, on account of, to obtain, unto, towards*) righteousness. Same with "confession." One does not make confession because one is

already saved, rather one makes confession **unto** (*to or for, in order that, on account of, to obtain, unto, towards*) salvation. In fact, even repentance is said to be **unto** (*to or for, in order that, on account of, to obtain, unto, towards*) life (Acts 11:18).

Moreover, Matthew writes, “For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Matt. 26:28). Here is the exact same phrase as is found in Acts 2:38—“for the remission of sins.” Even though several verses have been quoted, all I need is one to show that *eis* **never** looks backwards or retrospectively, and this one is verse is chief. Jesus did not shed His blood because of the forgiveness of sins, rather He shed his blood *eis* (for, unto) the forgiveness of sins—so that sins could be forgiven, not because sins were already forgiven. And here we see the absolute destruction of such an assertion.

While, the discussions over the years regarding the word *eis* have been instructive, and the truth has been firmly established concerning the purpose of baptism being “**for** (*eis* or unto) the remission of sins,” we do not need the very phrase to establish our case. So, pretend, for a moment, that the phrase “for the remission of sins” is not found in the verse, making it read, “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ”

On the Day of Pentecost, Peter told the gathered crowd that Jesus was the Son of God because of the miracles he worked in their presence (Acts 2:22-23; John 3:1-2). Yet not a soul in the crowd is recorded to have objected. Peter told them all that Jesus was proven to be the Son of God by the prophecies He fulfilled (Acts 2:25-28). Yet not a soul in the crowd is recorded to have objected. Peter also preached to them that Jesus was proven to be the Son of God by His bodily resurrection from the dead (Acts 2:29-32). Yet not a soul in the crowd is reported to have objected. Finally, Peter tells them, “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made the same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36).

Peter just got done telling them they had killed their long-awaited Messiah. They had killed the Son of God knowing the Father was with Him in working miracles. They had killed the Son of God knowing He fulfilled the prophecies of the Hebrew Scriptures. They had killed the Son of God knowing that He was resurrected from the dead. They had murdered the Son of God, the only remedy for their sins, and now they knew it.

So, fearing hell and eternal separation from God, they cried out, “Men and brethren what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). Why did they ask what they should do? Because they knew they were lost in their sins and were presently standing before God without having any forgiveness for murdering Jesus. Verily, how would you feel if you were in their shoes, having done what they had done? How could you live with yourselves for having murdered the Son of God.

Peter, who loved his Jewish brethren, and knowing the remedy, responded enthusiastically, excitedly, and joyfully, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ.” What were they to do? **Repent and be baptized!** Who was to repent and be baptized? **Every one of you!** By what authority? **In the name of Jesus Christ!** But **why** were they to repent and be baptized? Because they murdered Jesus the Christ and were dead in their sins. Without repentance and without baptism they would never have been forgiven for murdering Jesus. However, they took advantage of the remedy Peter gave them, and three thousand souls were added to the church that day (Acts 2:41, 47).

But the reality is, the phrase “for the remission of sins” is indeed there, and it simply buttresses the fact of the necessity of baptism. Now if *eis* is “because of”, then were they supposed to repent because of having forgiveness of their sins already? Of course not. But as with baptism, “to ask is but to answer.”

What Must I do to be Saved?

Believe – John 8:24; Acts 16:31; Heb. 11:6.

Repent – Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; 17:30-31.

Confess faith in Christ – Matt. 10:32-33; Acts 8:37.

Be baptized – Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38.

Anti-Scriptural Baptist Doctrines

Jere Frost

Misrepresentations are deplorable, and in order that none occur herein, standard sources will be two in number, viz., (1) *The Standard Manual for Baptist Churches* by Edward T. Hiscox, and (2) **the Bible**. Only the doctrines that are explicitly stated in the former to be items of Baptist faith and practice will be considered in the light of the latter. What others say and hearsay will not be considered.

Under the heading of “Church Ordinances” in the above mentioned Manual, the following quotation appears:

Baptism is not essential to salvation, for our churches utterly repudiate the dogma of baptismal regeneration; but it is essential to obedience; since Christ has commanded it. It is also essential to a public confession of Christ before the world, and to membership in the church which is his body. And no true lover of his Lord will refuse these acts of obedience and tokens of affection (p. 20, Note 8).

Make Obedience Non-Essential

“Baptism is not essential to salvation...but it is essential to obedience.” (ibid.) This is indisputable teaching that obedience is not essential to salvation. The meaning of essential is “important in the highest degree; indispensable” (Webster). According to Baptist doctrine, obedience **is** dispensable, and **not** important. But Hebrews 5:9 states that Christ is “the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him.” Christ personally taught that to hear His teachings but to refuse to obey them was to build upon sand (Luke 6:46-49). Vengeance, punishment and eternal destruction will be rendered “to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thess. 1:8-9). Obedience is clearly seen as essential in the light of the Lord's teaching. and disobedience provokes God's wrath. But not so in Baptist doctrine. Here is the contradictory predicament simply stated: Commands are essential, and baptism is a command but it is not essential. How can a doctrine more glaringly contradict the Scriptures?

Make Commands of None Effect

In Matthew 15:9, Jesus rebuked the scribes and Pharisees saying, “ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.” In verse 9, He explained that they were “teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.” The doctrine of the Pharisees made God's commandments of none effect by excusing men from the heavenly decrees. Baptist doctrine refuses to let it be otherwise and leave no doubt, for baptism is affirmed to be a commandment and is then deliberately made of none effect by excusing men from obedience thereto. In the stead of God's commandments, which they make non-essential (of none effect) salvation is promised according to terms and conditions not known to the will of God. It is boldly stated in the Manual, “baptism is not essential (“of none effect”) to salvation...Christ has commanded it.” There is absolutely no difference between Baptists and Pharisees. The Pharisees made a commandment concerning honor to father and mother of none effect—non-essential! Baptists make a commandment concerning baptism of none effect—non-essential!

Confession of Christ Made Unnecessary

“It (baptism) is also essential to a public confession of Christ before the world” (Ibid.). But it isn't necessary! If it isn't necessary, but is essential to the confession of Christ, then it isn't necessary to confess Christ. This is the only conclusion. However, Jesus promised only to confess in heaven those who confessed Him on earth (Matt. 10:32-33). If, on the other hand, the day comes when Baptists affirm the scriptural truth that confession is essential, they must admit the necessity of baptism, since “it is also essential to a public confession of Christ before the world.” Baptist doctrine is a refuge for those who rebelliously refuse to confess Christ, for you have to be baptized to publicly confess, and “our churches utterly repudiate the dogma.”

Body of Christ Made Non-Essential

“It (baptism) is also essential...to membership in the church which is His body.” This is the equivalent of saying that the body of Christ is non-essential, and the consequence

of such doctrine is that **Christ Himself** is not essential. This is a hard statement, but it is an accurate and fair representation of the unfortunate predicament in which men find themselves when they begin to legislate against God's laws by dubbing one command "essential" and another "non-essential." They may easily repeat this case of unwittingly dubbing Christ Himself as "non-essential." That this is such a case, and that the representation of the doctrine and its consequences is warranted, observe: "...Christ also is the head of the church, being himself the saviour of the body." (Eph. 5:23b) "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." (Eph. 5:25) Notice that the body—the church—is that of which Christ is the Saviour, and that He loved it enough to die for it. In giving Himself for the church, Christ bought her with His blood. (Acts 20:28) Now note the point: The church (body) was bought by the blood of Christ and He has promised to save the body (church).

This same blood, which bought the church, is the blood through which we have our redemption, the forgiveness of sins (Eph. 1:7). Now this is not at all difficult to understand, for this blood-bought body is comprised of those individuals who have been baptized into Christ, and who were thus baptized into His death, or "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into His death?" (Rom. 6:3). To contact the blood of Christ is to benefit therefrom, and is to contact the blood of His death. Being cleansed or bought by His blood, the Lord adds to the body, the church, which is blood-bought. (Acts 2:41, 47) Blood-bought individuals constitute a blood-bought body; this is that of which Christ is the Saviour. Essential? It cost Christ His life and is the body (*ekklesia*—church, group) containing the saved and that which He has promised to save. It is as essential as salvation. But Baptist doctrine says "unnecessary" while a crimson flood flows unheeded and unhonored from His riven side—an unnecessary death (don't have to contact it) for an unnecessary body (don't have to be in it). **Ridiculous** in its mockery of Christ and unscriptural in its origin.

Promise Salvation Out Of Christ

The consequence! Verily, it demands that Christ Himself is unnecessary, for we are baptized into Christ (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27). Now if baptism is not essential, then the blessings procured by baptism are likewise nonessential. Since man gets into Christ by baptism, it is not essential that he be in Christ. Such a doctrine is damnable. Note further the consequences: **In** Christ is redemption (Eph. 1:7), but redemption is non-essential for it is in Christ and baptism into (which is "non-essential") is the only way one gets into Christ. Everything **in** Christ is thus non-essential forasmuch as a non-essential command is the only way to get into Christ. I had always understood the scriptures to teach that the really important things of life and eternity were **in Christ**, but according to Baptist doctrine the non-essentials are in Christ and salvation, an essential, is somewhere out of Christ. But then salvation just might be non-essential, for salvation and redemption are in Christ (Eph. 1:4, 7, 10) which is the non-essential place, and unless salvation is nonessential you cannot have the essential thing outside of the non-essential place. Confusing? It's always confusing and hopeless to try reconciling a human doctrine with God's word. Baptist doctrine again has floundered in the sea of unscripturalness and snagged upon the rocks and reefs of inconsistency. Such a doctrine has no defense and is helpless before the sword of the Spirit.

Provide Salvation Without Love

"And no true lover of his Lord will refuse these acts of obedience and tokens of affection" (ibid.) This statement is true, but when preceded by its accompanying Baptist doctrine, it rises as another ship-wrecking reef to the unsuspecting and uninformed Standard for Baptist Churches. Again observe the cardinal Baptist doctrine that affirms salvation before and even without scriptural baptism. But here comes the rub, "no true lover of his Lord will refuse..." However, one can refuse and go to heaven. Let's get it straight and make it clear. You can refuse baptism and go to heaven, but you can't refuse it and be a true lover of the Lord. Thus, you can go to heaven without being a true lover of the Lord. This makes room for both the rebellious and indolent believer, and to cry "Lord, Lord" equals Baptist salvation. But Jesus said that such would not "enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 7:21).

Contradictions On Faith And Grace

We believe the Scriptures teach that the great gospel blessing which Christ secures to such as believe in Him is justification; that justification includes the pardon of sin, and the gift of eternal life on principles of righteousness; that it is bestowed, not in consideration of any works of righteousness which we have done, but solely through faith in Christ...and secures every other blessing needful for time and eternity." (ibid. p. 62) "We believe the Scriptures teach that salvation of sinners is wholly of grace (ibid. p. 61).

On page 62, under the topic of *Justification*, and in the above quotation, note the expression "solely through faith in Christ." Compare it to the quotation taken from the preceding page under the heading of *The Way of Salvation*: "We believe the Scriptures teach that the salvation of sinners is wholly of grace." Word definitions, though apparent in this instance, focus light on another example of the inability of the *Baptist Standard Manual* to agree with itself. Solely—"Singly; alone; without another..." Wholly—"Entirely; completely; perfectly. (2) Totally; fully; exclusively; altogether." On the one hand, it is faith that saves or justifies "alone, and without another." On the other hand, it is grace "entirely, exclusively, and altogether." Both positions **cannot be right**. If the two work together—and they do (Eph. 2:8)—salvation is **not** through or by either "solely" or "wholly." Neither statement is true, and each one is an unwitting testimony that the other is false.

How Faith And Grace Save

It is readily admitted, for it is true, that the Scriptures say, "for by grace are ye saved through faith" (Eph. 2:8). But a misunderstanding of grace and faith, and how they save, is responsible for the **unscriptural** and **contradictory** position assumed in *The Standard Manual for Baptist Churches* by Hiscox.

Grace saves through a plan that is teachable. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us..." (Titus 2:11, 12a). God's grace does not mysteriously spirit us from darkness to light and from doom to salvation, but instructs us to live soberly and godly in this present world. It is God's unmerited favor (grace) that makes possible our redemption. By faith (Eph. 2:8; Rom. 5:1) the instruction of the Lord must be accepted. This does not mean or imply that by belief only all of Christ's blessings have been procured. The faith that saves is the faith that obeys. In James the second chapter, the relationship between faith and works of obedience is clearly shown. Abraham, a man of unquestioned faith, is used as an example to show the absolute necessity of obedient works accompanying faith. Note verses 21 and 22: "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?" (Note: **obedience** to the thing commanded). "Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was made perfect?" Without works faith is imperfect and incomplete, and is made perfect or complete by works. Now if faith is essential and vital to salvation—and it is—so is that which makes that faith perfect and complete. But listen to the inspired writer in verse 24: "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." *The Baptist Manual* says "justification...solely through faith." One says "faith solely (only)," but the other says, "not faith only (solely)." The two cannot be reconciled. There is no concord between Baptist doctrine and the Gospel of Christ. To accept one is to refuse the other.

Conclusion

Knowing the facts of the matter, the only course that honesty and sincerity can pursue, is to set aside and completely disregard the Manual, for the *Standard Manual* is **substandard** and anti-scriptural at best. The three quotations cited herein are not exceptions, but they are typical of the mishandling and misuse of God's word. The plea of this writer is that you will humbly and obediently turn from the creeds of men to the simplicity and purity of the New Testament. Embrace the gospel of Christ by doing all that it requires, and content yourself with being a disciple of Christ—a Christian. (Acts 11:26).

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Biblical Principles Regarding Christ's Kingdom

Kent Bailey

Biblical principles regarding the kingdom of Christ are crucial for our understanding in becoming Christians as well as developing in the growth process of becoming **strong** Christians. One of the great hindrances to individuals in obeying the gospel of Christ is a failure on their part to properly understand the establishment and nature of the kingdom.

As we consider what the scriptures teach regarding the kingdom of Christ we note several particulars.

- The kingdom of Christ was promised by the Old Testament prophets. In the study of the scriptures we find that God had an eternal plan and purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord (Eph. 3:11). As a crucial component within this plan the kingdom of Christ plays a major role. We note that the kingdom as prophesied in the Old Testament had Deity as its designer and would not be limited to that of time (Dan. 2:44).

We also note that in view of Old Testament prophecy, Christ would be the King over this kingdom and that it would be comprised of those from various nations. Furthermore, this dominion—based upon divine ownership—could never be destroyed (Dan. 7:13-14).

- During His earthly ministry, Christ promised to establish His kingdom that would be comprised of individuals having been saved from past alien sins by means of His own blood. This kingdom was not established during His earthly ministry. It was **promised** by Christ during that period and was established following His death, burial resurrection and ascension back to the Father (Matt. 4:17; 16:18-19; Mark 9:1; Acts 1:8; 2).
- The kingdom of Christ is spiritual in its nature and universal in its scope. That is set forth in the scriptures by the very definition of the term. The word **kingdom** (*basileia*) when spoken of regarding the kingdom of Christ is used relative to the rule, reign, and sovereignty of Christ. Such is not a political entity as falsely affirmed by Premillennialism. It is a spiritual relationship in Christ comprised of all individuals who obey the gospel of Christ (Matt. 16:18-19; Acts 2:38-47; Col. 1:12-14, 18; Acts 20:28; Rev. 5:9-10; 1 Tim. 3:15; 1 Pet. 2:5; Rev. 5:9-10).

This saved relationship in Christ wherein Christ rules in the lives of his people is also spoken of as being the **church** (*ekklesia*), the called out assembly of Christ. The terms kingdom and church are different terms used with reference to the same body of individuals. It is not a denomination; neither is it a group of denominations. Universally the church or kingdom is nondenominational, undenominational and anti-denominational. It is thus one body of saved individuals (1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4). Existing with a spiritual essence (Rom. 14:17), with a spiritual reign (Acts 2:1-4, Luke 17:17), with spiritual subjects (Acts 2:41), in a spiritual culture (Acts 2:42), consisting in spiritual growth (2 Pet. 3:17), thus being a spiritual habitation (Ephesians 2:21).

- The kingdom of Christ has divine love as its basis. In the epistles of John we find that the word of God provides for us a revelation of love (1 John 4:10-12). We also note that the scriptures demonstrates the true character of love (1 John 2; 2 John).

Love (*agape*) is not a passive amiability. It demands ultimate devotion, a giving of one's self, sacrifice and even militancy. Loving servants of Christ are indeed fighting soldiers who realize that ultimate love for God requires a holy hatred for both Satan and sin (Psa. 139:22; Heb. 1:9; 1 Tim. 6:12; Jude 3).

- The kingdom of Christ encompasses a specific brotherhood. By the term brotherhood (*adelphotes*) we refer to that of **brotherly relation, community and/or family**. The kingdom of Christ and the house or family of God are one and the same identity (John 3:1-5; 1 Tim. 3:15). Brotherhood in Christ necessi-

tates obedience to the gospel of Christ thus bringing about one's being added by the Lord to the church (1 John 1:3; Acts 2:47). Those who have not been baptized into Christ have not been born into the kingdom and/or added to the church.

Brotherhood does not necessarily imply fellowship. Fellowship (*koinonia*) is properly defined as *joint participation*. When brethren individually or collectively as local churches impenitently practice sin they are no longer in the fellowship of God (1 John 1:6; 2 John 9-11). Such being the case faithful brethren are not authorized by the New Testament of Christ to extend fellowship to them unless and until repentance takes place within their lives (2 Thess. 3:14-15).

- The kingdom of Christ necessitates scriptural worship. Our fellowship with God the Father and Christ the only begotten Son requires our worship and praise. The first century church of Christ was so directed by the inspiration of God to give such (Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2; Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:19; Heb. 2:12; 10:25).

In consideration of scriptural worship we correctly conclude that while such indeed is inclusive not only of outward acts, but also a submission of our spirits to the will of God (Rom. 1:9). True worship is directed towards God, guided by divine truth, and also involves the human spirit-the inner man. (John 4:23-24).

May we always realize the importance of being in the kingdom of Christ and faithfully serving him all the days of our lives!

Justification by Faith—How?

Franklin T. Puckett

In the world today there are a multiplicity of doctrines being taught. It is essential that we be able to draw a line of distinction between the doctrine of God and the false doctrines of men. We must know the doctrine of God in order to be made free from sin and to inherit eternal bliss in the life to come. But we cannot recognize that doctrine of God, and distinguish between it and the doctrines of men, without a most diligent and careful study. That is why it is always appropriate and in order that truth should be contrasted with error, the teaching of God with the teachings of men.

The doctrine of salvation by faith only is one that came to prominence and wide acceptance through the influence of Martin Luther in the reformation of the 16th century. Luther inserted the word *alone* into his translation of Romans 3:28, making it read, "We reckon therefore that a man is justified by faith **alone** apart from the works of the law." Realizing that the book of James squarely contradicts this idea, Luther rejected James entirely, declaring it not canonical, and describing it as "a book of straw." From the days of Luther to the present, prominent denominational bodies have included the doctrine of "salvation by faith only" in their creeds, church manuals, and confessions of faith. Their preachers contend that justification is secured the very split second one believes in Christ.

The Bible clearly teaches, however, that man is saved by faith when faith obeys. Apart from obedience there can be no salvation, no justification. The doctrine of salvation by faith only is not taught in the Bible, is contrary to the Bible, and gives the lie to the express statement of James, "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only" (Jas. 2:24). The only kind of faith that will save a man is the kind which Paul described as "faith working through love" (Gal. 5:6). Faith without such work, without such obedience, is dead; it is unprofitable; it does no good whatever.

Paul makes the matter plain for us when he says, "For ye are all sons of God, through faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:26). It is here, in and through faith, that one becomes a child of God. But how did Paul know that these Galatians, to whom he was writing, were "children of God through faith"? He explains it in the very next verse, "**For** as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Here is the cause or reason for the preceding statement.

In his letter to the Romans, Paul explains exactly how justification had come about: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus

Christ” (Rom. 5:1). Paul includes himself in the number of those who had been thus justified. A brief study of his justification will show what it means to be “justified by faith.” As a persecutor of the church, Paul was on his way to Damascus with letters of authority that he might arrest the saints and bind them and bring them back to Jerusalem. The Lord appeared to him in the way, and said, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? (Acts 9:4). Was Saul saved at this point? Certainly not, for he didn't even know who the Lord was. He asked, “Who art thou, Lord?” (Acts 9:5). Up to this point in the encounter Saul was not a believer in Jesus Christ; he still regarded Christ as an imposter and a fraud. He was still convinced that he “ought to do many things contrary to” this same Jesus.

In response to Saul's inquiry as to his identity, the Lord answered, “I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest; it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.” When Saul heard this heavenly voice declare that the speaker was the One he had been persecuting, he believed. For the first time he realized that he had indeed, and in truth, been opposing the Son of God. This leads Saul to think of his own terrible plight. “And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” (Acts 9:6). The Lord did not respond by telling him what to do to be saved, or how to be converted. Rather He said, “Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.”

Was Saul a saved man at this point? Well, hardly! He is not at peace with God. Far from it. He recognizes the fact that something must be done; he is merely waiting to be told what that “something” is. The Lord sends Ananias, a certain disciple in Damascus, to him. When Ananias comes, he finds Saul praying. Many preachers would have said that was the way to do it; they would have encouraged Saul to pray on, and on, and on, and on. They might have told him he would certainly “come through” if he would only persist in prayer. But that was not what this New Testament preacher told Saul, the penitent believer. Paul was already a believer; and he was penitent. So Ananias said to him, “Why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16).

When Paul heard these words from Ananias he “arose, and was baptized. And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus. And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues that he is the Son of God” (Acts 9:18-20). This is the conduct of a man at peace with God. This is the behavior of one who has been justified. Gone now are the three days of darkness and hunger and thirst; gone are the fears, the trembling, the remorse and gnawing anxiety. Saul has been justified—justified by faith. But **when** was he justified? When was he pardoned? When did he “have peace”? Was it on the Damascus road when he became a believer? Of course not.

Paul was justified and “had peace” when he obeyed God, and not before. The whole story of his conversion emphasizes that point. The doctrine of salvation “by faith only” would have had him justified, pardoned, forgiven, and “at peace” out on the Damascus road when he became a believer. But Paul knew better than that; and so does every one who reads the story of Paul's conversion with understanding. Paul was saved by faith, but **not** by **faith only**.

God Talks to Me

Gary W. Summers

“Jesus speak,s to me personally and directs me .he choose me to tell all about his love . And with his holy spirit help i will.”

Those are the actual words given in response to a seven-page letter showing what the Scriptures teach on this subject. No one has any idea what this person **thinks** Jesus is saying to him, but He certainly is not telling him how to write, or there would not be 6 obvious grammatical mistakes in only three sentences (not counting the failure to capitalize references to Deity). Since God knew the Hebrew and the Greek, He can surely handle modern English.

So how can the Christian challenge the claims of someone who asserts that God is speaking to him? One could rightly say that the individual who so alleges is obligated to offer proof, but it is doubtful that he will feel compelled to comply. One could point out that anyone can say God is speaking to him. Muhammad averred that Allah spoke to him. Joseph Smith said he translated plates (which no one ever saw) by God's inspiration. Cult leaders declare all the time that God speaks to them. So have some mass murderers. Obviously, such claims have no validity.

There is only one way to inject any kind of objectivity into this situation—and that is for the person claiming Divine communication to write it down. David wrote down what God said to him in the Psalms, just as Solomon did in Proverbs. Moses wrote God's covenant with Israel so that all generations coming afterward could keep His commandments (Deut. 10:12-13). Jesus and His apostles not only spoke the word of God orally; their words were recorded by Divine inspiration. Had they not been written down, we would not have the Golden Rule and hundreds of other bits of information that we need. We would not have Divine inspiration's explanation of the way Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled in the New Testament.

Therefore, all of those who think that God is speaking directly to them (instead of through the Word that He gave us) owe to the world the wisdom that God has imparted to them. If it was important enough to tell one person, then it needs to be communicated to all of us. Isaiah and Jeremiah did not keep their prophecies to themselves—or their denunciations of the nations of the world. John did not keep his revelation to himself. And neither should anyone else. All of those claiming that God speaks to them must write down their meditations and prophecies so that we may all evaluate the "Divine" wisdom they allege they have received.

Visit our Website at
www.thegospelpreceptor.com

How we Know the Bible is Divine

Harry Pickup, Sr.

No book in all the world has been so consistently attacked as the Bible. Men who are honest (and some who are dishonest) have criticized it from Genesis to Revelation. Some people who are willing to accept the fact that Jesus Christ lived on the earth, still cannot believe that this volume is the divine Word of the living God. They accept it as "inspired" only in the same sense that Shakespeare and other outstanding men were inspired. They ask us how we can prove its credibility and its authenticity.

Sincere, honest investigation of the subject is always invited; but most of the findings (?) of the average critic bent on disproving the Bible are mere assertions, unfounded theories, and wild guess-work by men who are unworthy of respect as scientists. Such men are pseudo-scientists, with no real ability or standing at all; but because they have jumped on the bandwagon of Bible criticism, some people think they are smart.

Of course there are honest and competent men who are scientists indeed. The very word *science* means "to know" and certainly no true lover of the Bible would deny one single established fact. It is true, however, that the book markets of our land are flooded with books which are written and sold with but one motive—financial gain. And it has been found that the field of carping criticism against the Bible is one lucrative field. Hence, much of the trash that is being sold is based upon the findings (?) of men who no competent scholar on earth would accept as worth anything at all.

If the sincere student of these matters will thoroughly analyze the modern theories, or the ancient so-called solutions, which contradict the Bible account of things, it will be found that these opinions present a far more difficult problem than the simple explanation of God's word which they contradict.

Concerning Origins

The Bible presents the most reasonable explanation of the origin of things and of the scheme of life. The Bible account of creation begins with a First Cause. It follows this with a clear recognition of the principles of physics—time, space, matter, force, motion, etc., principles which were not formulated by scientists until the last century or so. The Bible is not a treatise on science but its laws, description of things, history and promises do not violate one single point of true science, and do not conflict with one single fact that man knows.

Some of the exegeses and hypotheses which present man's origin are more radical than others, but, generally speaking, they are all based upon the assumption that things just happened by chance. This is neither reasonable nor exegetical! How could this universe come by chance into its present cosmic orderliness, and into its perfect control from center to circumference? And how could this orderliness just happen to stay by chance through millions of years? That, beyond a doubt, would be a miracle. What a headline: "Universal Chaos By Chance Gives Birth To Universal Order!" The idea is ridiculous, and yet it is the basis for the theories of practically all who contend that the Bible is not true. How many times do you suppose you would have to throw up a font of printer's type into the air for the same font to form itself into one of the complete plays of Shakespeare? How many monkeys do you suppose it would take, and how many years would it take them, pecking away upon how many typewriters to finally happen upon one of the same Shakespearean tragedies? And even then they wouldn't know what the words meant—and so would be right back where they started! All of this is too unreasonable, remote, far-fetched and ridiculous; yet it actually forms the structure of the material out of which men build their case against the Bible.

The word of God presents a reasonable, feasible, understandable plan. It begins with God (the First Cause) and proceeds to a normal explanation of all things thereafter. It must of necessity do it this way: for it was produced by God, and God has adopted the Book, as he made it, to the needs and desires and the mind of man as he made him.

Your mind cannot grasp the idea that nature could produce anything without a Power behind her. The Bible explains exactly how all things came to be. Thus the Book is the product of an Intelligence greater than man. Without that plan, directed by God, nothing comes out right in origin, composition, or explanation.

Concerning Internal Evidences

The Bible presents internal evidences which are too strong to be refuted. Consider only one simple case. There are two identical chapters in the Book—2 Kings 19 and Isaiah 37. Well, you say, this could easily have been brought about by one man copying the other. No, such is not the case. Every student of Bible history knows that the writer of 2 Kings lived and died 300 years before Isaiah was born. But, one may say, perhaps Isaiah had access to his writing. This seems next to impossible, for the places where both lived were far removed the one from the other and there was little contact between them. But suppose Isaiah had a copy of 2 Kings in his own library, if he had a library, which he didn't. What reason could he have had for copying word for word this old account written by an earlier writer? No, it was not an accident, any more than the world was an accident, accidentally thrown off as a nebular mass from some distant planet or the sun. God directed this writing just as he directed all else in this Book which satisfactorily explains all in the scheme of human affairs. There are dozens of similar internal evidences which testify to the inspiration of the Book which we have neither time nor space to consider.

Concerning its Enemies

The Bible is true because all the attacks of its enemies have been unable to prove it false. In any trial the defendant is accounted innocent until proved guilty. The burden of proof invariably rests upon the one who is prosecuting. For nearly 2,000 years this volume as we have it today, with its 66 books of the Old and New Testaments, has stood against the attacks of skeptics, agnostics, infidels, and atheists. The last generation has produced a few who have built upon the works of skeptics and unbelievers of other days, but the pattern of the attack has changed but little. The vicious circle goes

round and round, but the arguments continue to have a bark that is strangely similar to the howls of yesteryear.

If its enemies cannot destroy it in as many years as they have tried, and if it continues to be the best seller on the book stands throughout the world, then it must have more than the mere human background which its enemies claim for it. Yea, it does! This Book is the Word of the living God. That is the only explanation possible for any reasonable man.

What Does God Say?

Roger M. Hendricks

Perhaps no question has received so many different answers as the question, "What must I do to be saved?" Hundreds of different answers have been given to this question. When we seek the assistance of the various preachers in our community or area, our dilemma still remains. The reason is that the preachers themselves differ in their ideas about how salvation is to be obtained.

To Whom Shall We Go?

Realizing that this is man's most important question and that we must discover the proper answer to it, we wonder what is to be done. Where is the answer to be found? To whom shall we go in search for the truth regarding salvation?

In Titus 1:3 we learn that God is our Saviour. This being the case, is it not reasonable to believe that we should inquire of him the answer to our question? Should we not ask, "What does God say about procuring salvation?"

God's Word, the Bible, teaches us that man is to have faith in the Almighty and in His Son, Jesus Christ. "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:16). "...he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mk. 16:16). Faith was required of the eunuch from Ethiopia and he declared, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 8:37).

God Requires Repentance

Jehovah also demands repentance on the part of man. "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30). "Repent ye therefore, and be converted that your sins may be blotted out..." (Acts 3:19). Repentance is a change of mind or heart which produces a change of life.

Confession of Jesus is Necessary

A confession of Jesus Christ as God's Son is a part of God's scheme of redemption. Jesus stated, "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him shall I also deny before my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 10:32-33). The apostle Paul, taught that "with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. 10:10). We have previously noticed the confession made by the Ethiopian eunuch. It was simply, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." Peter said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16). This is the confession which is "unto salvation."

Baptism is a Condition of Pardon

Baptism is a part of God's plan of salvation. The Bible reveals that baptism is a burial and a resurrection. "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4). "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead" (Col. 2:12).

Baptism is a burial into and a resurrection out of water. "...and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him" (Acts 8:38).

That baptism is a part of God's plan of salvation can be seen from the following verses: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be

damned” (Mark 16:16). “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38). “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16).

Continued Obedience is a Necessity

Having obeyed the afore mentioned commandments, one becomes a Christian and is added to the Lord's church. “And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (Acts 2:47). He must then live a faithful Christian life; viz. a life of continued obedience to God:

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 7:21).

And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power (2 Thess. 1:7-9).

Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city (Rev. 22:4).

...be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life (Rev. 2:10).

Theories of Men are Unimportant

One should not be greatly concerned about what men say with regard to salvation. All men are fallible; all can err! The Pharisees in the days of the Master considered the traditions of men to be of greater value than the commands of God. Jesus condemned this erroneous theory in these words:

Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandments of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition (Mark 7:7-9).

Our interest should be in **what God says** and **only** in what he says!

What Will You do With Jesus?

Each of us must do something with God's dear Son. We must render obedience to his Will or we must reject him and remain in disobedience. The choice is an individual one. Which will you choose to do? Our sincere desire and prayer is that you will choose to do as God commands.

If Tomorrow Never Comes

Danny Box

Tomorrow will never come for many people. “Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away” (Jas. 4:14). The nature of our life Sermons is that we are on earth only for a brief time. What if tomorrow never comes in your life?

If tomorrow never comes I want to be found in Christ. The Bible teaches we should “be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith” (Phlp. 3:9). I care nothing for self-achieved righteousness; I simply want to be found in Him.

If tomorrow never comes I want to have served faithfully in the Lord's army. I long to hear God say, “Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (Matt. 25:23). Whatever has been put into my hands my goal is to be trustworthy in it. Being God's faithful servant is what matters.

If tomorrow never comes I want to die in the service of my Lord. I realize, “I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work” (John 9:4). I desire to be busy with God’s business during the daylight of my life. Night is coming.

If tomorrow never comes I want my family and friends to know of my love and I want to leave them an example to follow. Paul said, “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1). My prayer is that the example of my life can be such that I can say to family and friends, “Follow my example. I followed the Messiah; now you follow me.”

If tomorrow never comes I want to have made some difference for good in my world. “Let your moderation (unselfishness) be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand” (Phlp. 4:5). I want to serve my fellowman realizing that the Lord is near. What would be your desire “**If tomorrow never comes?**” Would you wish for one more day to obey? (Mark 16:16).

Would you wish for one more day to be restored? (Acts 8:22). Or would you pray, “Come, Lord Jesus?” (Rev. 22:20).

Conversion of a Blasphemer

Ron Cosby

If you were dying, would you spend your last moments railing against God? Then, having railed and ridiculed the Creator, would you have the nerve to make a request of Him? Luke records a couple of lowly thieves blaspheming the only begotten Son of God.

Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left... In like manner also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; himself he cannot save. He is the King of Israel; let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe on him. He trusteth on God; let him deliver him now, if he desireth him: for he said, I am the Son of God. And the robbers also that were crucified with him cast upon him the same reproach (Matt. 27:38, 41-44 ASV).

Amazing! The first thing that amazes us is that this thief is being crucified but, nevertheless, has enough gall to rail upon another who is in the same predicament. It makes you feel like saying, “Hey, fellow! Look where you are! You are hanging on a cross!” Yet even more amazing is the fact that these two crooks are **guilty** of the crimes **they** have committed. The Christ is innocent, declared such by the rulers who held the kangaroo court and the soldier who nailed Him to the tree.

Even more amazing is that this blasphemy is allowed. God did not strike the men dead on the spot when the foul words soiled their lips. The King of Kings did not order His army of angels to stop their mouths. That's what kings of France and kings of England did! I am afraid that is what we would have done. Such irreverence deserves death from the mighty hand of God, but how does the Lord respond? Before we answer, let us study the idea of irreverent words and actions.

The Bahurim Blasphemer

When the blasphemer sees he has the upper hand or is not called on the spot for foolishness, he may show nerves of steel. Absalom, David's son, led a rebellion against his father, the king of Israel. In David's distress, the boisterous Shimei adds insult to injury.

...when king David came to Bahurim, behold, there came out thence...Shimei,...and cursed still as he came. And he cast stones at David, and at all the servants of king David...And thus said Shimei when he cursed, Begone, begone, thou man of blood, and base fellow:...Shimei went along on the hillside over against him, and cursed as he went, and threw stones at him, and cast dust (2 Sam. 16:5-13 ASV).

David's general, Abishai, responds the way most of us would. He said, "...Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head" (2 Sam. 16:9 ASV).

After the victory is won against Absalom, as David triumphantly returns to Jerusalem, he meets the blasphemer again. David is not the only one going in the opposite direction. Shimei "fell down before the king...[and] he said unto the king, Let not my lord impute iniquity unto me..." (2 Sam. 19:18-20 ASV). David did not sentence him to the judgment of the Law, at this time. He let him go free.

"Bahurim" Blasphemers are Still Allowed to Rail

Blasphemy was not restricted to David's enemies or the cross. In his song "Dead God," Marilyn Manson "courageously" sang, "The only good god is a dead god. The only god good for me." **Courageously?** I don't think so! **Foolishly** better describes such arrogance. Manson is not alone. Mark Bakke proudly displayed his disgust against God by charging that God lied, "If one thinks about it for a bit, one can easily see that the serpent was absolutely right in his statement to Eve. That means that God is a liar and that Man is suffering for it. This hardly qualifies as any form of 'justice.'" Such arrogance!

Because of the tsunami in 2004, one writer began his tirade with, "God is a Terrorist," adding, "Personally, I find comfort in the notion that there is no such being. Given a choice between believing in a malicious or impotent or indifferent deity, and a universe in which everything happens by mere chance...I'll take my chances with chance." What will he whine when he meets God?

I wish I could say that these quotes were difficult to find, but the electronic World Library is filled with such haughtiness. What will become of such men? What if God refused to forgive scoffers? Then the thief is doomed forever.

Who is Blamable for Blasphemy and How?

Brethren who preach one thing while living another bring reproach upon the Lord of lords.

Thou therefore that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou rob temples? thou who gloriest in the law, through thy transgression of the law dishonorest thou God? For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you, even as it is written (Rom. 2:21-24 ASV).

...that aged women likewise be reverent in demeanor, not slanderers nor enslaved to much wine, teachers of that which is good; that they may train the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sober-minded, chaste, workers at home, kind, being in subjection to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed (Titus 2:3-5 ASV).

Long before our own society uttered its railings, Isaiah lamented, "...my name continually all the day is blasphemed" (Isa. 52:5).

The Blasphemer May Become Blameless

What shall blasphemers do? The Law of Moses clearly condemns the irreverent to death (Lev. 24:15-16). The Law of Christ warns that matters may even be worse.

A man that hath set at nought Moses law dieth without compassion on the word of two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, think ye, shall he be judged worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? (Heb. 10:28-29 ASV).

The thief on the cross was condemned to die. Before he died, however, the blasphemer repented. This amazing turn of events and the Lord's response is only recorded by Luke:

And there was also a superscription over him, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS. And one of the malefactors that were hanged railed on him, saying, Art not thou the Christ? Save thyself and us. But the other answered, and rebuking him said, Dost thou not even fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said, Jesus, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom (Luke 23:38-43 ASV).

Mark the change in the malefactor. He blames and rebukes his fellow thief, believes in law and justice, expresses belief in God, believes in Jesus and His power to reign, and beseeches the King for mercy. But what will the King of kings do? Mercy! That is the Lord's amazing response.

Jesus said, "...Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43 ASV). When the Lord of Glory forgave the once arrogant, but now penitent, thief, it sent a message of mercy and hope to the rest of mankind who may have lived and spoken carelessly. All may be forgiven (Mark 3:28-29).

Conclusion

The penitent thief is not the only railer forgiven of indignities against God and His people. Saul of Tarsus stands at the head of the line as the greatest of sinners. The thief and all the rest of us have to stand behind Saul the chief of sinners (1 Tim. 1:13-15). Once the sinner fully understands and commits in faith by being baptized into Christ (Acts 22:16; Rom. 6:3-4, 17-18), he will have no regret.

As Polycarp said, "For 80 and 6 years I have served Him, and He has never once wronged me. How can I blaspheme my Lord and King who has saved me?" (c.69-c.155).

What About the Hen?

Guy N. Woods

Sometime back some young fellow objected to the biblical account of creation, and informed an aged sister that he no longer accepted the Bible as true; he no longer believed in heaven; he had come to the conclusion that all matters are the result of evolutionary processes. This sister said to him that while she lacked his education opportunities, she would like to ask him a question or two: Would he please explain to her, which came first, the hen, or the egg? He thought about it a moment, smiled at such an easy question, and said that anybody ought to know that the hen was first. Of course, the hen was first.

She said to him, "Well, would you please tell me where that first hen came from, since, according to your own view, it didn't grow up from a chicken, and was not hatched from an egg? How do you account for the origin of that first hen?"

His brow knitted in perplexity; and he said that he had decided his first answer was a bit hasty; he hadn't given proper attention to the question; had not thought it through. He felt sure now that, undoubtedly, the egg was first! Yes, certainly the egg was first.

She said, "Do you mean to tell me that there was once a hen egg without a hen to lay it?"

Then in his confusion, she said this to him: "You can't even explain to me the mere existence of a hen without a God, and yet you expect me to believe in the universe without Him."

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

By Jerry C. Brewer

This 216 page book is now in its fourth printing. Its title comes from Ecclesiastes 1:9. There is no new thing under the sun and that truth applies to apostasy, the bane of God's people from time immemorial. Our age is no exception and **The Thing That Hath Been...** traces the causes of apostasy that split the church in the 19th century paralleling them with the same causes in the present apostasy and division.

What are known as “mainstream churches of Christ” today are mired in the same apostasy as those of the 19th century and vastly differ from that small remnant of faithful churches of Christ who still “speak as the oracles of God.” The following is a cross section of “mainstream churches of Christ” documented in the book, all of whom are in various stages of apostasy.

- **Adams Boulevard church of Christ, Bartlesville, Oklahoma**
- **Alameda church of Christ, Norman, Oklahoma**
- **Elm and Hudson church of Christ, Altus, Oklahoma**
- **Edmond church of Christ, Edmond, Oklahoma**
- **Northridge church of Christ, Shawnee, Oklahoma**
- **North MacArthur church of Christ, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma**
- **Tamarack Road church of Christ, Altus, Oklahoma**
- **South Yukon church of Christ, Yukon, Oklahoma**
- **The Bypass church of Christ, Idabel, Oklahoma**
- **Antioch church of Christ, Nashville, Tennessee**
- **Grace Crossing [A Community Church of Christ], Conroe, Texas**
- **Wilbarger Street church of Christ, Vernon, Texas**
- **Lakehoma church of Christ, Mustang, Oklahoma**
- **New Life church of Christ, St. Louis, Missouri**
- **Faith Village church of Christ, Wichita Falls, Texas**
- **Second and Adams church of Christ, Elk City, Oklahoma**

- Pioneer and Bell church of Christ, Elk City, Oklahoma
- Ft. Cobb church of Christ, Fort Cobb, Oklahoma
- Fourth and College church of Christ, Cordell, Oklahoma
- Custer Avenue church of Christ, Clinton, Oklahoma
- The Weatherford church of Christ, Weatherford, Oklahoma
- Northwest church of Christ, Durant, Oklahoma
- Southern Oaks church of Christ, Chickasha, Oklahoma
- Del City church of Christ, Del City, Oklahoma
- Central church of Christ, Ada, Oklahoma
- North Garland church of Christ, Enid, Oklahoma
- Maryville church of Christ, Maryville, Tennessee
- Forest Hill church of Christ, Memphis, Tennessee
- Glenpool church of Christ, Glenpool, Oklahoma
- Granbury church of Christ, Granbury, Texas
- Seminole church of Christ, Seminole, Oklahoma
- Muskogee church of Christ, Muskogee, Oklahoma
- Dripping Springs church of Christ, Dripping Springs, Texas
- Cabot church of Christ, Cabot, Arkansas
- Clear Creek church of Christ, Hixson, Tennessee
- Niceville church of Christ, Niceville, Florida
- Leander church of Christ, Leander, Texas
- Auburn church of Christ, Auburn, Alabama
- Elmwood church of Christ, Lafayette, Indiana
- Una church of Christ, Nashville, Tennessee
- Westside church of Christ, Norman, Oklahoma

“Mainstream periodicals” such as *The Christian Chronicle*, *The Gospel Journal* and *The Gospel Advocate* are documented as well, along with **para-church organizations, religious socialism “ministries”** among churches of Christ, and **individuals** who were once stalwart defenders of the faith, but who have sold their souls for prestige, power, and money. So-called “Christian Colleges” that are supported and defended by “mainstream churches” are also exposed, including Freed-Hardeman University's practice of using pornographic pictures in its art classes.

The Book is **FREE** and **single copies** are mailed **POSTAGE FREE!** Email your order to **txjch@att.net** today.

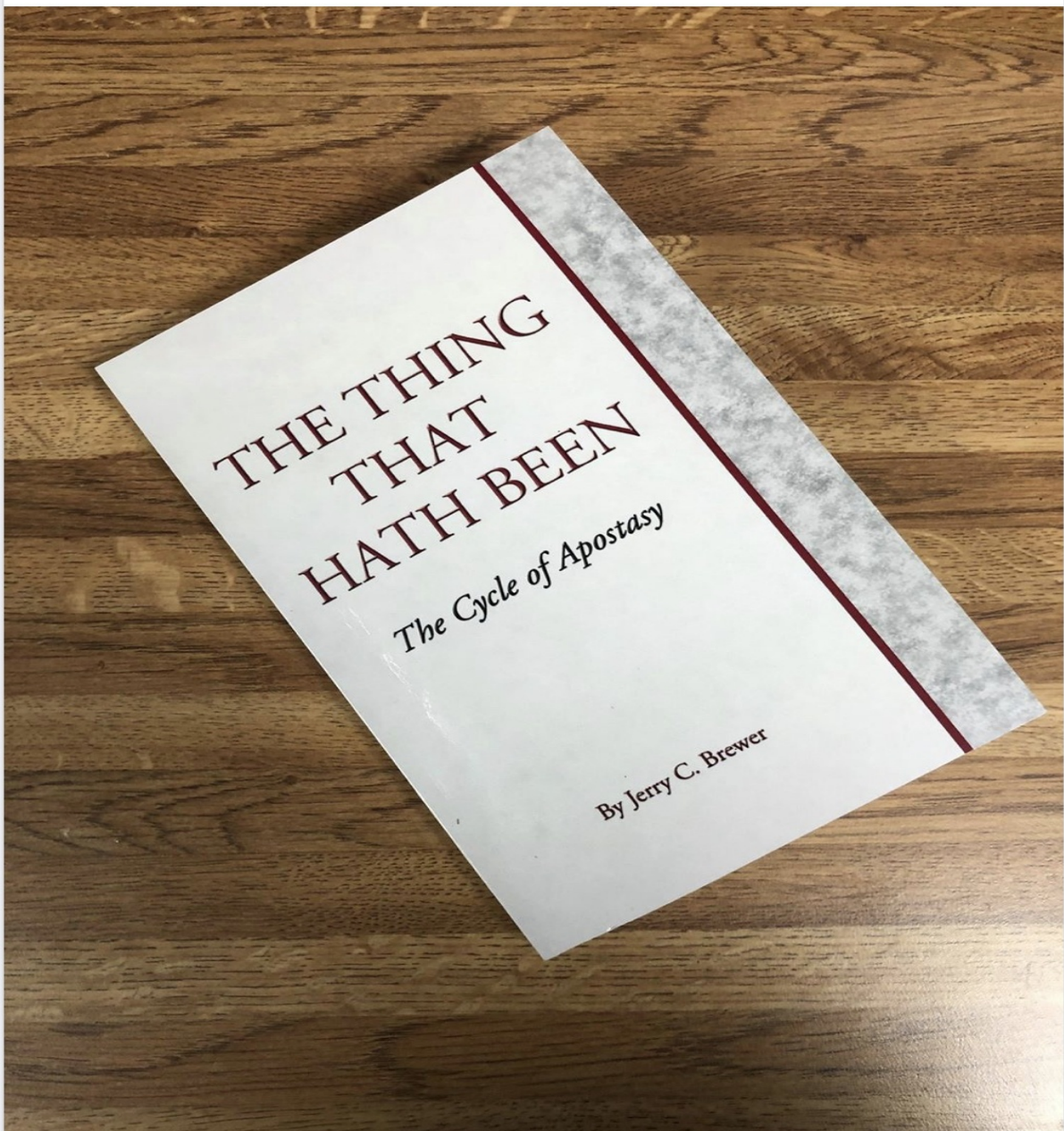
“The Thing That Hath Been...”: The Cycle of Apostasy



Dub McClish

April 18 at 1:24 PM

The Thing That Hath Been is the latest book from the pen of our brother, Jerry Brewer. Subtitled, *The Cycle of Apostasy*, it is a blockbuster of 216 pages that every member of the Lord's church needs to read. In it our brother traces and documents the historical parallels between the digression/apostasy of the last half of the 19th century with the same sad drifts/departures the church has suffered in the latest 4 or 5 generations. You will find it hard to put it down once you have begun reading. Published in February, the book is already in its third printing. It is offered **free of cost** (\$3.00 p/h requested). When you receive/read yours, I think you'll want to order to give to others. Order it from Brewer Publications, 308 S. Oklahoma Ave., Elk City, OK 73644, or by email at txjch@att.net.



We now have limited funds that enable us to mail single copies **FREE OF CHARGE**. Send us addresses and we will send "**The Thing Hath Been...**" **without cost** to you. The **book** is **FREE** and, for a limited time, so is the single copy postage! To Order, Email us at txjch@att.net.

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False Doctrines of Man

Yukon, Okla. church of Christ

Berea church of Christ

South Seminole church of Christ

What it Means to Say Baptism is Non-Essential

Gayle Oler

1. It means that Peter commanded a non-essential! “And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord” (Acts 10:48). It therefore reduces the commandments of God to absurdities if any one of them isn't essential to salvation.
2. It means the remission of sins is not essential to salvation. “Peter said unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38 ASV).
3. It means that not one single command of God can consistently be construed as obligatory upon man. By the same rule of reasoning by which baptism is deemed unnecessary to salvation, every other commandment can be so deemed. Faith is commanded. So is baptism. Faith is exemplified. So is baptism. Jesus said, “Except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins” (John 8:24 ASV). He also said, “Except a man be born of water and of the spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5).
4. It means that Ananias deceived Paul when he told him, “Arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). If Paul's sins had been washed away prior to his baptism, Ananias did not correctly represent the case to Paul. Paul's sins had not been forgiven prior to baptism. Neither are men's sins today.

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