

The Gospel Preceptor

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

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A Plea for the Plea

Dub McClish

There is no more exciting and thrilling ideal to those who hunger and thirst for ultimate Truth than that of being a part of the church of the Bible. The incomparable objective of restoring the church of Christ was necessitated by centuries of apostasy followed by earnest but doomed-to-fail attempts at mere correction of the evil monster of Rome and its apostate ancestors. The mighty sixteenth-century reform effort itself degenerated into another version of rampant abandonment of the inspired blueprint, resulting in as much deviation in religion as it sought to repair.

The sparks of restoration have likely always been present in the face of digression. They can certainly be seen in eighth-century “Publicans” (England) and “Paulicians” (Europe) who generally rejected the doctrine of the Roman Church and the growing power of the pope. Strong traces of a determination to subscribe only to the New Testament are evident in the intervening centuries through the times of the reformers. There were restoration voices as loud in protest to the false doctrines of Luther and Calvin as to those of the pope. Some of the reformers (e.g., Calvin) were as adept as the papists at inflicting torture and death on many of their enemies.

More recent voices of restoration were heard from such eighteenth-century men as John Glas, Robert Sandeman, and the Haldanes, in Scotland. About the same time the ideal appeared in our fledgling nation as devout men in the New World became heart-weary with human tradition and uninspired religious dogma. James O’Kelley broke with the Methodists, Abner Jones and Elias Smith with the Baptists, and Barton W. Stone with the Presbyterians in their determination to be only the Lord’s people. Later came Thomas Campbell and his more notorious son, Alexander, and others at the beginning of the nineteenth century, all of whom had to grope (and sometimes stumble)—gradually and painfully—their way out of the dark tunnel of error into the glorious light of Truth.

While these men understandably made mistakes as they pursued their quest, their passion for the primitive pattern was unmistakable and resolute. They knew that the unity and freedom they craved in religion could and would come only as men were persuaded to cast aside all human religious doctrines and practices so as to walk in the old paths set down for all time by the inspired writers. Their plea was not for a new way of their own origin, but for the old, original way of the Lord. Borne along by such Bible-rooted revolutionary slogans as “Where the Bible speaks we speak, and where the Bible is silent we are silent” and “Let us call Bible things by Bible names and do Bible things in Bible ways,” these men used the fire in their own bones to ignite a spiritual blaze that caught fire and rapidly spread across the ever-enlarging frontiers of a young nation.

While many of those heralding this exciting plea were unlettered and had only tree stumps for their wilderness pulpits, still their message with its innate power and verity found its mark time after time. In its wake the denominational authorities quaked as they saw their sects being rapidly consumed. Though they tried mightily to resist on polemic platform and by printed page, the powerful two-edged sword of the Spirit slew

them hip and thigh, time and again. Those godly restorers had the Lord of glory and His Truth among them; how could they fail?

By the middle of the nineteenth century, when it appeared that the pure Gospel and the church that it has ever produced would literally sweep our young republic, disaster struck. That which the subtle Serpent could not do by frontal attack from without, he determined to do through treason from within Christ's kingdom. Some who had escaped the spiritual shackles of sectarianism, like Lot's wife, began to look backward with longing and lust for some of the very things from which the Truth had freed them. In their desire to substitute a "missionary society" for the church's evangelistic commission and to add unauthorized man-made musical instruments to the worship, they found it necessary to abandon the respect they once had for the silence as well as for the statement of Scripture.

To justify their innovation idols, they invented a deadly new slogan: "Where the Bible is silent, we have freedom to act and speak." Predictably, this flawed dictum not only allowed them to rationalize their initial cravings, but sadly, it also opened a Pandora's Box. By the principle upon which they began fulfilling their new desires for things not explicitly forbidden in the New Testament, everything else not explicitly forbidden might also be justified, from doughnuts and milk on the Lord's table to counting beads in prayer.

The defectors relentlessly and ruthlessly followed the Prince of this world to the distraction, decimation, and finally the division of the church of Christ, officially recognized by the federal census near the beginning of the past century (1906). They could boast of capturing about eighty-five percent of the church's members in their cruel campaign. Their efforts have resulted in two separate Christian Church denominations, with even the less-liberal of them still inseparably wedded to the utterly unscriptural motto that reflects their contempt for the silence of Scripture.

The small remnant of faithful brethren had to start new congregations, build new buildings, and establish new schools because most of the schools and churches, with their respective properties, were rudely stolen from those who had poured so much of their lives and fortunes into them. Within a few decades, the faithful had more than regained the numerical ground lost to the apostates. In the 1950s, the Lord's people were the most rapidly-growing religious body in the U.S. As a century before, it appeared that the future was only bright for the progress of Truth in our nation. Then Satan seemed to reflect on his earlier success with an internal attack; history began to repeat itself. First, there arose some brethren who were determined to bind optional matters as obligatory, in both evangelistic and benevolent works. In spite of refutation of their doctrine in numerous debates, sermons, and journalistic discussions, they attracted considerable numbers to their cause. Perhaps to some degree in reaction to an unbiblical restrictive agenda of these brethren, in the 1960s, another group of brethren with an equally unbiblical platform began to appear. They, in the footsteps of the digressives of the mid-nineteenth century, pursued an unrestrictive agenda that insisted on making various Scriptural obligations optional.

This latter group of brethren is in fact so much like those who began their leftward movement a century and a half ago that they have been steadily urging a reunification with the denomination those erstwhile brethren became. The current crop of digressives has pursued a much broader agenda than the introduction of the two prized innovations of their religious fathers, however. These self-denominated change agents have totally abandoned the plea for maintenance of the restored church.

They, much as the Disciples of Christ/Christian Church denomination, deny both the possibility and the need for restoration. They attribute our distinctiveness as a religious body to the philosopher John Locke and some of his influence on the early nineteenth-century restorers rather than to the apostles. But they are wrong.

These present-day liberal brethren are members of a "movement"—one bent on destroying the church of Christ by denominationalizing it. I am not a member of a "movement" (and I wish brethren would refrain from equating the Lord's church with a "Restoration Movement"). I am a member of the church of Christ because I obeyed

the Gospel of Christ and the Lord added me to His church (Acts 2:38–41, 47). Anyone anywhere anytime can (and will) become a member of the church bought, built, and owned by Christ when he/she confesses faith in the Sonship of Christ, repents of sins, and is baptized into Christ in order to receive the forgiveness of sins by the blood of Christ (Acts 22:16; Rev. 1:5). When such ones in any locality then worship, work, and are content to be organized into a congregation as specified in the New Testament, they constitute a church of Christ.

The plea to all men to become and be only Christians as defined by the New Testament is the message of the Gospel itself. The uncorrupted seed of the Word of God (Luke 8:11) can produce only one fruit when it produces at all: the church of Christ. This is the beautiful, simple plea that must and will never grow old to those who have discovered and genuinely obeyed the Gospel Truth and to those honest hearts who are searching for it. In a day characterized by apostasy and digression in the church and utter confusion in denominationalism, may those of us who are in the Way not waver for one moment. Rather, let us all redouble our efforts to sound forth the plea of the pure and primitive Gospel, which alone will produce the pure and primitive church.

Can We Know the Truth?

Nana Yaw Aidoo

It is the case that no one knows everything. The attribute of Omniscience is reserved only for the Almighty God, Who can tell the end from the beginning. (Isa. 46:10). It is also the case that no rational human being is absolutely and totally ignorant that he knows nothing. Everyone knows something. What some people are unwilling to accept is that what we know is either true or false. These people deny that truth can be known or that there is such a thing as absolute truth. This is the philosophical idea known as truth or alethic relativism.

Relativism about truth, or *alethic relativism*, at its simplest, is the claim that what is true for one individual or social group may not be true for another, and there is no context-independent vantage point to adjudicate the matter. What is true or false is always relative to a conceptual, cultural, or linguistic framework. (“Relativism,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*).

The story is told of a university professor who always made the claim in class that truth cannot be known and that there is no absolute truth. A student who had grown tired of the professor’s comments asked him one day; “are you absolutely sure?”

Interestingly, when people make the claim that truth cannot be known, they are affirming that they **know** that truth cannot be known. James Bales exposed this self-defeating and self-contradictory statement.

To say that one cannot know truth, is to say that one has studied so much, and learned so much, that he *knows* that truth does not exist. What a tremendous truth such an individual claims to know! He knows there is no truth. He knows you cannot know. If he can know this truth, truth can be known. If he cannot know truth, he cannot know the truth that there is no truth. Furthermore, if total ignorance is the conclusion of scholarship, scholarship is impossible. (*The Spiritual Sword*, October, 1969, p.6).

We are told to believe that we are all seeking truth and so no one should claim a knowledge of truth. The point, however, is not whether we are all seeking truth but whether while seeking truth, we can find it. Can truth be found as/when we seek it? Some say no! God’s description of such people is that they are “ever (always NKJV) learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.” (2 Tim. 3:7).

Can we know the truth? Jesus Christ so believed. To the Jews He said; “And ye shall **know** the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (John 8:32, Emph. NYA). The Son of God emphasized a knowledge of the truth and the subsequent obedience (John 8:31), as the means by which men can be made free from the bondage of sin. Would our Lord have made such an emphasis, if it were impossible to know the truth?

Can we know the truth? The apostles so believed. When His disciples deserted Him after His “hard” bread of life discourse, Jesus Christ asked the twelve whether they wanted to go away too. Peter answered Him; “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we have believed and **know** that thou art the Holy One of God.” (John 6:68-69 ASV). The truth was that Jesus Christ was the Holy One of God and Simon Peter laid claim to the fact that all of the twelve knew it.

Not only can we know the truth, but we can know that we know the truth. John wrote; “And hereby we do **know that we know** him, if we keep his commandments.” (1 John 2:3 Emph. NYA). Was the apostle “proud,” “too-knowing” “Pharisaic,” and “self-righteous” for making this claim?

What are some truths that we can know?

- We can know that God exists.
- We can know that Jesus Christ is God’s only Begotten Son.
- We can know that the Bible is God’s only Word to man.
- We can know that Jesus Christ is the only way to heaven.
- We can know that immersion in water is the point at which alien sinners are saved from their sins.
- We can know that the church of Christ is the only church that has God’s approval.
- We can know that women preachers are unscriptural and sinful.
- We can know that there are only two genders.
- We can know that marriage is between one man and one woman for one lifetime.
- We can know that God created the world in six literal days.

We can know these truths and many more. If there is something, we have no knowledge of, the Biblical exhortation is that we study so as to grow in knowledge. (2 Pet. 3:18). But if it is the case that truth cannot be known, then Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit and the apostles lied. Again, if it is the case that truth cannot be known, then God has a wrong desire for He desires that men be saved and **come unto the knowledge of the truth** (1 Tim. 2:4 Emph. NYA).

Can we know the truth? Yes, we can! And anyone who says otherwise makes God a liar. Rather than glory in ignorance or make ignorance a virtue, may we, through diligent study of the Sacred Writings, “be filled with the knowledge of his will...increasing in the knowledge of God.” (Col. 1:9-10).

Our God is an Awesome God!

David Ray

On July 5th of this year there will be a lunar eclipse. This occurs when the earth passes between the sun and the moon for a brief period of time and its shadow passes across and darkens the moon. The moon, while not receiving any direct sunlight (during a total lunar eclipse) is still visible due to light refracted by the earth’s atmosphere. This makes it appear reddish and is sometimes called a blood moon. The best continent from which to view the upcoming eclipse will be South America; but it should be visible from North America as well.

Like so many others, I’m a fan of astronomy and am easily impressed by these cosmological events. But I’ve noticed something very sad: very few give credit to the Creator of these mesmerizing images.

It’s hard to imagine an art enthusiast seeing a piece he loved so much and not even being remotely interested in who the artist was, much less praising the artist for his work. Yet this is exactly what happens on a daily basis. God has created a beautiful home for us to live in and enjoy every day and it seems that rarely, if ever, is He

thanked for it. Instead, most people go about their daily lives enjoying all the benefits He created for them but failing to acknowledge Him for it. They praise the “god” of chance and coincidence, thinking that somehow, by no higher power at all, we could not only exist in such an orderly and designed world, but that events such as this could just randomly occur (even though their occurrences are so **designed** and planned by God that scientists can tell you exactly when and where they will occur for centuries to come)! Consider these verses:

“The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God (Psa. 14:1).

“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork” (Psa. 19:1).

“Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness” (Psa. 150:2).

“Thou, even thou, art LORD alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee” (Neh.9:6).

“...the living God...giveth us richly all things to enjoy” (1 Tim. 6:17).

As I observe these impressive astronomical events, or look at pictures of them and long for the next time I might have the opportunity to witness them, I not only thank God for caring enough about the people of His creation to create moments like these to impress us, but I also somehow feel the need to apologize to Him on behalf of an ungrateful world who refuses to acknowledge Him for His love. If they can’t appreciate the marvels of the universe He gave us for our **physical** good, how will they ever appreciate the sacrifice of His Son for our **spiritual** good?

The next time **you** enjoy one of these rare cosmological displays, or simply experience something as regular and beneficial as the rising of the sun and falling of the rain, please don’t forget Who blessed you with them!

Is Anything More Important Than Your Salvation?

Lee Moses

Your financial security is not more important than your salvation. Based upon the way they live, it is clear that most American adults place financial security near, if not at, the very top of life’s priorities. While financial prudence is wise, and financial success gained through hard work to be applauded, there are matters far more important. “For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matt. 16:26).

Your job/school responsibilities are not more important than your salvation. Responsibilities are an important part of life. They tend toward personal improvement. They help to bring order and purpose to our lives. They help us contribute to a larger good than ourselves.

Many people view their job responsibilities as something more than providing for their financial needs. They view other people as depending on them, whether co-workers, employers, or customers. This is a healthy way to view one’s vocation. There has recently been a lot of talk about “essential businesses”; but in view of the preceding, most businesses serve a very valuable role in society, a role that extends well beyond the primary goods and services they provide.

That said, such responsibilities pale when compared with the things of the Lord. When Jesus called disciples, saying, “Follow me,” they immediately laid aside their work responsibilities to follow the Lord (Matt. 4:18-22; Luke 5:27-28). For doing this, Jesus promised them numerous blessings in this life, “and in the world to come eternal life” (Mark 10:28-30).

Your ties with friends and family are not more important than your salvation. Parents, children, spouse, and friends are all tremendous blessings from the Lord, to be cherished and savored (Psa. 103:13; 127:3; Prov. 18:22; 17:17; 27:9). Yet Jesus warns, “He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me” (Matt. 10:37).

The threat of disease is not more important than your salvation. Disease brings misery to lives, as well as painful early death. But consider the words of encouragement Jesus gave His apostles: “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matt. 10:28). Losing an eye or bodily limb in this life is far better than losing one’s soul for eternity (Mark 9:43-48). When compared with the Judgment to come, powerful persecutors and devastating diseases are mere gnats in our existence.

Your nation’s security is not more important than your salvation. Many brave souls have died for our national security, and those are sacrifices never to be taken lightly. However, one sacrifice was given greater than all those combined: Jesus Christ “gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father” (Gal. 1:4). Christ’s sacrifice did not deliver us from wicked political powers, such as the Assyrians, the Nazis, or the Soviets. He died to deliver us entirely from this present evil world, “that he might redeem us from all iniquity” (Titus 2:14), “to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him” (Heb. 7:25); and, as a result, Christians “are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Heb. 10:10).

No, nothing is more important than your salvation. “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Heb. 9:27). Financial security, job performance, and family or friendly ties will not prevent death’s eventual arrival, much less that of Christ’s Judgment. At that time no one will be lamenting diseases he suffered in life or breaches of national security. All that will matter from that point and eternity following is that we are found saved and faithful in Jesus Christ.

Will you be?

The Two-Fold Promise to Abraham Fulfilled

Jess Whitlock

God promised that by the seed of woman the head of the serpent would be bruised (Gen. 3:15). From that time forth, the Bible shows the fulfillment of that promise. Following the flood, as the world drifted into idolatry, God chose Abraham as the one through whom that seed should come. Let’s briefly trace that promise as it pertains to God’s great scheme of redemption for fallen mankind.

The Promise Unfolded

The promise is revealed for the first time in Genesis 12:1-7. There is (1) the nation-land promise, i.e., God would make of Abraham a great nation, ultimately that nation would receive the land promise of Genesis 12:1-2, 7, and (2) the promise that in his seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed (Gen. 12:3).

The fulfillment of the nation-land promise takes the form of a covenant in Genesis 15 as we recall the captivity of 400 years (vv. 13-14). The fourth generation and the condition of the Amorites is stipulated (v. 16). The extent of the land to be received is given in detail (vv. 18-20).

The Covenant with Israel

The covenant of circumcision, as pertained to the “flesh and the land” is then recorded in Genesis 17:1-14. The promise to Abraham is renewed to Isaac (Gen. 26:1-5) and to Jacob (Gen. 28:3-4, 13-14). While in Egypt, the tribes develop into a nation until the going out of Egypt in the “fourth generation”; Levi, Kohath, Amram, Moses and Aaron (Exo. 6:16-20). The Biblical line then continues to Mount Sinai, where God makes a covenant with Israel as a nation (Exo. 19:4-5; 20:1-17; 34:27-28). Then came the wilderness wandering following the giving of the law (the covenant) with Israel (Exodus through Deuteronomy). We must wait until the book of Joshua for the

invasion of Canaan (Josh. 1-12). The division of the land of promise then follows (Josh. 13-22). All of this entails the fulfillment of the land promise.

The Spiritual Promise Unfolded

The spiritual promise and its fulfillment extends from Genesis 3:15 to Abraham to include all “families, all nations” (Gen. 12:3; 22:18). The promise is renewed to Isaac (26:4). Judah is given the promise as a particular tribe of Israel (49:10). The promise then goes from David to the coming of the Messiah (2 Sam. 7:11-16). God would make of David’s seed, One to be placed upon his (David’s) throne. The throne of that kingdom would be established forever. There can be no doubt that this refers to the Messiah (2 Sam. 7:14; Heb. 1:5-8; Psalms 89:26-37).

The promise is fulfilled in Christ the Lord (Luke 1:26-33). Peter’s sermon on the day of Pentecost goes back to this powerful and precious promise (Acts 2:22-37). The throne of David was the throne of God (1 Kings 2:12; 1 Chron. 29:23), upon which Christ now sits (Rev. 3:21) forever (Heb. 1:8). Genesis 12:3 receives its ultimate fulfillment in the words of Galatians 3:16, “Now to Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his seed. He saith not, and to seeds, as of many; but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ.”

“The Rapture” Is False Doctrine

Jerry C. Brewer

You’ve probably seen the bumper sticker that says, “In case of rapture this car will be unmanned.” While that is cute and catchy, it teaches a false doctrine. People like Paul Crouch, Kenneth Copeland and Jack Van Impe speak of “The Rapture” while thousands of their television viewers sit enthralled. But the doctrine of a so-called “rapture” is wholly without Biblical foundation. In fact, the word **“rapture” cannot even be found in the Bible.**

This false notion of a rapture is simple. Its advocates claim that the righteous living and dead will be taken to heaven at the second coming of Christ, while the wicked will be left on earth for a period of tribulation. That false notion has not only made the authors of the “Left Behind” series a lot of money, but it’s also duped many people into believing something the Bible doesn’t teach. They base their speculation on Second Thessalonians 4:13-18 which says,

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

This passage says, “the dead in Christ shall rise first.” But the question is, “Rise before whom or what?” Does Paul mean that the dead in Christ shall be raised before the wicked? No. The resurrection of the wicked and righteous together, which Jesus addressed in John 5:28-29, is not under consideration in these verses. Paul is here comforting them concerning **Christians** who had died—those who were “asleep in Jesus.” His point is that the living should not sorrow as those who have no hope, because when Jesus comes again he will bring with him **all** who sleep in him—the dead in Christ. Paul is assuring them that their dead loved ones will not be left in the grave. The Thessalonians had the false idea that the dead would miss out on heaven when Christ returns and that only the living would be there. But Paul says the living shall not “prevent them which are asleep”—ascend into heaven ahead of, or before, those who have died before the Lord’s return.

His point is that the dead in Christ shall rise first—before the living in Christ ascend—and they shall **all ascend together** to meet the Lord in the air. Neither the wicked, a

millennial period, a so-called “rapture” nor a tribulation period is under consideration in these verses. There are no such things to be found within the pages of the New Testament. Those “Left Behind” books ought to be left behind, and they will be by those who know and love the truth of God’s word.

The Most Disbelieved Verse In The Bible

Charles Pogue

“Then Peter said unto them, 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). The preceding verse, are at least a portion of it, is arguably the most disbelieved verse in the entire Bible. Earlier today, I spent some time on a Bible helps website which contains numerous versions of the Bible, commentaries, original languages, Strong’s Concordance, and a list of sermons. Out of curiosity, I went down the list of sermons on the above verse. Out of approximately 60 sermons, only one was on the subject of baptism. The author of this sermon which included false teaching on the subject, called baptism a Christian rite and denied it was then or is now unto the forgiveness of sins.

Why do men reject what this verse so clearly, plainly, and explicitly says about the command to be baptized for the remission of sins? The simple answer is the overwhelming majority of religious people have embraced the false idea that man can do absolutely nothing toward salvation which he regards as a human work. With this idea, men contradict their own doctrine because they affirm that faith is required for salvation yet both 1 Thessalonians 1:3 and 2 Timothy 1:11 define faith as a work. Men both deny what Acts 2:38 says and their false doctrine that man contributes not one whit to his salvation. As an additional thought, baptism is not a work of man but of God!

After reading the error respecting Acts 2:38 in the hosts of sermons on the verse, I wondered what such men would say if the site included some sermons on 1 Peter 3:21. “The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” There were only three sermons listed as those which dealt with the passage. One dismissed it altogether. One claimed it is the water which saves one in baptism. No, it is the blood of Christ which washes away sin, baptism is the point when it does (Acts 22:18). The third man hem-hawed around on the verse and attempted to deny the efficacy of baptism by stating in an unclear fashion that baptism cleanses the conscience while the Savior cleanses the soul of sin. Certainly, the Savior cleanses the soul of sin, but in the Acts 22:16 verse we mentioned above we learn when the cleansing takes place. “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

In Paul’s later to the Romans, he wrote these inspired words:

Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen (Rom. 16:25-27).

The only faith which will save is obedient faith. To have an obedient faith one must keep the commands of God. One of those commands is to be baptized. “And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.” Why will men not lay aside the false doctrine of man that you are saved by faith only then can join the church of your choice instead of being baptized into Christ for the remission of sins and thereby added to the one church which the Lord gave His life to purchase with His own blood? (Acts 20:28).

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Must One Understand Baptism's Purpose in Order to be Saved?

Dub Mowery

It has been correctly stated, that, Christianity is a taught religion. Jesus said, “It is written in the prophets, and they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me” (John 6:45). In giving the Great Commission, the Son of God declared:

...All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen (Matt. 28:18-20).

Ignorance of the will of the Lord is not excusable in His sight (Acts 17:30-31; 2 Thess. 1:7-9). Yet, there are those who foolishly claim that a person does not have to understand that baptism is for the remission of sins. They further contend that as long as a person being baptized understands that baptism is a command of God then his baptism is valid. Every command of God is essential for the purpose intended by Him. In fact, a person cannot be saved separate and apart from the commandments of the Lord (Heb. 5:8-9; Rev. 22:14). Therefore, our Lord does not have any nonessential commandments. We are certainly commanded to be baptized. For example: The Apostle Peter commanded the household of Cornelius to be baptized (Acts 10:48). Since there are not any nonessential commands, a person cannot be saved by refusing the command to be baptized.

When salvation or its equivalent terms are found in the same passage of scripture with baptism then baptism **always precedes salvation**. There are no exceptions to this fact. Let us now examine some passages of scriptures concerning this matter. At Mark 16:16, the Son of God declared, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” Notice, “shall be saved” follows **both** belief and baptism. At Acts 2:38, the Apostle Peter said, “...Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” That passage reveals that “the remission of sins” is obtained when a person repents and is baptized. Ananias, a gospel preacher, said unto Saul of Tarsus, “And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). It is evident from that passage the washing away of sins takes place **at baptism**, not before.

The Apostle Paul reminded Christians at Rome of the significance of their having been baptized. He wrote unto them,

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

In verse 3, he points out that they had been baptized **into** Christ.

Question: What is the significance of being baptized into Christ?

Answer: All spiritual blessings, including salvation, are **in** Christ (Eph. 1:3; 2 Tim. 2:10).

Paul also states that we are baptized into Christ's death. It is by being baptized into the death of the Son of God that we obtain the washing away of our sins by His blood (Rev. 1:5). At John 19:31-34, we learn that the blood of Christ was shed after His death. Therefore, we are spiritually cleansed of our sins by being baptized into His death (Acts 22:16). And then in Romans 6:4, the inspired Word states, “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.” Thus, we put off the old life of sin and rise from the waters of baptism to walk a new life. The new life as a child of God begins at that moment (John 3:5; 2 Cor. 5:17). At First Peter 3:21,

the Apostle Peter wrote by inspiration, “The like figure whereunto even baptism doth now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” Considering the previous verse of that passage, Peter was pointing out that just as Noah and his family were saved from the ungodly sinful world by water (the flood), even so, baptism saves us from our own worldly sins. Baptism serves a higher purpose than to cleanse the physical body. Our souls are made pure by the blood of Christ when we are baptized into His death. However, this would not have been possible if the Son of God had not been resurrected from the dead (1 Cor. 15:15-23).

Without exception, the conversions recorded in the books of Acts reveal that those baptized **understood why** they were being baptized. On the day of Pentecost, when Peter convicted those gathered of having killed the Son of God, they were “...pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?” When they became aware of their heinous sin, those convicted wanted to know what they must do in order to receive forgiveness. The Apostle Peter immediately exhorted, “...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.”

Question: Did those inquirers understand what they were commanded to do?

Answer: Indeed they did, for after Peter further exhorted them, the scripture plainly states, “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls” (See Acts 2:36-41).

In gladly receiving the inspired Word, about 3,000 precious souls obeyed. Those obedient believers understood that scriptural baptism is for the remission of sins.

Ananias, the gospel preacher, said unto Saul of Tarsus, “And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). Did Saul of Tarsus understand the words of Ananias? Indeed he did, because he arose and was baptized (Acts 9:17-18). A careful examination of all the conversions recorded in the book of Acts will show that all of them were taught what they must do and then they responded by being baptized.

The gospel preacher Philip wanted to make sure that the Ethiopian eunuch understood the Word of God concerning Jesus Christ before he baptized him. When Philip saw the Ethiopian riding in a chariot while reading from the book of Isaiah, he asked him, “...Understandest thou what thou readest?” The Ethiopian immediately responded by saying, “...How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him.” This shows that the man was honest and sincere and was eager to **learn** the truth. In reference to the passage found in Isaiah the 53rd chapter, “...Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?” When Philip preached Jesus unto him, the eunuch wanted to know what would hinder him from being baptized. Hence, to preach obedience unto Christ includes baptism. Philip said, “...If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch and he baptized him” (See Acts 8:26-39). This passage reveals that a person must understand the will of the Lord before obeying Him in baptism.

Truly, Christianity is a **taught** religion, not a “better-felt-than-told” religion.

The Church—Its Conditions of Membership

F.G. Allen

The conditions of membership in the church of God naturally divide themselves into two classes: those of admission into the church, and those of continuance in its fellowship. We shall here examine the first of these.

When we go to the history of the church as given by inspiration, we find the conditions into it very clearly expressed. We find in the very beginning of our investigation that the Lord added people to the church. “And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (Acts 2:47). Strictly rendered, so scholars tell us, the text reads, “And the Lord was adding to the church daily those being saved.”

This language implies that the Lord saved the people and added them to the church by one and the same process. They were not first saved and then added, nor first added and afterwards saved, but they were saved in being added and added by being saved. Hence, it was not a formal adding to a local congregation by extending the hand of fellowship after salvation from sin, but an adding to the one body of Christ in the obtaining of salvation by obedience to the gospel.

We find that while the first members of the church were added by the Lord, they were added through certain agencies. These were both human and divine. We find the Holy Spirit, the gospel, and the preachers all present and all active in this work. What the Lord did, therefore, He did through these agencies, and he yet accomplishes the same work in the same way. There is not a case in the entire history of the church where one was added to it without all of these agencies. Let him who thinks to the contrary attempt to find it.

Those whom the Lord added heard the gospel, believed in Jesus as their risen and exalted Saviour, repented of their sins, and were baptized. These facts will not be questioned. None were baptized but those who “gladly received his word” (Acts 2:41). There were no infants baptized, then, since they could not have “gladly received his word.” Not only were there no infants baptized and added to the church on this occasion, but there were none added subsequently. This the inspired text clearly implies and absolutely demands.

Those whom the Lord added were being saved—saved from sin. In the Commission, Jesus said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). As recorded by Luke, repentance is added, and the salvation promised expressed by the term “remission of sins” (Luke 24:47). The salvation of the Commission, then, is a salvation from past sins by their remission and conditioned on faith, repentance, and baptism. Those whom the Lord added believed, repented and were baptized. Hence, they were saved from their past sins. All whom the Lord added to the church were thus saved.

Infants are not thus saved. Hence, no infants were added. If infants were among those added to the church, they were saved from sin in being added. If saved in being added, they were unsaved before. Therefore, being added to the church was necessary for their salvation. If infants were unsaved then, before being added to the church, they are unsaved now before they are added. Hence, if they die out of the church they are lost. Unless one is prepared for these conclusions, and we know not who is, he must forever relinquish the idea that among those added to the church by the Lord were infants. Then remember that this was a continuous work, from day to day, and there is no place for the admission of infants into the primitive church.

With the above statement, we find all the subsequent inspired history of the church agreeing. Philip went down to Samaria and preached Christ to them, and “when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized both men and women” (Acts 8:12). There were no infants, then, baptized in Samaria.

“And many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized” (Acts 18:8). No infants among these. Thus we find the continuous history of the church. The gospel was heard, believed, obeyed. But it is claimed that there are some exceptions found to this rule. These are claimed to be found in the conversion of the household of Lydia and that of the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:15, 40).

It is said that Lydia was baptized “and her household;” but to say that her household consisted in whole or in part of little children is an assumption wholly groundless, and mere assertions can never be accepted by those who love the truth when they conflict with a clearly expressed law of the kingdom of God.

The argument claimed in the conversion of the jailer is of the same nature. “The jailer and his house were baptized. His house contained infants. Therefore, infants were baptized.” No one can fail to see the unsupported assumption in the minor premise; hence, the erroneous conclusion.

But instead of this assumption, there are facts stated which forbid infants being among the number baptized.

1. The jailer and his house were preached to—“all that were in his house”— infants are not preached to, therefore there were no infants in his house.
2. The jailer and his house believed—“believing in God with all his house.” Infants do not believe, therefore there were no infants.
3. The jailer and his house rejoiced—“he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.” “Rejoiced” and “believing in God” sustain like relations to the expression “with all his house.” But infants do not rejoice in a religious sense. Hence, there were no infants there.

We see, then, that the jailer and his house were preached to, the jailer and his house believed, the jailer and his house were baptized, the jailer and his house rejoiced. Hence, there were none baptized who were not old enough to be preached to, to believe, and to rejoice in the salvation that is in Christ.

In this short investigation, we have found the following:

1. That so far as the character of those entering the church is revealed, they were baptized penitent believers and saved from past sins.
2. That this was in harmony with the clearly expressed law of the kingdom.
3. That no exceptions have been found to these examples and this law; hence, we conclude that faith, repentance, and baptism were conditions of admission into the church of God. Faith and baptism were constantly connected together in the New Testament churches. Christ did not ordain infant baptism. The opinion that it was “left to the free development of the Christian spirit” is worth nothing to those who take the Word of God as their guide.

What Salvation From Sin Means

Gordon Wilson

Students of the Bible are aware of the fact that salvation, as that term was used in the Old Testament, had an entirely different meaning than it has to us who are under the New Covenant. Then, it meant deliverance from whatever physical dangers were near, as when Israel was saved from Egypt (Exod. 14:30), and Daniel was saved from the den of lions. However, the New Testament speaks more particularly of salvation from sin.

Jesus was offering salvation from sin when He gave the Great Commission, promising that “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). The apostles began to carry out this commission on the day of Pentecost when Peter commanded his audience to “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38). In view of the Lord's offer to provide salvation, it should be worthwhile to inquire as to what is involved in salvation from sin.

First, salvation means freedom from the guilt of sin. When God forgives, He blots out all remembrance of sin, thus holding the sinner absolutely guiltless. We have His promise: “And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more” (Heb. 10:17). Peter told the Jews in Acts 3:19 to “Repent and be converted that your sins may be blotted out.” Sometimes a friend will say “I forgive,” but later will again reproach you with your past mistakes. But when God forgives, we have His blessed assurance that the slate is indeed wiped clean.

Second, salvation means relief from the burden of sin. To one who has been convicted of sin, the reproof of his own conscience is an agony unbearable. The heaviest burden that man can carry is the knowledge that he has sinned against God. Perhaps all of us

can remember the time when we were sinners and first realized it. But to those who are saved the Bible says, “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water” (Heb. 10:22).

Third, salvation means deliverance from the penalty of sin. While the saved person may have to bear the consequences of sins formerly done, still the thought of being snatched, as it were, from the very edge of an eternal hell, by the mercy of a loving God, ought to be inducement enough to make every sinner repent, and is enough to cause gratitude to spring up in the heart of every Christian. If it were not for the grace which the Lord has seen fit to bestow upon us, we should all live in fear of the wrath of God to be executed in the day of final judgment.

Fourth, salvation means that we are no more the servants of sin, but are now become the servants of righteousness (Rom. 6:17). Thus, we have the obligation of rendering the utmost obedience to Christ. In whatever His word bids us do we must be faithful. Having been made free from the service of sin, to return to it is to enter a state worse than the former (2 Pet. 1:9; 2:20-22).

Fifth, salvation means a present refuge from sin. Whenever temptation endangers the saved soul, he can turn to Jesus as one who has likewise suffered temptation but overcome it (Heb. 2:18). Thus, He can be touched by our weaknesses and will extend mercy and grace in our time of need (Heb. 4:15-16). Our God has assured us that with every temptation there will also be provided a way of escape (1 Cor. 10:13). That way is Christ. Also, as God's children we may pray that we be not led into temptation, but delivered from evil, and He will answer that prayer.

Finally, salvation means the hope of being transported to a place where there is no sin. This life offers many pleasures, but we know that it also contains many disappointments and occasions of grief. When we contemplate the fact that all of these evils are brought about as the result of sin, we are led to long for a place where there is no sin. If you can imagine what this world would be like if sin had never entered in, then you can begin to picture to a small degree what heaven shall be like for us. This is the hope of the Christian; a hope that enters in beyond the veil, where Christ has gone as a forerunner for us. (Heb. 6:19-20.)

Realizing what salvation from sin means, any sane person will earnestly desire it, and can receive it through obedience to Jesus Christ.

The Church is not a Denomination

Cled E. Wallace

The church of Christ is one thing and a denomination is something else. They are both different and antagonistic. The church of Christ is a spiritual body, consisting of all Christians, while a denomination is purely a sectarian setup.

A universal acceptance of New Testament teaching regarding the church would annihilate denominationalism—sink it without a trace, while to the extent that denominationalism triumphs, the apostles' doctrine is outraged and the prayer of Jesus for unity is mocked. This may seem to some to be a severe statement of the case, but take a frank look at the problem.

A denomination is a partisan brotherhood. A man can be a Christian, continue “steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and fellowship and in breaking of bread and in prayers” (Acts 2:42) and never belong to one, endorse it, or have one thing to do with it. In fact, if he is just a Christian, a member of the body of Christ, and sticks to the New Testament, he is a living rebuke to everything of the sort. To even suggest that the Founder of Christianity planned that His followers should break up into partisan flocks, adopt human creeds, and wear sectarian names is absurd. This sort of thing is open rebellion to His expressed will. “Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word; that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us; that the world may believe that thou didst

send me” (John 17:20-21 ASV).

Any man who can prove the righteousness of denominationalism by the New Testament is capable of proving that Peter was a Papist, Paul a Baptist, James an Episcopalian, Luke a Methodist, and Apollos a Holy Roller. These men belonged to no denomination, because there were none in their day, and they roundly condemned even the erring tendencies that squinted in the direction of such things. The disciples of Christ were admonished to “contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3 ASV). Paul told Timothy to “abide thou in the things which thou hast learned,” and to “guard that which is committed unto thee” (2 Tim. 3:14 ASV; 1 Tim. 6:20 ASV). They would have disobeyed had they wandered off into anything of a denominational character.

Let two honest and capable men start out in quest of the Truth on the church question. One takes a New Testament and goes to Jerusalem on Pentecost, where and when the church was set up; the other goes to a modern denomination-infested city in the year of our Lord 2020. What does each one find? The man in Jerusalem finds Simon Peter, freshly baptized in the Holy Spirit using the “keys of the kingdom of heaven.” A short time before, the Lord had said, “Upon this rock I will build my church” (Matt. 16:18). After His resurrection and before His ascension, He gave a worldwide commission: “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).

Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, now presents infallible proofs to a vast and astonished multitude that Jesus Christ has indeed risen, and “that God hath made him both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36 ASV). Thousands believed him and cried for mercy:

Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, 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 2:37-38).

The results were truly astounding. “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:41). What do we have here? The church of Christ. Christ has fulfilled His promise to “build” it. What is this church? It is the body of Christ, consisting of all the Christians in Jerusalem, all the Christians in the world at that time. Were there any Christians in Jerusalem who did not belong to the church? Try and find one. The line is clearly drawn between the church and the world—those who were the Lord's and those who were not. “And he is the head of the body, the church” (Col. 1:18). “For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free; and were all made to drink of one Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:13 ASV).

Did the church of Christ have a creed? Indeed, “they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine” (Acts 2:42). These Christians in Jerusalem did not belong to a denomination, yet they were baptized believers in Christ, and, therefore, members of His body, the church. A denomination by common consent does not include all Christians. It is smaller than the body of Christ and larger than any congregation of Christians. It is unauthorized and organized rebellion against the simplicity of the gospel. It is a plant the heavenly Father has not planted, and will be rooted up (Matt. 15:13).

The church of Christ is older than all denominations, and Christianity is older than all human creeds. If by any chance they developed from what we find in the New Testament, it was by a sinful perversion of its principles that would justify God in casting angels down to hell should they be guilty of such a usurpation of authority (Gal. 1:6-7). A man can take a New Testament and go to Jerusalem and easily find and identify the church. Its name, faith, terms of membership, organization, worship are not remotely suggestive of the modern denominational system whose chief function seems to be to eclipse it.

Now let us follow the fortunes of our friends in a modern city where denominations abound. Maybe the general conference or synod or association is in session. He hears

much of “our denominations,” “us as a people,” “our usage,” “our Baptist people,” etc. Although the leaders of these parties profess to be tolerant and broad-minded and concede that no party contains all Christians, yet all are headed for the same place; still they are in such fundamental conflict that a Christian cannot belong to two of them at once. The sectarian spirit is seething, especially under the surface of things. Not one of these sectarian bodies, nor all of them, is the church of Christ. The church of Christ was the body of Christ and included all Christians before there were any denominations.

If the man in Jerusalem starts down the centuries to this modern city of Babylon, he finds that this side of the New Testament differences arose over matters not in the New Testament. Unscriptural terms had to be invented to define unscriptural principles. Parties and party dialects are a natural consequence of departure from the New Testament teaching. Such a mess as denominationalism cannot be identified with the church of Christ, “the house of God, which is the church of the living God” (1 Tim. 3:15).

If the man in the modern city where denominations abound starts back to Jerusalem, he will find the denominations dropping off one by one at some date or the name of some man. If he gets as far as Jerusalem and the New Testament, he will find not even one denomination and no sectarian principles whatever. There are no Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists, and such like in the New Testament, and there ought to be none now. A man who is just a Christian has all the Truth that others have and all that others do not have. He has it all and that ought to be enough to satisfy the most exacting.

Innocent Blood Cries Out

Earl Gieske

One tragic sign of the times in Pagan America is the shedding of innocent blood. On Jan. 22, 1973, the machinery was set in motion which began what is surely the darkest period of our history as a nation. On that date, the United States Supreme Court declared the unborn to be non-persons with no rights under the constitution. According to those liberal, ungodly, men, in a capricious and arbitrary decision, the mother could murder her unborn for any excuse through the first trimester of gestation. Further, with the consent of a doctor, the unborn can be murdered up to any time before the umbilical cord is severed.

By the capricious whim of of seven men in 1973, the machinery was set in motion which has produced the greatest pandemic in the history of the world. The soil of our nation is soaked with the innocent blood of the unborn, and with no reprieve in sight. Multitudes of citizens will go before God at Judgment with blood on their hands.

God sent His people into captivity for 70 years because of the shedding of innocent blood. Surely, the words of the prophet to Israel are just as true about modern America; “For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind...” (Hos. 8:7a). Centuries later, James wrote to spiritual Israel, “Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you...Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you” (Jas. 5:1, 6).

It is not only the mothers and doctors who are causing the abortions and are guilty of murder, but the politicians who vote taxpayer money to fund abortions, the Supreme Court Judges, the people who put political party above principle, the wild eyed radicals who lobby for murder, the liberal media who push the agenda of abortionists, and masses of people who simply refuse to take a stand for truth.

The Hippocratic Oath, which all doctors once took before practicing medicine, reads in part:

I will follow the system of regimen which, according to my ability and judgment, I consider for the benefit of my patients, and refrain from whatever in deleterious and mischievous. I will give no deadly medicine to anyone if asked, nor suggest any such counsel; and in like manner I will not give to a

woman a pessary to produce an abortion. With purity and with holiness, I will pass my life and practice my Art (*The Oath; Great Books of the Western World*, 1952, Vol. 10, p. 23).

Hippocrates was born in 420 BC. He was an idol worshiper and was a heathen, yet how far below the standard he set for himself and other ancient physicians have those in modern medicine fallen who routinely murder the unborn! I do not paint all doctors with the same brush, for there are many doctors who refuse to perform abortions. But for many of them, the Hippocratic Oath is now the **Hypocritical** Oath.

Since that dark day of Jan. 22, 1973, some **62 million abortions** have been performed in the United States alone. Only God knows how many have been performed in the world, but God has marked each one in His book of remembrance. The Bible says, For we know him that hath said, Vengeance *belongeth* unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. *It is* a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb. 10:30-31).

Each minute of each hour of each day of each week, babies are murdered at the rate of **1,206,192 each year** at the hands mothers and abortionists in the U.S. Alone. It staggers the imagination and sickens one to contemplate this horror in our “enlightened” society.

In February, 1981, a private pathology laboratory in Los Angeles, which collected aborted babies for disposal, fell behind in payments on its 20 foot-long storage container. It was repossessed and when workers came to haul it off they were horrified to see the headless body of an infant spill to the ground. The stench of rotting flesh and formaldehyde overwhelmed some of the workers and some of them vomited. Inside the container, they found the bodies of some 17,000 unborn infants. A few of the babies were well formed, some of them certainly past the 22-week cutoff point for legal abortion in California.

Editor's Note: In 2001 an Oklahoma City doctor, who operated an abortion clinic and murdered hundreds of babies, was charged with first degree murder in the death of his wife. In the years he operated his clinic, there was no media coverage of his documented murders of the unborn but the alleged murder of his wife made sensational headlines. “Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!” (Isa. 5:20). Since 1980, **1.6 Billion babies** have been murdered in the womb, worldwide.

The Lord Saves—But Where?

J.P. Lusby

The church of the Lord came into existence according to the eternal purpose of God. “To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Eph. 3:10, 11). It would be a reflection on Him who purposed the church if men could be saved without it as well as with it. It would mean that God had purposed and planned throughout the ages to build an institution which was of no worth or value.

This idea that the church is non-essential implies that the messages of the prophets concerning Christ and his church were fraught with no importance; that John's announcement of the coming kingdom was a farce; that Jesus Christ shed his blood in vain. The theory is an insult to God and a blasphemy toward him who died for the church. It nullifies the whole scheme of human redemption.

Christ said, “I will build my church” (Matt. 10:18). Did He declare He would build an unimportant institution? Did He imply that He was going to build something non-essential? Christ **did** build the church, and penitent souls were added to it. Were they added to something that was insignificant and valueless and unnecessary?

Is the Church “Non-Essential?”

“Oh, but the church doesn't save,” people say; “it is non-essential.” Then why did Christ build it, become the head of it, and fill it with his Spirit? Why did He give His blood for it? Paul says that Christ purchased the church “with his own blood” (Acts 20:28). The blood that was shed on the cross was the purchase price that was paid. But if the church really is non-essential, what reason could there be for so terrible a price being paid for it? If the institution bought by the blood is non-essential, then the shedding of that blood was non-essential. Do you not see that such a theory belittles the blood of Christ, makes void the eternal purpose of God, and nullifies the great scheme of human redemption?

Paul said, “Husbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it” (Eph. 5:25). Christ loved the church enough to die for it. Why should He do so if the church is of no worth? There are those today who claim to love Christ, but who do not love that for which Christ gave His life, the church. They say the church is non-essential! If one does not love that for which Christ died, how can he love Christ? Can one love the Lord and at the same time disparage and belittle the Lord's bride?

There are seven “ones” mentioned by Paul in the Ephesian letter. He declares there is “one body, and one spirit...one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God” (Eph. 4:4-6). Which one is non-essential? Where is the man who would be so presumptuous as to strike one out? There is one God, who is the object of our worship; one Lord, who is the source of our authority; one faith, which is the one gospel; one baptism, which is the common act of obedience; one body, which is the one church; one Spirit, who is the one messenger of revelation to the church; one hope, which is the one motive of desire and expectation. Now which of these “ones” is non-essential ?

Does the Church Save?

“But the church doesn't save” we are told. How often those very words are heard over the radio, from pulpits, in private conversation, and read from the press. The cry is raised, “The church doesn't save; Christ is our Savior.” Now in a sense that is true; but let us try it on other principles. Suppose we should say, “faith doesn't save,” and then add to that “Christ is our Savior.” Immediately we would be cited to the innumerable passages of scripture which teach that we are saved by faith; and would be told that while Christ is our Savior, we cannot be saved unless we believe in Him. And that is exactly right. Christ is our Savior, but that very Savior has told us that, “he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16). Again, suppose we should begin to say, “repentance does not save; Christ is our Savior.” We would be faced with the words of the Savior, “except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3). While repentance is not our Savior, still Christ cannot save us unless we repent. Repentance saves because Christ made it a condition of salvation. If one repents, he will not perish; if he does not repent, he will perish. It is as simple as that.

In precisely the same manner we can say, “baptism doesn't save; Christ is our Savior.” But Peter said, “baptism doth also now save us” (1 Pet. 3:21). You may call it a “figure” or anything you like; Peter said it saves us. Of course, Christ is our Savior. But He has made baptism a condition with which we must comply. Neither the church, nor faith, nor repentance, nor baptism is the Savior; but the Christ who is the Savior has made all of these things a part of His plan of salvation. No man can be saved who ignores any one of them.

In the same sense that faith, repentance, and baptism save, the church saves. It is Christ who is saving through the church. He is “the Savior of the body, the church” (Eph. 5:23). The man who tries to argue that “the church doesn't save; Christ saves,” is making a statement the implications of which he himself does not understand. No one has ever tried to contend for one moment that the church is the Savior. All recognize that Christ and He alone is the actual Savior; but the question is; Where does Christ save? Does He save in the church, or out of it? Does He save by means of the church, or without using it at all ?

God laid down the principle, “In all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee” (Ex. 20:24). But in this, the gospel age, He has recorded His

name in the church. No one, therefore, can hope for any blessing from God who is not in the church.

God purposed and planned the church. Christ executed the plans of the Father, and built the church. He became the head of it; He is the church's savior. Outside the church there is no promise, no salvation, no hope. Inside the church are all the spiritual blessings which God provides (Eph. 1:3). It is **in** the church, **through** the church, and **by means of** the church that the human race can hope to reach that home of the soul. There is no other way.

“What Saith The Scriptures?”

Harrell Davidson

Our question this month is: **“Which coming of the Son of Man is being referred to in Matthew 10:23?”**

We appreciate the questions that readers send us from time to time. Each is a challenge to us to do the very best that we can in answering them.

There are many opinions among religious leaders regarding this passage. Matthew 10 is the sending out of the apostles and they are mentioned in verses 2-4. The apostles were restricted in going out in that they were not to go to the Gentiles or any Samaritan city (v. 5) but commanded to go to the “lost sheep of the house of Israel”—Jews (v. 6).

Verse 6, I believe, is the key to a better understanding of verse 23 questioned above. Why not go to those places and specifically go the Israelites? The answer may be found in verse 23, but we continue to probe. The “lost sheep” are those who had lost their way thus they once met the approval of God or else they could not have lost their way. This by itself proves that once saved always saved is a false doctrine as well as one cannot fall from grace. These had fallen and were said at this juncture to be lost.

Remember that the apostles were to go to the “lost sheep of the house of Israel” so they were in cities where Jews lived. Jesus said that He was sending them as sheep going amidst wolves (v. 16). They would be brought before the councils of men at different places and at times beaten—scourged (vv. 17-18). They did not need an attorney or have to study what and when to say a thing for it would be given them in that hour, and it would not be themselves speaking but the Spirit that spoke through them (vv. 19-20).

Now, we come to verse 23, “But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come”. Which coming is this speaking of?

“The coming of the Son of man” has a fixed doctrinal sense that is not His coming in His kingdom in Acts 2 in my judgment. Nor is this a reference to His coming in the resurrection. He would later tell the apostles that now you see Me and then you won’t, speaking of His resurrection and return to heaven. This has to do with a specific time that had been told of old by the prophets and later quoted by Jesus in Matt. 24: 15 which is part of Daniel 9:23,25,27; 11:31; 12:1. See also Mark 13:14 and read Luke 21:20 that speaks almost the same but a little differently. “And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh”. Though this is also a reference to the same event as told by Christ in Matt. 10:23.

From the time that the verses on Matthew were spoken till the Lord came in judgment against Jerusalem was a little over thirty (30) years. The apostles would not have the time to go to every city hamlet or village in all Israel till this judgment would come.

It is also true that some of those living at that time would see the kingdom come with power (cf. Mark 9:1, Luke 9:27). Others would see the coming of the kingdom—Gentiles grafted in but the destruction of the Jewish economy—nationality—would be a

deadly blow to the Jews who rejected the prophets as well as Christ. The Jews wanted to hold on to the law of Moses going about teaching Gentiles that they also must be circumcised, etc.

Remember that God came in judgment against the Jews—Babylonian captivity. They had rejected the counsel of God. They, as a nation, also rejected Christ. They were warned time and time again.

It would do no injustice to this Scripture for it to refer to the coming of the kingdom—the church, but in my judgment, this is not the thrust of the passage under consideration.

Thanks for your question and your study of the Book Divine.

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

Saved By a “Relationship”?

Nathan Brewer

“Have you done what the Bible teaches you need to do to go to heaven?” Bob asked.

“I don't think we're saved by doctrine. I think our relationship with Christ is the important thing,” Mike replied.

Have you ever heard or taken part in a conversation similar to that? If you haven't, chances are you soon will. We hear more and more these days of the importance of having a “relationship with Christ.” Some questions are in order about this statement.

First, what does it mean to “have a relationship with Christ?” Second, does the Bible tell us to have “a relationship with Christ” to go to heaven? Third, does *doctrine* take a back seat to this “relationship?”

We can kill the first two birds with one stone. No one can go to the Bible and show us what it means to have “a relationship with Christ” or where that instruction is given, because that specific language is not used in the Bible.

This takes us to the third question. The burden of proof rests upon those making this claim. Since the Bible is silent on the subject, the supposed superiority of a “relationship” over doctrine is already proven to be a myth.

First of all, biblical passages explicitly teach this. In Romans six, Paul deals with leaving the life of sin and living a life of obedience to God. He contrasts those who serve sin with the servants of righteousness. In verses 17 and 18 he says, “But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.”

According to Paul, the saints at Rome had once been servants of sin, but by the time he wrote them they were servants of righteousness. He even says they were “made free from sin.” When did this change take place? Paul says it was when they “obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered” to them.

Paul makes a similar statement to Timothy, instructing him to, “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee” (1 Tim. 4:16). Timothy was a preacher and Paul told him to make sure he lived a clean life and heed the doctrine. By doing this, Timothy would save himself and those to whom he preached.

These two passages from an inspired pen make plain the close relationship between doctrine and salvation. But there's a second line of thought to consider. The word *doctrine* has been given an ugly connotation by the world. Many think of words like “legalistic,” “cold,” “rule-keeping,” “Pharisaical” and other nasty epithets when one speaks of *doctrine*. But what is *doctrine*?

According to *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance* and *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of The New Testament*, the word “doctrine” in Romans 16:17 and 1 Timothy 4:16

comes from two different Greek words which mean the same thing—**teaching**. **Doctrine** equals **teaching**.

Teaching is what Jesus spent the bulk of His last three years on earth doing. He said that we come to God through “teaching.” (John 6:44-45). Teaching is what He sent his apostles into all the world to do after He ascended back to heaven. (Matt. 28:18-20). What did Jesus and the apostles teach? **Doctrine!**

To say that one's salvation depends on having “a relationship with Christ” sounds very pious. But all it really amounts to is yet another vague, postmodern, religious catchphrase. The Bible **does not** tell us to be saved by “having a relationship with Jesus.” But the Book does say that if we love him we will keep his commandments. (John 14:15). Isn't that another word for “doctrine?”

A Separate People

Foy E. Wallace, Jr.

The divine idea of separation in religion is as old as the Jewish race. God divinely determined to raise up a people to be his own, a peculiar people, separate from all other people, to preserve belief in the true and living God, to prepare the race of man, then in universal apostasy, for the coming of the Redeemer of man.

Abraham was chosen of God to be the father of the chosen race. But idolatrous Ur of the Chaldees was not a land to nourish such a race. Influences were overwhelmingly against God's purpose to raise up a separate people. Hence, the call of God came to Abram to abandon country and kindred and seek a home in an unknown land. It was a stern requirement, but the true philosophy and absolute necessity of such a demand is seen, and the lofty purposes of God justify the radical measure. “So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him.” And that is the beginning of separation--a separate family.

Years afterwards the posterity of Abraham, through a series of varied providential circumstances, settled in the land of Egypt. There they grew into a numerous race. Their presence within the empire presented a rather ominous aspect to Egypt's Pharaoh, and, as a safety measure, the Israelites were reduced to serfdom. Time developed that they could not serve God in Egypt. Their religion was contrary to Egyptian customs and their worship was in direct conflict with Egyptian idolatry. Separation was essential. God called them out of Egypt. The emancipation of Israel was accomplished by wondrous power. A peculiar nation was formed at Sinai, with peculiar laws, a peculiar government, and peculiar life and relations. In keeping this law and maintaining this separation Israel was blessed. But when they departed, changed their government (1 Sam. 8)) served other gods (Deut. 8: 19), and formed alliances, they were rejected by God and subjected by their enemies. And only after reformation did God grant them restoration (Ezra 10: 10, 11). The lesson of the story is separation—a separate nation.

But that is not the end of the story of separation. God still requires it—a separate church. “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: which in time past were not a people, but now are the people of God” (1 Pet. 2: 9, 10). As fleshly Israel was called out of Egypt, God has called the church, spiritual Israel, out of the world. And to retain the favor of God, the church must maintain that separation distinct and peculiar.

1. The church must maintain separation in speech. “Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard in me” (2 Tim. 1: 13). The power of a united language is demonstrated in the Tower of Babel. It became the bond of an apostate union which God had to break up in a confusion of tongues. And it is so that unity and purity of speech—calling Bible things by Bible names—is a bond among Christians that will triumph over error and bring order out of confusion.
2. The church must maintain separation in doctrine. Paul's charge to “preach the word” and his admonition to “speak thou the things that become sound doctrine” need constant emphasis today. There can be no compromise. Jeremiah

said: “My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.” (Jer. 2: 13.) God’s word is the fountain of living water, our only source of truth. The creeds and doctrines of men are broken cisterns. A compromise with error can only be regarded as a repetition of the evils assailed by the prophet Jeremiah in his day. The New Testament command to “touch not, taste not, and handle not,” does not refer to strong drink, but to “the commandments and doctrines of men.” (Co]. 2: 21, 22.) It is a warning against flirting with error and fraternizing with denominationalism. The growing idea that the “church of Christ” is just a church among churches will prove fatal, and it must not prevail. It is the church or nothing. It is only one way or none. Any participation on the part of members of the church of Christ in denominational functions can only compromise the church and is detrimental to the cause of truth.

3. The church must maintain separation in worship. The Old Testament injunction to “take heed lest ye turn aside” has its counterpart in the New Testament counsel: “Let no man beguile you,...intruding into those things which he hath not seen,...and not holding the Head,...after the commandments and doctrines of men. Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship” (Col. 2: 18-23). Self-devised worship is condemned along with man-written creeds and man-made doctrines. The New Testament pattern must be adhered to. The forms and formalities of men in worship must be shunned. God’s worship is sacred and God is jealous. He requires separation in worship.
4. Finally, Christians must maintain separation in life. Terms of dignity are applied to Christians. The church is “a chosen generation,” it is “a royal priesthood” and “a holy nation.” Christians are to “show forth the praises [or excellencies]” of God who called them. But is there any visible distinction in the lives of professed Christians today and admitted non-Christians? What is it that non-Christians do that the majority of professed Christians are not doing?

The demand of the Bible upon Christians is to deny “ungodliness and worldly lusts” and to live “soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.” It is a demand for separation of life. “Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.”

Two Horrible Diseases

C.D. Plum

The two horrible diseases to which we refer are leprosy and sin. But as bad as leprosy is, sin is much worse. Leprosy has caused untold misery and physical death, but leprosy is a babe compared to the misery and ultimate spiritual death caused by sin.

Two Men

Leprosy works upon one man and sin works upon another man. It is generally understood, I think, that in reality each man is two men. I mean each man is composed of what is divinely called an “outward man” and an “inward man” Paul expressed it this way: “For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day” (2 Cor. 4:16).

Leprosy works on the outward (physical) man, but sin works upon the inward man, or soul. While leprosy in the flesh is dreaded, how much more should we dread to have a sin-sick soul! Jesus says, “Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matt. 10:28). Since leprosy can kill the body, but not the soul, sin is more to be dreaded than leprosy. Leprosy can send the body to the grave, but sin can send both body and soul to hell.

Two Laws

These two diseases are caused by the transgressions of two laws. Leprosy, and most other physical diseases that we have today, are not necessarily caused by the direct transgression of God's law, but such was true in the beginning. Until our foreparents

violated God's law that said, "Thou shalt not eat," disease was unknown (Gen. 2:17). So, indirectly if not directly, disease is due to the transgression of God's law. Then leprosy and all other diseases are largely contracted through the transgression of the laws of health.

Sin is caused by the transgression of the "law of faith." Paul said, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Rom. 14:23). Since faith comes by hearing the word of God, any act of living on our part that crosses God's word is sin (Rom. 10:17). Moreover, any act of work or worship for God that is not in harmony with Christ's word is sin.

Contagious

Leprosy and sin are contagious—that is, you may contract the disease from another. It is because leprosy is contagious that those who have the disease are usually banished to a secluded place. So it is with sin.

We can say with safety that Mother Eve was the first sinner. She took of the forbidden fruit (Gen. 3:6). Her misdeed was catching. Closely following her disobedience was that of her husband, Adam. Those who do wrong usually try to get others to do wrong also, even as Eve gave the forbidden fruit to her husband—and they usually succeed! What a blessing had the sin stopped with her husband but, alas, it did not.

Later, Cain manifested the same sinful spirit in bringing before God an offering that was not according to "faith" as was his brother Abel's. The fact that his "uncalled for" offering was rejected by God and Abel's "called for" offering was accepted by God made Cain's sinful spirit to arise again, resulting in jealousy and the murder of his own brother (Gen. 4:1-10; Heb. 11:4).

Neither did this contagious sin stop with Cain. That spirit was transmitted to our day. Jude says, "Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain" (Jude 11). Just think, friends, how contagious sin must be! From Mother Eve to Father Adam, then to the son Cain, and from Cain to our day, and no doubt until the end of the world. Then in the face of all this, people will look lightly upon sin, wink at it, and indulge in it.

Separation

When people have leprosy, they are usually unfit for clean company—the company of others who do not have the disease. Thus they are separated to a place by themselves and visited only by those who wait upon them. If such could only be so with sin! But since all responsible people have "sinned and come short of the glory of God," it makes it difficult to avoid contact with them.

Frankly, I have often thought, what a shame it is for little innocent children to have to mix and mingle with responsible people, learn their sinful ways, and eventually become sinners. Sin separates one from God (Isa. 59:2) and the apostle Paul warns that Christians be careful of the company they keep, lest they be defiled. "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Cor. 15:33). The American Standard Version says, "evil companionships corrupt good morals."

When a stream of fresh water runs by itself, it remains fresh; but when a stream of salt water runs into it, or it runs into a stream of salt water, the fresh water becomes salty. When Christians "abhor that which is evil," and, as far as possible, keep themselves separated from filthy company, it is easier for them to live better. No doubt, there should be more separation between the clean and the unclean than there is.

No Human Cure

Most doctors tell us there is no genuine human cure for leprosy. It ever has been so. Truly, leprosy is a loathsome disease, without much hope for the afflicted ones.

Under the Mosaic law, God gave a cure for leprosy. In brief, it was this:

1. Take two living birds;
2. Kill one of the birds, catching the blood of it in a vessel that contained water, cedar, wood, scarlet, and hyssop;
3. Dip the live bird in this bloody mixture;
4. Let the live bird go free after the dipping (Lev. 14:4-7).

Even so, there is no human cure for sin. “It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps” (Jer. 10:23). But, through Christ, God has given us a way that will cleanse us from past sins. It is greatly similar to the leprosy cure above. In brief, it consists of this:

1. Take two — Christ and the sinner.
2. Christ was killed and His blood shed (Heb. 9:22-28).
3. Dip the sinner in Christ's blood. This is done when the sinner, being a proper subject for baptism, is baptized—“buried with him by baptism into death”—where Christ's blood was shed (Rom. 6:4).
4. This dipping—baptism—makes the sinner free from past sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16). From this burial, the sinner is raised to walk in a “newness of life” (Rom. 6:4).

The Horrible Death

Those who die of leprosy experience a horrible death. Words can hardly describe it—a slow death, a death by inches but death nevertheless, with decaying flesh and an almost unbearable odor.

But as bad as the death of the leper is, **more terrible** is the death of one who dies in sin. The man who dies in sin cannot go to heaven (John 8:21). His is a departure out into the darkness where there is “weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matt. 25:30). Turn, sinner, for why will you die unsaved?

The Plan of Redemption

John Allen Hudson

It is utterly impossible to discuss all the parts to the wonderful scheme of human redemption. But there is the same evidence of plan and purpose there as in nature, where again it would be impossible to discuss all the parts, or even name them, in one brief article.

Suffice it to say that every part is related to the Lord Jesus Christ and His expiating death on Calvary, just as in nature every part is related to every other part and the whole to a congruous plan. Jesus, the Sun of righteousness is the center of the scheme of redemption as the sun is the center of this solar system.

1. When the first couple sinned, God planned to save man. He was the original planner or designer.
2. Jesus Christ purposed to enter into man's condition and thus prepare Himself to represent man's cause, to go between God and man and effect a reconciliation. He was the mediatorial cause. “For there is one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5).
3. The Holy Spirit, the third person in the Godhead, became the revealing cause, for after the death and departure of our Lord from the apostles, Jesus had the Holy Spirit to come and be their Comforter and to bring all things to their minds whatsoever He had said unto them (John 14:25-26; 16:13-25). This was the special, superior, and distinct work which the Holy Spirit did beginning with the first Pentecost after the resurrection of our Lord (Acts 2). Hence, the Holy Spirit was the third divine causation in the scheme of redemption.
4. The blood of Jesus Christ was the procuring cause of man's redemption. “Without the shedding of blood is no remission” (Heb. 9:22), but it was not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins. No. Only the blood of Christ could save.

Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Pet. 1:18-19).

5. The apostles were the instrumental agency or cause in men's redemption. They were appointed to treat with men and women and to offer redemption to all mankind. Hence, they were called ambassadors for Christ.

In the first sermon preached by them, recorded in Acts 2, man was offered complete forgiveness in the name of Christ for the first time in the history of the world. In that sermon the apostles manifested the place and position that God had assigned them in the scheme of human redemption. They were the vessels and bearers of the message of salvation. What a lofty mission! And for that they had been intensively trained—trained as never were men trained before. They had been with the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, for three and one-half years day and night. In the crowded villages, on the lonely plains by the sea, He had instructed them unto the kingdom of God. Then He gave them the Holy Spirit to safeguard their utterances and to have them say just what heaven wanted them to say in the momentous plan of saving the eternal spirits of men and women. What a work, indeed! “Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ,” said the apostle to the Gentiles (2 Cor. 5:20).

6. The gospel was the didactic and prescribing cause. It makes man to know his condition and God's grace in contrast therewith. Jesus said for the apostles to go and teach all nations. He said for them to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. His commission of authority and commission of duty upon them was most explicit:

All authority is given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have said unto you and, lo, I am with you alway; even unto the end of the world (Matt. 28:18-20).

“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). Wherever they should go from Jerusalem unto the uttermost parts of the earth, their message was to be one and unchanging. It was to be the gospel. “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Rom. 1:16-17).

7. Finally, faith exercised in the heart, would be the appropriating cause. “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). “He that believeth not is condemned already” (John 3:18). “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth, in him, should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

When the people on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus heard, for the first time in the history of the world, the gospel in its fullness offering from God complete forgiveness, Peter said to them, “Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36).

Faith—faith in their hearts was required. “Then being cut to their hearts, they cried out, Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). They believed, and coupled with that faith was this obedience: “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...” (Acts 2:38).

Have you obeyed the gospel plan of salvation? Do you now enjoy the peace with God that comes through the remission of your sins? If not, why not obey the Lord today and be baptized for the remission of sins?

How Does One Know if He is Saved?

Dub Mowery

Frequently someone inquires, “How can I know as to whether or not I have been saved from my past sins?” This is the most important question that an individual can ask concerning himself. Unfortunately many seek the answer in the wrong place and source.

Let us first consider some of the **wrong** ways in which men in general attempt to learn whether they are saved. Some claim, “I know that I'm saved because I feel it right here!” (while pointing to the left side of their chests). But Solomon stated by inspira-

tion: “He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered” (Prov. 28:26). Also, the prophet Jeremiah declared, “O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps” (Jer. 10:23).

It is the inspired Word of God that gives us spiritual light to direct our path. The psalmist reverently stated unto the Heavenly Father, “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psa. 119:105). Thus, the realization of a person's spiritual salvation is not derived by subjectivity—his feelings—but rather by objectivity—evidence outside his own being.

Others seek after a supernatural sign from Heaven as evidence of their salvation. The Apostle Paul warns of those who seek after supernatural signs instead of receiving the truth in love (2 Thess. 2:9-10). God's inspired Word is the truth that saves (John 17:17; 1 Pet. 1:22-23).

Similar to those who look for a supernatural sign, there are those who claim to have received a message from “a still voice.” But what message could such a voice provide for us concerning salvation that is not already included in the Scriptures? According to the Apostle Peter, we have already received “...all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue” (2 Pet. 1:3).

There are still others who claim that they have seen an angel who declared their salvation. However, the Apostle Paul warns against those claiming salvation by an angel that conflicts with the gospel of Christ (Gal. 1:6-9).

Still others claim that they obtained redemption by receiving the Holy Spirit. There is not one example in the Bible of a person being saved by a direct operation of the Holy Spirit. The truth of the matter is that those of the world cannot receive the Spirit (John 14:16-17). God's inspired Word is the instrument of the Spirit to convict us of sin (Acts 2:36-37). In adhering to that inspired Word, a precious soul is born into the spiritual kingdom of God, which is the church (1 Pet. 1:23; Jas. 1:18; Acts 2:47).

Many feel that they are saved because they have “accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Savior.” But Jesus reveals that such a claim is inadequate in obtaining salvation. Recorded at Luke 6:46, He declared: “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” Not only that, but our Lord informs us that professing religious allegiance unto Him is insufficient when an individual fails to **do** the Heavenly Father's will (Matt. 7:21-23).

In a positive way, how can we know whether or not we are saved? The Apostle John tells us at First John 2:3-5 how we can know concerning this most important matter. He stated:

And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.
He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.

The Apostle Paul further clarifies how a person enters into Christ. He reveals that an obedient believer is baptized into Christ (Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:26-27). A person baptized into covenant fellowship with the Lord becomes a new creature (2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 1:3).

The inspired Word is the medium in which the Holy Spirit has revealed what is necessary for our salvation (Jas. 1:21; Acts 11:14; 2 Pet. 1:3). The Apostle Peter, by inspiration, revealed what a person must do to be saved from their sins, “...they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:41). It is our prayer that you will place your trust in the inspired Word of God rather than the creeds of men, or your own feelings and preconceived concepts of salvation.

Visit our Website at
www.thegospelpreceptor.com

How to be a Christian Only

Foy L. Smith

There is no greater plea in the world today than that one which invites people to be “Christians only.” The name Christian includes all that is needed, or should be desired, for spiritual appellation. Indeed, a real, genuine “follower of Christ” should be content in worshipping God as a “Christian only.” Anything less than a Christian is far too short, and anything that goes beyond, transgresses heaven's testimony for humankind. But the important question is: “How may one be a Christian and nothing else?”

Obey the Doctrine of Christ and no More

To obey the Gospel as revealed in the New Testament means:

- Believe in Jesus Christ as the crucified, buried and risen Lord (John 8:28; Rom. 10:10).
- Repent of past or alien sins (Acts 2:38; 17:30).
- Confess your faith in Christ (Matt. 10:32; Rom. 10:10; Acts 8:37).
- Be baptized (immersed) for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:15; Rom. 6:4; Acts 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:21).

Upon such obedience, we have the assurance that God will add us to “the church” (Acts 2:47). And we further know that such disciples were called “Christians first in Antioch” (Acts 11:26).

Wear the Name of Christ and no Other

The fact that God promised a “new name” (Isa. 62:2), and that he gave it “first in Antioch,” should be ample evidence of the all sufficiency of that name. To add to it, to put a handle on it, to weaken it by adding some human name, is but to mar its beauty, dishonor the head of the church, discredit Him who died for us and Whose name we are to wear (Acts 4:12).

It is, then, possible to wear the name of Christ and no other. The Holy Spirit even condemned the wearing of names of inspired men in New Testament times. How could it benefit us to wear names of men who are not inspired, or names given by men who are without heaven's authority to give them (1 Cor. 1:10-13)?

Accept and Abide by the New Testament Creed and no Other

This must necessitate a repudiation of all man made creeds that have become binding upon so many people. It must do away with human doctrines for governing worship. It takes the New Testament to make a Christian; it takes something more than the New Testament to make a person more than a Christian. It is possible to make the claim “let us follow the Bible only,” yet in actual practice, preaching and worship, accept along with it the “doctrines and commandments of men” (Matt. 15:9). Creeds must be revised each year, but the Word of God never has to be revised. Accept it and nothing else.

Be a Member of the Church of our Lord and Nothing Else

It is possible to obey the Gospel, genuinely become a child of God and then go off and “join something” unheard of in the Bible, join an institution not founded by Christ, not wearing His name, nor worshipping according to His divine guidance. To do this is not to be a “Christian only.” God's book, the Bible, is sufficient. The Lord's church, the church of Christ, is enough. It is said: “It makes no difference what church one is a member of.” The Bible says that the church is the body of Christ (Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22-23). Paul says there is only one body; the conclusion is there is only **one church**.

Have a “Thus Saith the Lord” for all That we do

If followed, this sacred principle would make it impossible for us to have in the public worship anything that is not authorized by our heavenly Father. There is something wrong with the man who is not satisfied to take just what the Bible has said. Our worship is to be one of faith (2 Cor. 5:7). Without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6). Faith comes by hearing God's Word (Rom. 10:17). If we practice anything that we did not get from hearing and studying God's Word, it is not of faith. “Whatsoever is not

of faith is sin” (Rom. 14:23). When sin is finished, it brings forth death (Jas. 1:15).

A Final Thought

From these Scriptures we see that in order to be pleasing to our Father, we must have a “thus saith the Lord” for all that we do. Let us have no doctrine but that which is of Christ, no name but the name Christian, no creed but the New Testament, be a member of no church but that which belongs to Christ, and have a “thus saith the Lord” for all that we do and say religiously. In this way, all men are privileged to be Christians only!

Christianity Brings Change

Kent Bailey

The positive aspects of New Testament Christianity brings needed change. As Paul, the Apostle of Christ, presented the truth of God unto the Lord’s church at Corinth he was aware that they had been changed from a life of sin and rebellion against God to that of justification and sanctification in Christ:

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

Sin is a horrible thing. It corrupts humanity and destroys our innocence, alienating us from the fellowship of God (Rom. 3:23). If we remain in this lost condition we will die condemned in our sins. We will stand in judgment before Christ and face condemnation in Hell for all eternity (Rom. 6:23).

Eternal life is the total opposite of a Christless and hopeless eternity. That life will be given in the hereafter to those who have obeyed the gospel of Christ, having their sins pardoned by the blood of Christ and made fit for fellowship with God. This is referred to from two different perspectives; (1) Conversion (*epistrepho*) translated to turn or return, and (2) to have one’s sins blotted out (*exaleipho*) which is translated to obliterate, erase, wipe away, or blot out.

There are two sides to Salvation: Our side in turning to God through gospel obedience and God’s side of divine forgiveness. New Testament Christianity has a specific purpose—to bring change to individuals. God does not save anyone in his sins. He has a divine plan to save individuals **from** their sins through the blood of Christ as such salvation is found through its purchase price located within the New Testament church (Acts 20:28).

Let us note how New Testament Christianity is designed for individuals to bring about change in their lives by conversion to truth which, through obedience to the Gospel of Christ, brings salvation from sin in God blotting out, obliterating, wiping out, erasing all of one’s sins.

There Must be a Change of Trust

When we discuss the aspect of trust we are speaking with reference to one’s faith (*pistis*). Faith is not a blind leap into the dark as *Existentialism* falsely affirms. Faith is established upon both evidence and knowledge (Heb. 11:1-4). Without faith one cannot please God (Heb. 11:6). To be saved from sin one must have faith or trust in Christ (John 8:24). While faith is essential faith only will not save (John 1:12; Jas. 2:24).

There Must be a Change of Mind

The New Testament refers to the change of mind as that of repentance (*metanoia*). When one repents he changes his mind about sin—he looks upon sin differently and determines to cease sinning. One can never change his relationship to God without repentance (Acts 3:19-21; 2 Cor. 7:10). Repentance is a decision to give up sin.

There Must be a Decision to Form a New Lifestyle

Conversion necessitates a turning or return to God (*epistrepho*), Acts 3:19. When one repents there is a change in his living (Rom. 6:14-18, 21-22; Matt. 21:28-31). New Tes-

tament Christianity demands a different lifestyle. When one never attempts to change his lifestyle scriptural conversion does not take place.

New Testament Christianity Gives a New Purpose for Living

When one is not living a life for God there is no true purpose for living. But that is not the case for those who become Christians—members of the Lord’s church. They have a true purpose for life that the non-Christian or the fallen, unfaithful child of God does not have and truly cannot enjoy (Philp. 1:21; 4:5-9).

There Must be a Change in Loyalty Producing a New Allegiance

Consider the aspect of confessing Christ as it relates to Salvation (Acts 8:26-40). That is based upon our faith in Christ and his death burial and resurrection from death (Rom. 10:9). This confession is unto salvation (Rom. 10:10). One cannot be baptized properly without making that confession.

There Must be a Change in Relationship

This change takes place when one receives New Testament baptism as a penitent, having confessed, believer in Christ. One is baptized into fellowship with the Godhead (Matt. 28:18-10); to receive salvation from past sins (Mark 16:16; 1 Pet. 3:21); to receive remission or forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38); to have one’s sins washed away by the blood of Christ (Acts 22:16); to receive the benefits of the death of Christ (Rom. 6:3-7); to enter the fellowship of Christ (Gal. 3:27); to enter into the New Testament church wherein salvation is found (1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4; 5:23; Acts 2:47). If one has fallen away from Christ restoration to this relationship is made possible through repentance of sin, confession of sin, and prayer (Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:6-10).

God's Plan of Salvation

Thomas Allen Robertson

Many people wonder why it is that only through obedience to the Gospel of Christ they can be saved. It is with that question this lesson deals. Peter said, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:1).

Man is in need of salvation for one reason and one reason only—**sin**. God made His creation perfect, but man fell into sin. Not some men, but **all** men have sinned. Hence, because of sin—their own sins—men stand condemned and in need of salvation. Paul said, “We have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin....For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:9, 23). Thus man stands condemned because of his own sins, not the sins of Adam or of his father but for **his own**.

And due to the inherent justice of God the sinner stands condemned to pay the penalty for his sins. Paul tells us that the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). Also we are told that we shall certainly receive the consequence of our life of sin: “Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Gal. 6:7). But someone says: “Why must God punish sin? Why can't He just overlook it? Why can't He just let it go? Why can't He just say it doesn't matter and forgive men? Doesn't God want to forgive men?” God cannot overlook sin because He is a just God. The penalty for sin must be paid. If God did not punish sin, He would be putting His stamp of approval upon it. There would be no standard of right and wrong. God could not punish the vile sinner. God's **justice** makes it necessary for Him to punish sin.

But in spite of the sins of men and their just condemnation God loves His creatures and has devised a means for their salvation. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). Although men stood before Him as vile, guilty and condemned sinners, God loved them and devised a means for their salvation.

By sending Christ into the world to die for the sins of the world God worked out a plan of salvation whereby, at the same time, the penalty for sin could be paid and the sinner who would accept the overtures of mercy thus extended could go free. Of Christ, Peter says, “Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed” (1 Pet. 2:24).

Paul said: “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man” (Heb. 2:9). This is the heart of the Gospel. Christ died in our place. **He** tasted of death **for us**, so that we might go free.

The salvation thus purchased at so great a price is free to us—we can accept it or reject it. Paul said, “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:23). And again, speaking of Christ, he said, “Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him” (Heb. 5:8-9). Thus if we want this salvation which has been purchased for us we may have it through obedience to Christ, by doing the things commanded in his Gospel.

Well, what are the terms upon which this great salvation is offered to the world? Let Christ tell us. In commissioning the apostles, Christ 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). When the apostles placed the great commission into operation, as recorded in Acts 2, they told men who desired to be saved to “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38).

And as we follow the work of the apostles under the great commission, we find them teaching that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16), that faith is produced by the hearing of the word of God (Rom. 10:17), that men must believe in Christ if they are to be saved (Rom. 10:9-10; Heb. 11:6), that men must repent of past sins in order to be forgiven (Acts 17:39; 2 Pet. 3:9), that confession of faith in Christ is to be made with the mouth unto salvation (Rom. 10:9-10; Acts 8:37), and that in order to get into Christ, where salvation is granted by the blood of Christ, men must be baptized in water for the remission of past sins (Rom. 6:3-7; Gal. 3:26, 27; 1 Pet. 3:21). The apostles also taught that those thus saved from their past sins must continue to live godly lives as Christians thus working out their own salvation. (Phil. 2:12; 2 Peter 1:5-11).

This is God's plan for the salvation of man. He is not willing that any should perish. (2 Pet. 3:9). But His justice demands that He take vengeance upon all who will not obey the Gospel of Christ (2 Thess. 1:7-10). Will you accept God's plan of salvation while you have time and the opportunity is yours? The time is coming when man can only say “too late, too late.”

The Great Spiritual Physician

Gary L. Grizzell

Christians sing the beautiful song entitled *The Great Physician* by William Hunter (published 1859). This article shows the reason Jesus Christ deserves to be called such.

And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him. And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners? But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance (Matt. 9:9-13; see also Mark 2:17; Luke 5:31).

Jesus is seen in Matthew's house eating with those who had a bad reputation in the community. The self-righteous Pharisees question Jesus' disciples about this matter. Jesus overhears. So, at this point He teaches them a much needed lesson.

Jesus made the following remarks to His critics:

1) “They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.” The application is

that the tax-collectors and known sinners needed the spiritual physician. Thus, His association with them was for that purpose. Note that not all association is fellowship.

2) “Go ye and learn what that meaneth.” For the Lord to rebuke the Jewish religious leaders and tell them to go and learn a passage of scripture was to insult them greatly.

3) “I will have mercy and not sacrifice.” This was a quote from Hosea 6:6 emphasizing that religious works without the right motives were but vanity as far as their relationship with God was concerned! Those Pharisees had outward righteousness but were lacking in love, mercy and faith. Nor did they have a proper sense of justice.

4) “For I am not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.” Jesus reveals His mission on earth. Also, He reveals the remedy, the prescription—the antidote—for the sin-sick soul. That antidote is repentance. Repentance is a change of mind which results in a change of conduct, direction, and life in an obedient faith. From this account we learn that Jesus is truly The Great Physician.

The Spiritually Sick Must Come to the Great Physician

Jesus said, “They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.” This great principle is perhaps best illustrated in Luke chapter 15. In that chapter the Lord told about three things that were lost: 1) lost sheep, 2) lost coin, and 3) the lost boy. Those who were concerned left the safe ones to focus on and retrieve the lost ones. (1) The farther the sheep went astray, the closer the Shepherd was willing to follow, to find, and bring it back into the fold. (2) The woman left her nine silver coins to diligently sweep the house in search of the 10th piece. (3) Of his two sons, the loving father focused on his lost son. He watched with hope and great anticipation for his youngest son to come home from his lost state in a far country. Jesus said, “Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth” (Luke 15:10).

Any group of religious people (organization) where the upright, righteous individuals get all the attention and love is not the church of our Lord which one reads about in the New Testament. The mission of the church is to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). The philosophy of the world is that the little guy is the least important, but not so in the church of our Lord. This principle is seen in that each member is important to God and should be to us:

Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: and those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness (1 Cor. 12:22-23).

My little children, these things write I unto you, **that ye sin not**. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:1-2; Emph. GLG). We are to strive not to sin. Nothing being said here is to discount the need for obedience and repentance (Luke 13:3). However, to have the view that because one is sinful the Lord does not care for his soul is a misconception of the identity of Jesus Christ. Remember that the good shepherd in the Luke 15 parable sacrificially left the safe sheep to go out and find the one lost sheep. Of course that shepherd represents Jesus, the great shepherd. “Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, **that great Shepherd** of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant” (Heb. 13:20; Emph. GLG). “Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear” (Isa. 59:1).

The Example Of Paul

And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should

hereafter believe on him to life everlasting. Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen (1 Tim. 1:12-17).

Do you feel you cannot be worthy in order to be a child of God? Allow me to ask you this: Have you committed blasphemy? Paul did and was forgiven. Have you committed injury to someone? Paul did and was forgiven. Have you persecuted someone for being a controversial Christian? Paul did and was forgiven. Have you held the garments for others while they stoned a faithful gospel preacher to death? Paul did and he was forgiven. Have you abused civil law and its authorities to pursue, find fault with and persecute members of the church? Paul did and was forgiven. (Acts 9:1-2). In each of these cases he sincerely repented. "And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6).

Later, Paul himself would be targeted by the chief men of the city because they had been stirred up and manipulated by the local religious leaders. "But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts" (Acts 13:50). These women may have been "honourable women" in man's eyes, but certainly not in God's. There is not a poisonous tongue more damaging to a gospel preacher's reputation than a gossiping woman's tongue. Many times those gossips are idle widows or rich men's wives with too much time on their hands. On this passage an insightful comment is, "The potent influence of the female character both for and against the truth is seen in every age of the Church's history" (*Jamieson-Fausset-Brown*).

Speaking of persecution, it is His testimony (the Lord's) that is important—who He is, the only begotten Son of God. "I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and **for the testimony of Jesus Christ**" (Rev. 1:9; Emph. GLG). Modern-day testifying sessions of individuals telling all about themselves is not what saves a soul from spiritual death. We are to preach His testimony. He is the I AM. "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24). "And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were **slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held**" (Rev. 6:9; Emph. GLG). Christian martyrs in the first century were slain for telling the world about who Christ is, the Savior, the resurrected one, deity—not all about their personal lives in what has become in modern times blubbering, back-patting, feel-good sessions of pseudo Christianity. (This article is not saying that we should not confess our faults one to another and pray one for another as James 5:16 teaches, but we must guard against abuses of that passage). It is the gospel that is the power to save, not our personal stories about ourselves (Rom. 1:16-17).

Yes, we are aware that Paul told about himself—his conversion—because he was an apostle born out of due time. Paul wrote, "And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time" (1 Cor. 15:8).

Paul was called by the pen of inspiration the chief of sinners! "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save **sinners; of whom I am chief**" (1 Tim. 1:12; Emph. GLG). The Holy Spirit called Paul the chief of sinners, not you. A principle learned from a statement Jesus made dealing with another person is seen here: "Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but **to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little**" (Luke 7:47, Emph. GLG). So in Paul's case we are reminded that he that is forgiven much, loves much.

Guilt

Note the difference between how Peter dealt with guilt as opposed to how Judas dealt with it. Peter denied Christ three times and later went out and wept bitterly for his sin. "And he went out, and wept bitterly" (Mat. 26:75). He sincerely repented and as a faithful apostle was allowed to preach the gospel on the birth date of the church of Christ (Acts 2). He had become a great servant of God, and among other achievements

penned two epistles by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (1 and 2 Peter). Peter successfully dealt with his guilt for sins by believing he had been forgiven by the blood of Christ and told others how to obtain remission of sins (see Acts 2:38).

The Holy Spirit used **Peter** to tell us how to have peace of mind and freedom from guilt by having a good conscience toward God:

1 Peter 2:19 — “For this is thankworthy, if a man for **conscience** toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully”

1 Peter 3:16 — “having a good **conscience**; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ”

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

How did Judas, who betrayed the Lord into the hands of His enemies for 30 pieces of silver, deal with his guilt? To say he responded unwisely is an understatement. He went out and hanged himself (cf. Acts 1:18). That was so sad and needless. While still on the earth Jesus summarized that, “Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Luke 24:46-47). Too bad Judas disallowed himself to be a part of that effort to preach the good news of salvation beginning at Jerusalem. During the Lord’s life on earth, when Judas had secretly chosen the wrong path, Jesus said of the man who would betray him that “good were it for that man if he had never been born” (Mark 14:21).

“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isa. 1:18). Some seem so stressed out by guilt for sins that they act like they think, if it were possible, they are the chief of sinners. No one before Paul or after him may be called this. Why? Is it because there have not been others who were blasphemous, injurious and murderous of Christians? No, there have been others who had these traits. Nero of Rome was all of these and more. Paul was this wicked and, at the time the church began, he was a religious leader of the Jews. He was sincere, but religiously wrong, thinking the law of Moses was still binding—which it was not (Col. 1:14). So, unless you lived at the time when Christianity was just getting its feet off the ground, were a murderer of Christians, and called by the pen of inspiration the chief of sinners, then you can’t claim to be such.

Why do some who are over-ridden with guilt think they cannot be forgiven by God? Do they imply they are the chief of sinners? If you hear a person say (or you think to yourself), “I am not a Christian because I cannot live the Christian life. I’m not good enough to be accepted of God. The Lord would never receive me,” then remember that if God could forgive the chief of sinners He can and will forgive you, when you repent and obey the terms of salvation found in Jesus’ New Testament. Remember Paul said, “**I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him**” (1 Tim. 1:16; Emph. GLG).

Those Who Reject the Spiritual Great Physician are Without Hope of Forgiveness And Eternal Life

His critics of Nazareth said to Him, “Physician, heal thyself.” This expression is found only in Luke 4:23. The sentiment, however, is seen in Matthew 27:39-44. The enemies of Christ, Jewish religious leaders, mocked him while on the cross with the following wicked demands and accusations:

“If you are really the Son of God, you should save yourself, proving it, by coming down from the cross.”

Jewish religious leaders mocked Him with the wicked taunt that He had saved others, but He could not save Himself.

He has the obligation to come down from the cross to prove His claim that trusting in God was a credible claim.

Quoting from Isaiah 6:1 Jesus told those people of Nazareth that God had sent Him “to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives” (Cf. Luke 4:18). They rejected Him and thus denied themselves spiritual healing.

What must you do to become a New Testament Christian? Hear the gospel (Rom. 10:17). Believe in Christ (John 8:24), Repent of your sins (Acts 2:38), confess Christ as the Son of God (Acts 8:37), and be baptized (buried) in water for the forgiveness of your sins by the blood of Christ (Acts 2:38).

What did Saul of Tarsus (Paul, the chief of sinners) do to receive forgiveness? Having heard the gospel, believed in Christ, repented of his sins, and confessed the Lord, he was told to arise and be baptized and wash away his sins. He did that and so can you. “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16).

Jesus had power while on earth to both miraculously heal the body and, additionally, heal the soul. Note Matthew’s account below.

And he entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into his own city. And, behold, they brought to him a **man sick of the palsy**, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; **thy sins be forgiven thee**. And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth. And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) **Arise, take up thy bed**, and go unto thine house. And he arose, and departed to his house. But when the multitudes saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men. (Matt. 9:1-8; Emph. GLG).

The next time you come in contact with someone who believes God won’t accept him because that person thinks he is not good enough, remind him what the great physician said: “They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick” (Matt. 9:12).

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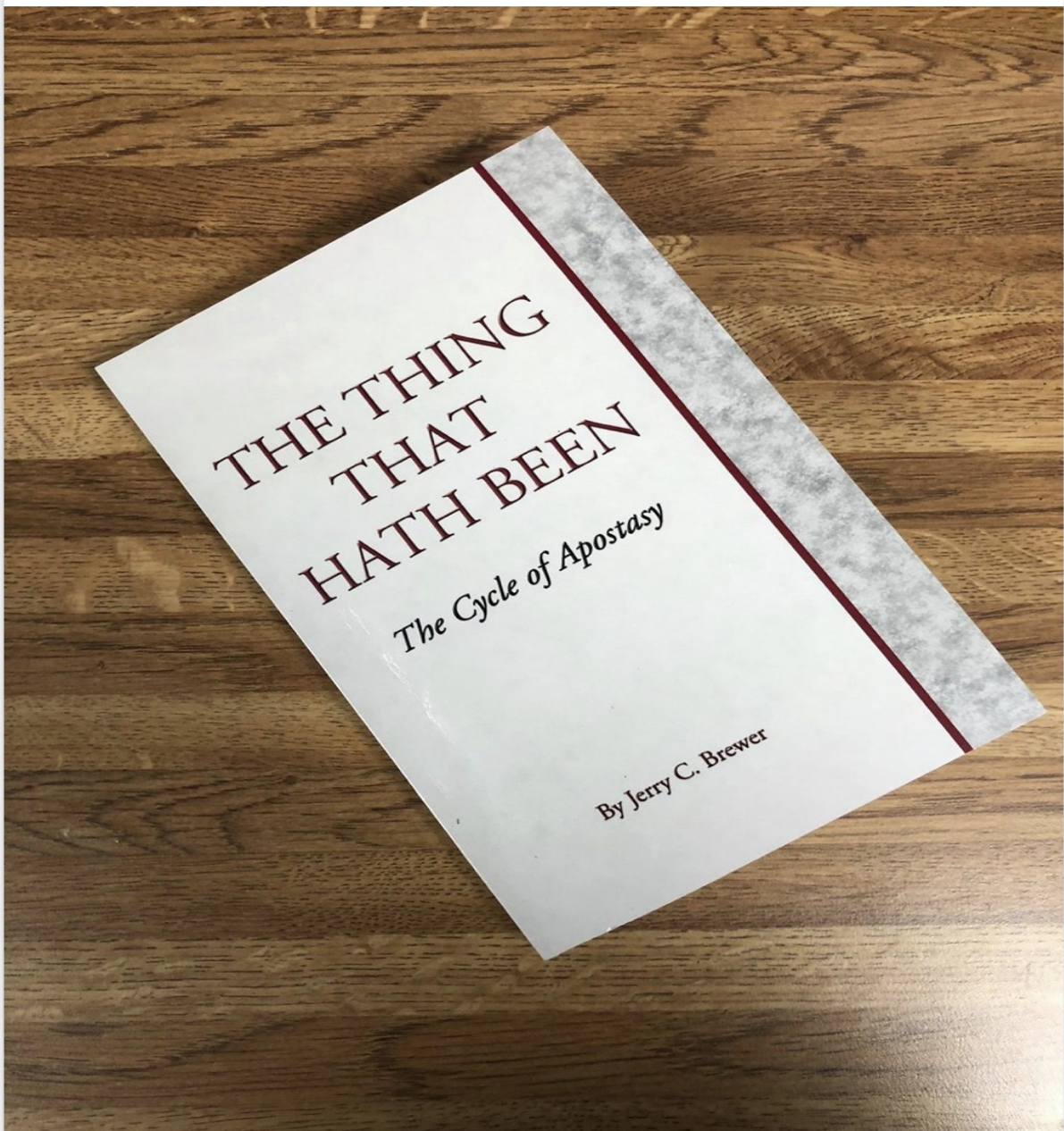
“The Thing That Hath Been...”: The Cycle of Apostasy



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.



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“The Way”

Doug Post

The New Testament reveals what the Old Testament taught. Of course, the Old Testament taught about the coming Messiah (Isa. 53) and a new era (Isa. 2:2-4; Jer. 31:31-34; Dan. 2:44), all of which point to Jesus Christ and His work (Gal. 3:19-27). Christ was the end of the law of Moses (Rom. 10:4), ushering in the New Testament, which replaced the Old: “Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.” He takes away the first that He may establish the second. By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Heb. 10:9-10, NKJV).

Here we learn Jesus came to do the Father’s Will as was spoken in the Old Testament (Psa. 40:6-8). Christ would, and did, take away the **first** (Covenant or Testament) and established the **second** (Covenant or Testament). Moreover, it is through “**that will**” (the “**second**” or New Testament) that all people would be sanctified. Jesus says all will be sanctified by the Truth, which is the Word or teachings of Christ (John 17:17, 20). Therefore, the New Testament is the Truth—the Word, a body of teaching designed to save souls. The apostle Paul was a minister of the New Testament (2 Cor. 3:6) but he was a minister of the gospel and the faith (Col. 1:23; Gal. 1:6-9, 23; cf. Gal. 3:25-26). All these passages indicate that the New Covenant or Testament, the Gospel, the Truth, the Word, and the faith are all synonymous terms. They are simply different words defining the same system or body of instruction.

Interestingly, there is another term synonymous with the aforementioned—“**the way**.” It is a term peculiar to Luke and the book of Acts. At the beginning of the New Testament there are four books referred to as the “gospels.” While there is only **one** Gospel, the term simply stands for the four writers, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, who provided four different perspectives of the events in the life of Christ. Following these four books is the book of Acts, which is the history of the church in the first century after the ascension of Christ. The book of Acts is the historical biography of the unfolding of the Great Commission assigned to the Lord’s Ambassadors, the apostles (Acts 1:8; Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:47-49). The first part of Acts focuses on the establishment of the church and then the spread of the church, with particular emphasis on the work of the apostle Peter. Luke then focuses his attention on Paul and his work as he brings the Gospel to the Gentile world, establishing churches among them.

The word *way* means a path, a direction, a way of life, or a course of life. For instance,

there are a number of people in the Bible who are said to have departed a certain place and went their way. Solomon personifies wisdom when he says, “I have taught thee in the way of wisdom; I have led thee in right paths” (Prov. 4:11). The “**way of wisdom**” is parallel to “**right paths**.” Elsewhere Solomon speaks of “instruction,” which is the point here.

The use of **the way** is related to teaching or instruction. When a person receives proper instruction, they have gained wisdom, which they can use in their walk of life. The Psalmist writes, “Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord” (Psa. 119:1). That is, those who are deemed righteous are the one who live their lives according to the instruction of God’s Word. Sometimes the word *way* might be used in the plural form—*ways*. However, walking in **the way** of the Lord is no different than walking in **the ways** of the Lord. The **way**, singular, encompasses all the teachings, or **ways**, of the Lord. For instance, the one who walks in the way of the Lord (Psa. 119:1) is walking in the ways of the Lord: “They also do no iniquity: they walk in his ways” (Psa. 119:3).

With God there is a right way and a wrong way. The right way is always God’s **way** or **ways**. Walking accordingly means one is walking in “**the way of righteousness**” (Prov.12:28; Luke 7:29; 2 Pet. 2:21) However one can leave “**the way of righteousness**” (Prov. 2:13). Jesus refers to “**the way of righteousness**” as the “**narrow road**,” which leads to life, but very few walk this road. Only those who love God’s word and its constraints will walk this road. On the other hand, many folks do not want to be confined by God’s word and will throw off its restraints. Jesus says many will walk this “**broad way**,” leading to death (Matt. 7:13-14). The **way** (singular) or **the ways** (plural) refer to the same thing—the teaching or teachings of God as found in Scripture: “I will meditate in thy precepts and have respect unto thy ways” (Psa. 119:15). The precepts are the teachings or **ways** God has provided for us in His word.

The prophet Isaiah writes:

Strengthen ye the weak hands and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes. And an **highway** shall be there, and **a way**, and it shall be called **The way of holiness**; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein (Isa. 35:3-8, Emp. DP).

Isaiah speaks of “**highway**” or “**a way**” which will be provided for those in need of salvation. He is simply continuing his earlier prophecy at the beginning of his writing:

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

Isaiah is simply speaking of the establishment of the Lord’s church, which occurred in Jerusalem (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8; Acts 2). The apostles were endued with power and began speaking in various languages, in order to accommodate all the visitors in Jerusalem for Pentecost. Evidently, they did not speak nor understand the Hebrew language, but Peter and the rest of the apostles received miraculous power from the Holy Spirit and preached the Gospel, for the first time to all these people and in their own language. This is the symbolism of the tongues as fire upon each of the apostles

(Acts 2:3) whereby they were fulfilling what Isaiah had prophesied (Isa. 2:2-3, 35:8). This was the gospel, the law, the word, His ways, His paths, the faith—the New Testament.

While the word *way* is a common word, the term “**the way**” has a peculiar but significant meaning. Just as the word *faith* means one thing, the term “**the faith**” carries an altogether different understanding. The word *faith* concerns the subjective standard and/or views, understandings, and beliefs of an individual, while *the faith* (the word or gospel of Christ) is a body of teaching or objective standard designed to produce *faith* (belief) in the individual (Rom. 10:17).

However, *way* and *the way* are sometimes synonymous but sometimes not. For instance, after the Ethiopian eunuch was baptized, Luke tells us, “and he went on his way rejoicing” (Acts 8:39). Then, while persecuting the church, Paul had gone to the high priest, “And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem” (Acts 9:2). The use of *way* in Acts 8:39 is vastly different than the use of *the way* in Acts 9:2. Context, ultimately, determines the meaning or usage. Moreover, *this way* refers to *the way*. Note what Paul says: “But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets” (Acts 24:14). Here *the way*, which was called a heresy, is simply Christianity. When Paul says he believed all the things written in the law and the prophets he was referring to the prophecies written concerning Christ and His kingdom. This kingdom would be directed by New Covenant system of law.

In saying He was the way, the truth, and life, Christ was referring His teachings or the New Testament in His blood (Matt. 26:28). Christ dying and shedding His blood for the forgiveness of sins is directly, related to the new law or Testament, which would be the means by which salvation would be obtained. That no one can come to the Father except by Christ who is **the way, the truth and life**, means no one can come to the Father except through His Gospel message, which, itself, is **the way, the truth, and the life** (John 6:63, 8:31-32, 12:48). No one finds God the Father, unless they go through the teachings of Christ, which are not only found in the first four books of the New Testament, but in the rest of the books of the New Testament. Jesus told His disciples He had many more things to tell (teach) them but at the moment, since Jesus was going to the cross to carry out His assignment, they would not be able to understand or grasp them (John 16:12). However, after He returned to the Father in heaven, Jesus sent the apostles the Holy Spirit who would guide them into all truth and help them preach the Gospel message to all the world (John 16:13; cf. vv. 7-15).

Ultimately, the term *the way* pertains to the course or path one takes to obtain salvation. “The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us **the way of salvation**” (Acts 16:17 ff.). The way is the only *highway* or road one can take to make it to heaven. The phrase *the way of salvation* tells us two important facts: Salvation is obtainable, but it can only be obtained by following this **one way**.

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