

The Gospel Preceptor

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

Volume 3, Number 11

Published Monthly

November, 2020

“Lord, Suffer Me First to go and Bury My Father”

Nana Yaw Aidoo

After delivering the last discourse in His great Galilean ministry, Jesus Christ “stedfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem” (Luke 9:51). His death was drawing ever closer but our Lord “marched resolutely towards that dark event.” On the way to Judea, our Lord encountered three prospective disciples and through these encounters, we are taught lessons on the cost of discipleship, for all time (cf. Luke 9:57-62). Let us however focus on the encounter with the second prospective disciple. When He met this person, Jesus Christ said to him, “Follow Me” (Luke 9:59). In response, the would-be disciple said “Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.” Our Lord then said; “Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.” (Luke 9:60). In view of the fifth commandment in the Decalogue, which explicitly stated; “Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee” (Exod. 20:12), the response of Christ to this prospect, is on the surface, quite baffling.

What did our Lord mean when He said, “Let the dead bury their dead...?” Was He telling the prospect to dishonor his dad? That cannot be, for if that were the case, then our Lord would have been guilty of sin, something we are certain He wasn't guilty of (cf. Heb. 4:15; 1 Pet. 2:21-24). Actually, Jesus Christ, who knew what was in man (John 2:25), knew that the prospect was simply making an excuse. There is no indication that the prospect's father was dead. If his father were dead and unburied, he wouldn't have been standing by the roadside for Christ to meet him and say to him, “Follow Me.” Rather, as David Roper notes, he would have been taking care of his responsibilities since in Bible lands, the burial of dead people took place immediately, and even if possible, on the same day with the subsequent ceremony taking a week or more. (*The Life of Christ 2*, p.21). Please notice if you would that it was Christ who requested this person's discipleship and not the other way round. Thus, the would-be disciple's response was more like, “Later! I'd consider it.” David Roper wrote of this text; “Those who have lived in that culture give many examples in which the words 'Let me first bury my father' indicated that in the far distant future, the speaker would consider the proposal” (ibid). Jesus knew that this would-be disciple was making an excuse and thus, the reason for not wanting to follow Christ was an illegitimate one.

However, friends, may we for a moment consider the excuse of the second prospective disciple? He told Christ; “Lord, suffer me **first** to go and bury my father.” The word *first* ought to catch our attention. Roper wrote; “The tragic word in the man's excuse is the word 'first'” (ibid). All who have read the Bible, know how much emphasis Christ places on Him being first in our lives. He said; “But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness..” (Matt. 6:33). He also said; “He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me...” (Matt. 10:37). If we would put first things first, then Christ would be or ought to be topmost priority in our lives. Our love for, and loyalty to, Christ must trump our love for, and loyalty to, even our most beloved relatives. However, by telling Christ to allow him to *first* go and bury his father, this prospective disciple was calling “for a radical transference of loyalty.”

How many times have we not seen the attitude that characterized this prospective disciple, in many people today? So many young ones moving through to the tertiary institutions say, “I am too young to think about God. Let me enjoy myself a little bit **first**. Then I'll follow Jesus.” When these young ones complete their tertiary education and become professionals, they then say; “I need to make it in life and so I need to work hard. My work is demanding and thus I am too busy and I get too tired often. Let me **first** of all become established. Then I'll follow Jesus.” Then, due to the brevity of life, in a short while, these ones find themselves so much advanced in years. This time round they say, “I need to plan my retirement because I need to enjoy life at that age too. So let me get my affairs in order **first**. Then I'll follow Jesus.” All these people seemingly forget that, since it is appointed unto men to die; they who were at one point young ones, will die too unless Christ comes first. Then finding themselves in “torments” (Luke 16:23), they will realize that it's now too late to think about God. “Of all sad words of tongue or pen, the saddest are these. It might have been.”

Dear reader, are you a Christian? If not, I urge you to run to Jesus for the cleansing power and be washed in the blood of the Lamb. There is no other day but today because “ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away” (Jas. 4:14). Believe with all your heart that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that He was raised from the dead (John 8:24). Repent of all your sins (Luke 13:3). Make that great confession that you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (Matt. 10:32). And upon that confession, allow yourself to be baptized in order to wash away your sins (Acts 22:16). From the watery grave of baptism, rise to walk in the newness of life, continuing in faithfulness to God (Rev. 2:10) and you shall receive eternal life as your victor's crown as promised by the God who cannot lie (Titus 1:2).

Jesus loves you and He bids you come today. “...behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Cor. 6:2).

Conversations With God or Satan?

Jess Whitlock

There is a book written 25 years ago that is making a resurgence. It is pushed by Oprah Winfrey, the Scholastic Book Club in schools, and Amazon calls it a “Good Read.” The book is entitled, *Conversations With God*, written by Neale Donald Walsch which began as a trilogy, but ended up as a series of ten books. Neale Donald Walsch puts himself in the place of God and encourages his readers to become their own “god.”

An inspired author wrote, “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness” (Rom. 1:18). Mr. Walsch is very well described by Paul: “...professing to be wise, they became fools” (Rom. 1:22).

Those who have read this spiritual junk food have rated it from one star to five stars! I would have to give this man's writings minus one trillion stars!

One reader said, “I think I've found my new Bible.” Another said she had been a religious conservative in Texas and read Walsch's book at age 15. Now, she is 21 and does not believe that Walsh “talks to God” because now she is an atheist! Another commented that he had heard the book would provide the reader with comfort, to which he replied it is “...like hard liquor, it may make you feel warm and fuzzy, but ultimately it's going to mess you up.”

Walsch actually claimed inspiration for his writing, stating that God spoke to him “over his right shoulder.” Walsch makes the claim that we (all human beings) are **God**. Where he used the upper-case “G” I would have to change it to the lower-case “g”. His reasoning sounds like Satan in the garden as he tempted Eve saying, “...For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil...” (Gen. 3:5). Walsch makes the claim that death is simply “the great illusion.” Therefore do not be surprised to discover that he denies the reality of judgment day (Acts 17:31; Rom. 14:10-12; 1 Cor. 5:10; Heb. 9:27). Walsch also

denies the existence of heaven and hell (John 14:1-6; 2 Cor. 5:1; Heb. 11:16; Matt. 25:41; Mark 9:43-48; Rom. 2:8-9; Rev. 20:14-15).

Walsch contends that such is the case because there is no sin (John 8:44; Rom. 3:23; 6:23; 7:23-25; Heb. 3:13; 6:4-6; 12:1; Jas. 4:17; 1 Pet. 5:8; 1 John 2:16; 5:17).

The apostle Paul would respond, “And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient” (Romans 1:28). The series of Walsch’s books is correctly rated as “fiction.” That is “writing that describes imaginary events and people...fabrication as opposed to fact.” Walsh makes himself into “god” (the lower case “g” is intentional on my part, JLW). Here are just a few examples of his heretical writings:

- A girl asks “god” this question, “Why am I a lesbian?” She is told by Walsch that it is because “...she was born that way because of genetics...” Then she is told to go and ‘celebrate’ her differences.
- A girl poses this scenario to “god” saying, “I am living with my boyfriend, my parents say I should marry him because we are living in sin. Should I marry him?” Walsh says, “Who are you sinning against? Not me, because you have done nothing wrong.”
- Mr. “**god**” Walsh is asked about how sins can be forgiven? Listen to this: “I do not forgive anyone because there is nothing to forgive...there is no such thing as right or wrong and that’s what I have been trying to tell people...the rule is ‘judge not lest ye be judged’...”

Such blasphemy goes on page after page in all of his writings. His fantasy is 99.95 percent lies with a little truth thrown in to deceive the gullible. Once I had to buy some rat poison. I noted that 98 percent was wholesome grain, but the 2 percent poison got the job done. Every time Walsch gives an answer to such questions from his fevered imagination, he stands diametrically opposed to the Bible. We learn in 2 Timothy 3:16-17: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”

Let us determine to get the word out to parents, grandparents, teachers and administrators in our schools, to churches and preachers, and to the few politicians who still respect the authority of God’s Word. We have been warned in 1 Peter 5:8. Right now, he is seeking our children and our children’s children! What will you do? Our nation is under attack!

Getting Further From the Truth

David Ray

The following excerpt comes from an article dated March 17, 2014 titled “Scientists Find Cosmic Ripples From Birth of Universe.”

Astronomers have discovered what they believe is the first direct evidence of the astonishing expansion of the universe in the instant following the Big Bang—the scientific explanation for the birth of the universe some 13.8 billion years ago.

Scientists believe that the universe exploded from a tiny speck and hurled itself out in all directions in the fraction of a second that followed, beginning just 10 to the minus 35 seconds (roughly one trillionth of a trillionth of a second) after the universe’s birth. Matter ultimately coalesced hundreds of millions of years later into planets, stars, and ultimately us.

And like ripples from a ball kicked into a pond, that Big Bang-fueled expansion caused ripples in the ancient light from that event, light which remains imprinted in the skies in a leftover glow called the *cosmic microwave background*.

Scientists still don’t know who kicked the ball

(<http://www.foxnews.com/science/2014/03/17/major-discovery-smoking-gun-for-big-bang-expansion-found/>).

There are only two competing views regarding the origin of the universe: God and the Big Bang Hypothesis. Therefore, to disprove one is to prove the other. Knowing this, we listen to the opponents of God to see if their explanations hold water and we find that the best answer they can give, in addition to being totally illogical and downright ludicrous, doesn't actually answer the question at all!

Wikipedia simply says "At this time [the time of the alleged Big Bang, DR], the universe was in an extremely hot and dense state and began expanding rapidly" (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Expansion_of_the_universe). So, at the time of the Big Bang the universe was really hot. But didn't the universe come into being **because of** the Big Bang? Isn't the Big Bang proposed in order to compete with God as an explanation for the origin of the Universe? But according to this, the universe already existed. So, the Big Bang clearly has nothing to do with the true origins of the Universe since it happened **after** the Universe came into existence.

According to the article above, "the universe exploded from a tiny speck." To say that the universe came from a *speck* that *exploded* (aside from being illogical) still leaves us asking, "From whence came the speck?" Was it in existence prior to and outside of the universe, or was the *speck* the entire universe condensed and compacted into something very, very small? (One should feel silly even asking this!)

Allegedly, millions of years after the Big Bang, "matter ultimately coalesced...into planets, and ultimately us." Where did this *matter* come from—enough matter to form millions of planets and stars? From the explosion of a speck?! As a child, I loved fireworks (anything that could blow something up)! Sparing many of the details, my scientific conclusion was that explosions are **destructive, not constructive!** Yet atheists try to reduce this enormous universe into nothing more than a crumb that exploded. But this still doesn't explain the origin of **that crumb**.

The whole purpose for believing in the Big Bang is so they **don't** have to believe in God. And yet, their explanation doesn't really explain anything. It just creates more questions that they can't answer and that leaves the open-minded truth seeker turning to Intelligent Design for an explanation (and hopefully to God and the Bible).

This problematic fact is admitted in the article. After describing the Big Bang results as "ripples from a ball kicked into a pond," we read that "Scientists still don't know who kicked the ball" (but Christians do). Ultimately this is the point: they don't know, they will never know, and with each "fact" they discover, they get further from the truth because they don't want to know.

"For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse" (Rom. 1:20).

The Thousand-Year Reign

Dub McClish

The vast majority of Protestants believe the "thousand years" of Revelation 20:1–7 refers to the tenure of Christ's reign in an earthly kingdom upon His return. Since He will come before His alleged millennial reign, this theological system is called "premillennialism."

Since the aforementioned passage is the Bible's only reference to a millennial reign of Christ, premillennialists rely heavily upon it, in spite of the fact that it does not contain or support premillennial dogma. For example, the passage does not mention such essential parts of the pre-millennial program as the "rapture," the bodily resurrection of saints, the city of Jerusalem, an earthly reign of Christ, a thousand years of earthly peace, or even the Second Coming—all essential points of the schema.

A principal key to understanding the book of Revelation is that it is largely written in symbolic or figurative "code" language (Rev. 1:1). No other Biblical document contains

as many signs and symbols as this one. One should thus approach its details as symbolic unless there is some contextual reason not to do so. Note the figurative flavor of the opening verses of Revelation 20 (the “angel,” the “key,” the “great chain,” the “bottomless pit”/“abyss,” and the “seal” are all obviously figurative). There is every reason to believe (and no reason not to believe) the “thousand years” is also figurative.

The events described in Revelation 20:1–9 are not a chronological continuation of chapter 19, which describes Jesus’ return, His destruction of all the ungodly, and His casting the “beast” and the “false prophet” into Hell (vv. 11–21)—all of which are highly figurative descriptions of the end of time and the Judgment.

Revelation several times moves in cycles from the beginning of the church to the end of time, the last such cycle occurring in 20:1–9. In these verses John recaps the period from Pentecost to the Judgment (the Christian Age), during which Satan is bound for “a thousand years,” “loosed for a little time,” and at last cast into Hell forever. During this period (the present Christian Age), Christ now reigns over His kingdom, the church (Mat. 16:18–19; John 18: 36; Col. 1:13; Rev. 1:5–6, 9; et al.), and simultaneously, Satan’s power is restrained. The “thousand years” of Satan’s “binding” and of Christ’s millennial reign is figurative, denoting a long, but indeterminate, period (cf. the “thousand hills” [Psa. 50:10] and the “thousand generations” [Deu. 7:9]). During this time, “souls” (not bodies) of martyrs “reign” with Christ in Heaven (not on the earth), awaiting the universal bodily resurrection at His coming (John 5:28– 29; 1 Cor. 15:22–26).

We are living in the millennium, the figurative “thousand-year” reign of Christ.

Keep Holy Things Holy

Lee Moses

When contemplating the wondrous and immeasurable attributes of God, one cannot help but think of His perfect holiness. Those who love the Lord appreciate this tremendous attribute; as Moses and the children of Israel sang, “Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?” (Exod. 15:11). Hannah prayed, “There is none holy as the LORD: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God” (1 Sam. 2:2). The word *holy* denotes being set apart from all things profane, or common. Not only is God holy, but all things pertaining to Him are holy. Under the Old Testament, the Israelites were commanded to make a special anointing oil to pour upon the Tabernacle and each apparatus of worship, as well as upon the priests (Exod. 30:25–30). Regarding this oil, God said,

This shall be an holy anointing oil unto me throughout your generations. Upon man's flesh shall it not be poured, neither shall ye make any other like it, after the composition of it: it is holy, and it shall be holy unto you. Whosoever compoundeth any like it, or whosoever putteth any of it upon a stranger, shall even be cut off from his people (30:31–33).

Because this anointing oil pertained specifically to God, it was not to be used in any way that would make it common. Now more than ever, things pertaining specifically to God must be kept holy.

The worship of God has always been and must remain holy. When the Corinthians were guilty of turning the Lord’s Supper into a common meal, they were warned, “And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation” (1 Cor. 11:34). The worship of the Lord must not be turned into a time to balance checkbooks, to make “to-do” lists for the week, or to think about things unrelated to the worship of God. It must be a time entirely devoted to Him.

God’s very name is holy: “Holy and reverend is his name” (Psa. 111:9). In His model prayer, Jesus said, “Hallowed (“render or declare sacred or holy”—Thayer’s Greek Lexicon) be thy name” (Matt. 6:9). Yet some will use God’s name in a most common man-

ner—such as to express surprise, disappointment, or anger; certainly a disrespectful use of that which is holy. Some will even take His holy name and twist it into silly words, such as “gosh” or “golly.” Such is not keeping holy things holy.

The church of Christ is holy. Christ,

...loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify (or “make holy,” LM) and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be **holy** and without blemish (Eph. 5:25-27, emph. LM).

Yet some will speak of the church for which Christ died as though it were on the same level as a man-made denomination. Some members of the church for which Christ died make no effort to conduct themselves in a holy manner, even though they are the very stones of which His church is built (Eph. 2:19-22; 1 Pet. 2:5). “But like as he who called you is holy, be ye yourselves also holy in all manner of living; because it is written, Ye shall be holy; for I am holy” (1 Pet. 1:15-16, ASV).

Holy things must be kept holy, whether it be the worship, name, or church of the Lord; or whatever it is that He deems holy.

Let it not be said of us, “They have made no distinction between the holy and the common...and I am profaned among them” (Ezek. 22:26, ASV). Let it be said that we keep holy things holy.

The Serpent in the Wilderness

Jerry C. Brewer

And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread. And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee; pray unto the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived. (Num. 21: 5:-8).

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. (John 3:14-15).

The fiery serpents which God sent among the Israelites in the wilderness were punishment for their murmuring against Him and against His spokesman, Moses. The people were powerless to save themselves from this plague and came to Moses admitting their sin and asking for relief. Upon Moses’ intercession to God for the people, he was told to make a fiery serpent of brass and set it upon a pole and if one was bitten, he could be healed by simply looking on the brass serpent which Moses made.

In His conversation with Nicodemus in John 3, Jesus referred to the brass serpent that Moses erected in the wilderness, some 1,500 years before, and likened that to His crucifixion. The serpent in the wilderness was a type of our salvation today through Jesus Christ.

The word *type* is not found in the Bible, but the word *pattern* in Titus 2:7 and Hebrews 8:5 is from the Greek *tupos*, from which we derive our English word *type*. So, the serpent in the wilderness was a pattern—or type—of salvation through Jesus Christ. The cross of Christ is central to the scheme of redemption which God purposed. Only by blood could sins be remitted as the Hebrews writer wrote: “And almost all things

are by the law purged with blood; and without the shedding of blood is no remission” (Heb. 9:22). It is the pattern of the serpent and salvation through Jesus Christ that is our focus in this lesson.

Israel’s Plight in the Wilderness

The plague of fiery serpents which God sent upon Israel was of their own making. In their journey from Mount Hor to “compass the land of Edom,” “...the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way” (Num. 21:4). As a result of one of their many instances of complaints against God and Moses, God provided them Manna from heaven to sustain them, which never ceased until they crossed into the promised land (Exo.16; Josh. 5:12). But not content with God’s care for them, they again complained, saying “our soul loatheth this light bread” (Num. 21:5). Their punishment was brought upon themselves and they had no remedy except by divine intervention.

Man’s Plight Today

The world is lost in sin today. Paul said, “...for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23) and, “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). Sin came into the world through Adam (Rom. 5:12), but no person subsequently inherited Adam’s sin. Paul further wrote, “Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression” (Rom. 5:14). Of this verse, R.L. Whiteside wrote,

This does not mean that the people from Adam to Moses did not sin at all, for that would contradict other things that Paul had said, but it means that they did not sin after the likeness of Adam’s sin. They were not guilty of a sin like Adam’s sin. To say that they did not sin after the likeness of Adam’s sin is equal to affirming that they were guilty of a different kind of sin. Adam violated a positive law; these people violated the moral law. And that was not like Adam’s sin. But if the statement in verse 12, that all sinned, means that all sinned in Adam, then all did sin after the likeness of Adam’s sin. Thus, in an unexpected place, we have positive proof that we are not all guilty of Adam’s sin (122).

Thus, the inspired Paul makes the case that “all have sinned.” Now, since this is the plight of every man from Adam to this present day, there is not a person who ever lived who could provide remission of sins for himself. That had to come from God in the Person of His Son, Jesus Christ, just as God, through the serpent in the wilderness was the only possible means of healing for Israel.

The Remedy in the Wilderness

Paul said that, “the preaching of the cross is to them that perish, foolishness” (1 Cor. 1:18). To Israel, that brass serpent on a pole as a snake bite cure may have seemed foolish. It would certainly be foolish today for a doctor to prescribe a look at a brass serpent as a cure for a rattlesnake bite! But God’s ways are not man’s ways (Isa. 55:8). Healing by the serpent in the wilderness was neither according to God’s moral law nor any scientific method. Israel’s healing came by obedience to God’s positive law. Neither was their healing accomplished by “grace only,” although it was a simple plan. One who was bitten by a serpent **had to do something**—he had to look upon the brass serpent on the pole to live. There were no exceptions to this positive law and when he **obeyed** (looked) he was healed of the deadly bite.

The Remedy Today

As God’s power to heal in the wilderness was exerted through the brass serpent, the cross of Christ is God’s power to remedy sin’s deadly consequences today. “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God” (1 Cor. 1:18). Comprehended in the preaching of the cross is God’s positive law which saves from sin. For this reason, the preaching of the cross for salvation is foolish to men, as the brass serpent for a snakebite remedy is foolish to medical practice.

God has two kinds of law which we describe as “positive law” and “moral law.” The distinction between these is critical in understanding how God saves man and that distinction is made clear by Benjamin Franklin.

Moral law relates to that which is right in itself, always was right, and requires things to be done because they are right. The things it requires can be seen to be right in the reason and fitness of things, and will be readily admitted to be right--not because any authority requires them, but because they can be seen to be right in the nature of things. But positive divine law is of a higher order than this. It has the force to make that right which is not right in itself, and is the highest test of respect for divine authority known to man. It is also the greatest trial of faith ever applied to man. It is intended to penetrate down into the heart, and try the heart, the piety, the devotion to God. The very acts that some men have irreverently styled, 'mere outward acts,' 'mere external performances,' are the Lord's tests of the state of the heart, intended to penetrate deep down into the inmost depths of the soul, try the heart, the piety, the devotion to God. They try the faith. The man that will obey a commandment, when he cannot see that the thing commanded can do any good, or, it may be, that he can see pretty clearly that it cannot do any good in itself, does it solely through respect to divine authority; does it solely to please God; does it solely because God commands it. This has no reference to popularity, pleasing men, or to the will of man, but it is purely in reference to the will of God. This is of faith; it is piety, devotion to God. It rises above mere morality, philosophy, or the pleasure of man, into the pure region of faith, confidence in the wisdom of God, and in submission to the supreme authority---yields to it reverently when no other reason can be seen for it only that the divine will requires it. The man in his heart says, 'It must be done, because the absolute authority requires it.' (pp. 151, 152).

In the preaching of the cross, there is no distinctive moral law attached. When the apostles preached, they did not tell their hearers to be morally good. Morality has been required of the human race since the creation and Jesus Christ brought no new moral precept into the world. What He brought was a remedy for sin, devised in the eternal counsel of God (Eph. 1:3-11), executed at Calvary, and which requires obedience of all who would be saved eternally.

Man's failure to understand this concept is his greatest problem today. The world has the idea that moral goodness is that which justifies man before God. But God's moral law is **not** the means by which He saves from sin. One may be morally upright in every facet of his life, but a single sin he commits will stain his soul and, although he may be perfectly moral the rest of his days, that single sin can **never** be remitted by his own moral works (Eph. 2:8). That can be done only through the blood of Christ, when a man hears God's positive law and "obeys from the heart" (Rom. 6:17).

Conclusion

It was disobedience to God's positive law—not His moral law—that brought ruin to the human race (Gen. 2:16; 3:1-7) and it is obedience to God's positive law which tests man's faith and brings remission of sin. That positive law is clearly revealed in the Bible. It requires faith on man's part in God and His Son Jesus Christ (Heb. 11:6; John 8:24), repentance of sin (Luk. 13:3; Acts 2:38; 17:30-31), confession of faith in Jesus Christ as the Messiah (Rom. 10:10; Acts 8:36-37), and baptism into Jesus Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38).

No one violates God's moral law by refusing to do any of those things. Adam was not immoral when he ate of the forbidden fruit, nor would any Israelite have been immoral who refused to look upon the serpent in the wilderness. Adam was given a positive law for his good in the Garden, Israel was given a positive law to save them from death in the wilderness, and God has given positive laws by which men are saved today. As the serpent was lifted up in the wilderness, so Christ was lifted up for our salvation and no one today can be saved apart from obedience in faith, repentance and baptism any more than an Israelite could have lived had he not looked upon the serpent in the wilderness.

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The Bible and the Book of Mormon

Nathan Brewer

Tear apart a building's foundation and the superstructure crumbles. Likewise, if a book of doctrine is shown to be false, then a religion based upon that book must also be false. Mormonism owes its existence to the Book of Mormon (BOM). If the BOM is true, then Mormonism is true. If it is false, then Mormonism is a false religion. A comparison between the Bible and the BOM reveals the falsity of the entire Mormon system.

Contradiction

The Introduction to the BOM states that the Bible is the word of God and that the BOM is equal to the Bible: "The Book of Mormon is a volume of holy scripture comparable to the Bible. It is a record of God's dealings with the ancient inhabitants of the Americas and contains, as does the Bible, the fulness of the everlasting gospel."

Truth must always harmonize; it can never contradict itself. In logic, the law of non-contradiction states that no two contradictory statements can both be true at the same time and in the same sense (Geisler & Brooks, 16). The word of God is truth (John 17:17). Therefore, if both the Bible and the BOM are the word of God, they will never contradict each other. Since Mormons admit that the Bible is from God and true, if we demonstrate that the BOM contradicts the Bible we can show that the BOM is false based on their own claims.

Lets begin with Jesus' birthplace. Micah 5:2 predicts that the coming ruler will be born in Bethlehem. The Jews in the first century expected their Messiah to arise from Bethlehem—David's city (Micah 5:2; John 7:42). And indeed, Matthew records that Jesus was born in Bethlehem (Matt. 2:1). The BOM tells a different tale. The prophet Alma predicts that Mary will give birth to Jesus in **Jerusalem** (Alma 7:10) This is an unfortunate gaffe for the cause of Mormonism. Bethlehem is a separate city and lies five miles south of Jerusalem (Pfeiffer, 191).

Another contradiction involves the very beginning of Christianity. The Bible reveals that the Lord's disciples were called Christians for the first time in Antioch of Syria (Acts 11:26). This was after Jesus' death and resurrection began to be proclaimed and penitent sinners responded to that message (cf. Acts 2:22-36). These became followers of Christ, or Christians.

According to the Mormon Manifesto, disciples were dubbed Christians before Jesus even came down from Heaven to live as a man (Alma 46:13-16). This would mean there were Christians before there was a Christ! Not only does this contradict the Bible, it is absurd. Other examples could be cited, but these suffice to prove that the BOM contradicts the Bible.

The Test for Truth

The Bible can be objectively tested to examine its claims. It was written by about 40 men over a period of 1,500 to 1,600 years (Boyd, 23), yet there are no internal contradictions. It always harmonizes with previous revelation (cf. Deut. 13:1-5). Bible writers performed miracles to confirm what they spoke and wrote (Ex. 4:1-9; Mark 16:17-20; Heb. 2:1-4). The New Testament alone is confirmed by a mountain of historical data. There are over 5,600 Greek manuscripts and thousands of early translations (Strobel, 63), as well as an abundance of quotations from the patristic writers (Geisler, 430). The BOM has no such objective tests. It was written by one man, Joseph Smith, and Mormons admit that Smith performed no miracles to verify his claims.

Mormons attempt to confirm the truthfulness of the BOM in two ways. First, the BOM contains the testimony of eleven witnesses, three of whom claimed they saw an angel deliver the golden plates that Joseph Smith used to translate the BOM. Eight other witnesses claimed they later saw the angelically delivered plates.

Even if this account were true, the angel and the men who taught the BOM would be accursed. We have shown that the BOM contradicts the Bible. In fact, this document represents a completely different system than New Testament Christianity. According to Paul's warning to the churches of Galatia, since the BOM presents a perverted, different gospel, those who are responsible for its delivery and promotion stand condemned (Gal. 1:6-9).

And even if the testimony of the 11 witnesses was unimpeached, at least one of them must be false since the Bible and the BOM contradict each other. The Bible's evidence with its miracles, testimony of multiple writers, and a mountain of textual evidence far outweighs that of Joseph Smith and his 11 friends.

However, not all of Smith's witnesses stayed on the reservation. One of them, Martin Harris, later cast his lot with the Shakers. In a letter written in 1844 from Phineas Young to Brigham Young, the former writes, "Martin Harris is a firm believer in Shakerism, says his testimony is greater than it was of the Book of Mormon" (Gunnell, 52). Although Harris **claimed to have seen** the golden plates delivered by an angel which revealed God's will for man, he later supported a different religion!

Witness Oliver Cowdery followed suit. He left and became a member of the Methodist Protestant Church (Shook, 58-59). He was later rebaptized back into the Mormon Church in 1848.

Another witness, David Whitmer, claimed that God later spoke to him again. This time, Whitmer said God told him to separate himself from the Latter-day Saints because so many had gone into error (Whitmer, 27). None of Christ's witnesses ever changed their testimony or their religion, even in the face of death.

The second test for the truthfulness of the BOM comes from its own pages. Moroni 10:3-5 informs us that if we will read the BOM and ask God if it is true, God will reveal to us that it is true. A more subjective test would be difficult to conjure. This means that if one does read the BOM and asks God if it's true and then hears nothing but silence coming from heaven, the problem must lie with the one asking. This is reminiscent of the claim that those unable to be healed by modern day miracle workers just don't have enough faith. Meanwhile, the Bible invites readers to vigorously investigate it and use reason to determine its truthfulness (Isa. 1:18; John 20:30-31; Acts 17:1-4,11; Eph. 3:4). The manuscript evidence and the testimony of ancient secular history also bear objective witness to the Bible's truthfulness.

The Book of Mormon is Not Needed

A Gospel preacher once told of a conversation he had with two members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He asked them if he could take just the New Testament, do exactly what it says to do to be saved, and go to heaven. They thought for a moment and responded, "Yes." The preacher then asked, "Then why do I need the Book of Mormon?"

Here is a dilemma. If the Bible alone can tell us how to go to heaven, the BOM is not needed. But if Mormons say the Bible cannot do the job, then they've contradicted the Bible. The Bible is sufficient to get us to heaven (2 Pet. 1:3).

Conclusion

In a personal conversation, a young Mormon elder said that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the fastest growing "Christian church" in the world. The foundation for that church is the Book of Mormon. The BOM contradicts the Bible, its evidence does not even approach the objective evidence for the Bible's truthfulness, and by their own admission is not needed to go to heaven. The BOM is false. Therefore, those who promote and follow its teachings are condemned (Gal. 1:6-9). Only the Gospel of Christ, as revealed in the New Testament, is God's power to save (Rom. 1:16).

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The Name "Christian"

L.O. Sanderson

In determining the name which the followers of Christ should wear, it is well that we reemphasize the fact that God has three positive methods by which He teaches and urges respect of, and obedience to, His will:

1. By direct exhortation,
2. By approved example, and...
3. By implication.

The first is none other than a direct, positive urge by those with authority to speak—God, Jesus Christ, or the Holy Spirit through the apostles. By **example**, we understand that in divine writ, where historical data cannot be gainsaid, it is plainly recorded that others obeyed a certain teaching in a manner pleasing to God. By **implication**, we mean that such is necessarily **implied** in the Bible and is not simply a reasonable or possible conclusion, but that there is no other conclusion to be drawn from what the Bible implies.

That we should wear the name of Christ, since we belong to Him, having been "purchased with His blood," is, of course, reasonable. Christ is the head of the body, which is the church (Eph. 1:22-23) and certainly the body shall wear the same name as the Head.

Christ is the bridegroom and the church is His bride. Hence, the bride will, if loyal and respectful, wear the name of Him to whom she is married (Rom. 7:4).

We are the children of God, if born again of water and the Spirit (John 3:3-5), thus becoming joint heirs with Jesus Christ, and without the shadow of a doubt we should wear the family name.

In view of these relationships, it is almost impossible to think that anyone with reverence toward God and His Only Begotten Son should permit himself to be called by any other name than "Christian." This is reasonable and logical.

But does God require us to wear that particular name? In the light of His teaching, by the three accepted methods, let us study and make answer. Now if the Bible teaches us to wear that name, by either method of instruction—direct teaching, accepted example, or necessary implication—that should be enough for any God fearing disciple. If perchance He should teach the same lesson by either two, then it would be impossible for us to emphasize the necessity of doing so too strongly. But suppose He teaches the ap-

plication of this particular name by all three of the methods. Who, then, would dare to question the privilege, the duty, or the demands of the Lord to wear it? We submit to you that God does teach us to wear that precious name by every method herein mentioned.

We shall examine the Bible teaching, reversing the order as to the ways of urging obedience suggested above. In Acts 26:28, when Paul had preached to Agrippa, the king said “Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.” Paul had not said—so far as the Bible is concerned—“Thou shalt become a Christian.” Yet, Agrippa undoubtedly understood Paul's purpose—he was trying to make of him a Christian! The record does not specifically so state, neither is there the likeness of an example connected therewith. But, what is the necessary implication? Not that he was trying to make of Agrippa a Pharisee or a Sadducee. One cannot by any manner of reasoning arrive at such a conclusion.

Neither can one even guess that Paul wanted to make him a “Pharisee-Christian.” Paul just wanted Agrippa to be a Christian—such as he was, except his bonds. To wear Christ's name along with some other would be the height of disrespect for the spiritual marriage relationship. Hence, the **necessary implication** is that Paul, along with other Spirit-guided apostles, would make of all men Christians, and Christians only. We, for the same reason, should wear only this name.

But again, “The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch” (Acts 11:26). This is not an inference, neither a direct command. It is a statement of fact, penned by the beloved physician, Luke, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, plainly showing that the disciples **were** called Christians. This historical information has God's stamp of approval on it.

The question is critically asked, “By whom were they called Christians at Antioch?” Well, it could have been by their enemies, or their friends, or by the apostles, or by the Lord. Which was it? If by their enemies, there must have been some reason. It must have been because they were followers of Christ. If by friends, there must have been some understanding regarding the name. If by the apostles, it was under the direction of the Holy Spirit. It must have been stamped upon them because of their relationship to Christ. But was it attached to them by enemies, and enemies only?

Consider the prophecies concerning God's purpose as it relates to name—Isaiah 56:5; 62:2; 65:15; and Amos 9:11-12. From these, we observe that God's children were to have a **new** name, better than human names, everlasting in its application, and was to be given by the “mouth of the Lord,” bestowed upon the Gentiles first, and after the Jews were cast off as a nation.

Not until after the death of Christ did other nations enjoy the blessings of the kingdom of God (Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 2). Not until then could it be said that “through their [the Jews'] fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles” (Rom. 11:11). Hence, any name used before that time to designate the children of God could not be a **new** name. This would exclude from consideration as the particular appellation, even such names as saints, brethren, or disciples, for these terms were used long before the cross. There is but one **new** name—“Christian.”

But note further: It was not to be given to the Jews first, though they entered the kingdom before the Gentiles. It was to be called upon the Gentiles first. There is no record of prophecy and its fulfillment so definite as to time, place, and persons as Acts 11:26. There, it is after the Jewish nationality had been taken from them; there a new name is given; there it is pronounced upon Gentiles first, and it is far superior to human titles. Thus it must have been given in harmony with the eternal purpose of God—yea, even by the “mouth of the Lord.” It is the one divinely appointed name, and a sweeter and more meaningful title has never been, nor will be, given to mortals here below. From it, the whole family in heaven and earth is named! In consideration of this approved example, along with our relationship to Christ, and in view of the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose, we should not recognize or wear any other name than “Christian” when our relationship to Christ is expressed.

But it is not taught only by necessary implication and approved example. The necessity of using it is made even more positive and certain, if possible, by the additional fact of direct command to wear it. “Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf,” or, “in this name” (1 Pet. 4:16 ASV). The force is “he should” or “he will” glorify God in this name, or in regard to this expressed relationship. Hence, if he suffer, he should suffer as a Christian; in that name he will, and should, glorify God. Here is the direct command to glorify God, and one way that it can be done—by being Christians, and only such. If we suffer as a Pharisee, Christ is not respected; if we suffer as a Sadducee, God is not glorified; but let us hold faithfully to the title “Christian” that we may show our relationship with Christ and glorify God, the Father.

What is Acceptable Worship?

Lester Kamp

Jesus said, “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24).

First, notice that according to Jesus our worship is to be directed toward God. We are to worship Him. Only Deity is worthy of worship. Men are unworthy of worship. Cornelius knew that Peter had been sent by God to tell him the Word of God through which (if obeyed) he and his household would be saved (Acts 11:14). When Cornelius first saw the apostle Peter he “fell down at his feet, and worshiped him” (Acts 10:25). Peter was a great man, an apostle of Christ; but Peter made it clear that men were unworthy of worship. “But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man” (Acts 10:26). Twice (Rev. 19:10; 22:9) it is stated that John, the apostle, when beholding the glories of heaven fell down to worship at the feet of an angel. He was forbidden to do so. He was told, “Worship God.” When Jesus was tempted in the wilderness, He stated, “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and him only shalt thou serve” (Matt. 4:10).

Second, observe that man is the one whose responsibility it is to worship God. In the previous verse Jesus had stated, “...for the Father seeketh such to worship him” (John 4:23). Clearly God desires worship from man. The primary purpose of man is to glorify God. “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou has created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created” (Rev. 4:11). “By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name” (Heb. 13:5).

Third, this worship must be “in spirit” for it to be accepted by God. God demands that our worship be offered from the heart sincerely. God rejects worship that is not sincere. Jesus described some who offered such worship to God. He stated, “This people draweth nigh to me with their mouth and honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me” (Matt. 15:8). Scripture speaks of those who are acceptable to God as “them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (2 Tim. 2:22). Worship is to be sincere expressions of praise and adoration of God which come from the genuine thoughts and intents of the heart.

Fourth, sincerity is not all that is necessary to make worship acceptable to God. Acceptable worship must be “in truth.” Truth is God’s Word (John 17:17). Our worship must be according to God’s instructions. When man injects his own ideas into worship, his worship becomes worthless. “But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Matt. 15:9).

There are certain acts of worship that God has approved. All other acts are thereby condemned by God for worship. Prayer is worship (Acts 2:42; Jas. 4:8; 5:16), singing “psalms and hymns and spiritual songs” is worship (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16), preaching God’s Word is worship (Acts 2:42; 20:7); giving financially of our means on the first day of the week is worship (1 Cor. 16:2), and partaking of the Lord’s Supper on the first day of the week is worship (Acts 20:7). It should be clearly observed that acceptable worship (i.e. acceptable to **God**) is not everything that man might want to do and call it worship. Acceptable worship follows the parameters set forth by God in His Word.

God determines what acceptable worship is. He has revealed to us in His Word what acceptable worship is. Everything else is **not** acceptable worship.

Regardless of what man may call it, the playing of mechanical instruments of music is not worship because God has not authorized it. Even if man suggests that burning incense is worship, it is not worship because God has not authorized it. Man might suggest that everything that man wants to do is worship if his heart is sincere. God's Word tells us that this is not so.

Some might suggest that all that man does is worship to God, but according to God's Word this is **not** the case. Doing righteous acts are service to God, but "good works" are not worship. Dedicating one's life to God is right, good and proper; but Christian living is never spoken of in the New Testament as worship. If all of life is worship, then worship is possible without the person realizing that he is worshiping. The person's heart, according to this view, at the time may not even recognize that worship is taking place. How can such worship be "in spirit"? Such is absurd! God has authorized only five acts of worship. Those are the acts that are engaged in when worship takes place; worship only occurs when one or more of these acts are done.

Fifth, only two of those five acts are restricted in time. God has specified **when** we are to take the Lord's Supper—the first day of the week. God has specified **when** we are to give financially to support the work of the church (local congregation)—the first day of the week. With God's approval we can engage in these acts of worship only on the first day of the week (i.e. the first day of every week). We can worship God through singing (psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs), praying and the preaching of His Word at any time. If God has regulated these acts in some way, then we must follow those regulations when we engage in that action. For example, God has given us guidelines for prayer (i.e. addressed to the Father, in the name of Jesus, etc.). Prayer must be offered according to those instructions of God wherever and whenever we pray.

Worship is an activity on the part of man to praise God and to reverence Him and His Word. Worship is according to God's pattern if it is acceptable to Him. Almost from the beginning of man's presence on this earth, man has tried to ignore God's Word, do his "own thing" and call it worship expecting God to be pleased. A study of the New Testament and a review of the cases of Cain and Nadab and Abihu ought to cause us to know that what we offer to God in worship is not always acceptable to Him just because we think what He has not authorized is okay, or better.

The Establishment of the Church

N.B. Hardeman

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

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

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

When we open the New Testament, we find in Matthew 3:1 that in those days came

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

All of this shows that, as yet, the kingdom, or church, had not been established, but that such an event was **at hand, had come nigh unto them**. In Matthew 16:18, after Peter's confession that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God, He declared that, "upon this rock I **will build** my church." This could not mean that He intended to merely enlarge it, since in the statement He referred to the foundation.

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

Now note:

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

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

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

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

Begin with Revelation and trace events backward. John says, "I...am...in the kingdom" (Rev. 1:9). Paul wrote Timothy how to behave himself in "the church of the living God"

(1 Tim. 3:15). Again, he said the Colossians were delivered from the “power of darkness” and translated “into the kingdom of his dear Son” (Col. 1:13). In Acts 8:1 we read of a “great persecution against the church,” and in Acts 5:11 it is said that “great fear came upon all the church.” In Acts 2:47 the statement is that “the Lord added to the church.” This brings us back to Pentecost, in the year A.D. 33, where the church, or kingdom, was established in Jerusalem where Zechariah said, “My house shall be built in it” (Zech. 1:16).

God raised up Christ to sit on David's throne (Acts 2:30). Daniel said, “I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to **[to, not from]** the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a **kingdom**, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his **kingdom** that which shall not be destroyed” (Dan. 7:13-14).

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

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Is Baptism “Water Salvation”?

J.D. Tant

Our present lesson is what the world calls “water salvation.” The charge against my brethren is unjust. Yet, for the purpose of arousing prejudice, men who are unable to meet the Bible doctrine as taught by my brethren will cry out, “Water salvation.”

If we should run a man down and baptize him against his will, there would be room for the charge. Or if we advocated the doctrine of total depravity, or believed in infant damnation as many do, and should baptize children as the Catholics do to wash the child and deliver him from God's wrath, then the charge might be true.

But as the charge is made against my brethren that we teach water salvation, it will be well to examine water in connection **with** salvation, and learn what God says about it. In the salvation of the sinner, we all agree that we are saved by the power of God. Then the question arises in this moving power of God: “Has He connected water with the same?” If we learn that He has, we may then understand why the religious world calls salvation by God's power, “water salvation.”

We all agree that God's power is both universal and special. It is universal as a whole and special to certain people for certain purposes. But in all power we agree, (1) there is the power, (2) the object, (3) the adaptation, and (4) the moving, after the power through the law of adaptation acts upon the object.

For example, we say water is a power to act upon the water wheel that moves the mill, but water is no power to act on powder to set it on fire and throw a cannon ball. The weight is the power that acts on the clock and causes it to move and keep time. But a weight is no power to act on a watch and cause it to keep time, for there is no law of adaptation between the weight and the watch. The spring is the adapted power to cause the watch to move, fire is the adapted power to make the powder burn and water is the adapted power to make the mill move. This shows that God has ordained different powers and different laws of adaptation to act upon different objects to cause them to move.

Now we are prepared to state that God's power is (1) universal over all in bestowing blessings such as life, food, rain, and sunshine, and (2) special over people for certain blessings.

One great hinderance to an understanding of God's law is that many theological teachers make no difference in **special** and **general** power. They will not reason on how God's power may accomplish different things under different conditions. When they once decide that God's power is demonstrated along a certain line to reach a certain end, they will readily close up all other channels and exclaim, "water salvation" to the man who wants to adapt God's saving power to him through God's divine law of adaptation.

To illustrate this idea, **A** tells **B** that 20 acres of his land made 1,000 bushels of corn; he tells **C** that his old gray mare made him 1,000 bushels of corn; he tells **D** that the rain in June made him 1,000 bushels of corn; he tells **E** that his new plow made him 1,000 bushels of corn, and he tells **F** that he made 1,000 bushels of corn.

Soon these five meet and discuss **A**'s corn crop. They argue like Methodist preachers do in their 9th article of faith which teaches that justification is by "faith only." **B** claims that 20 acres of land made the corn, for **A** told him so. **C** thinks that **A** lied, for he told him his old gray mare made it. **D** knows there is something wrong, for **A** told him that his new plow made the corn. **E** is sure **A** is not truthful, for he told him that the late rain in June made his corn. Then **F** knows that **A** lied, for he told him that he made the corn himself.

So these five men, reasoning like sectarian preachers do, would soon have **A** as full of contradictions as these preachers have the Bible. But did **A** tell the truth at all places? Yes. How? He hitched his horse to the plow and worked the land. God gave the rain. So the man, the horse, the rain, the land, and the plow each supplied the part they were adapted to in this crop, and it can be said truthfully of one, or all, that they made the corn.

God's power was special to (1) Noah, (2) to save him from the flood, (3) by means of the ark, (4) that he must use, (5) to obtain the result which was salvation from the flood.

God's power was special (1) with the Israelites, (2) to save them from Egyptian bondage, (3) by means—Moses and the Red Sea. (4) When they used the means, (5) they obtained the result—salvation from Egyptian bondage.

We notice God's special power (1) with Naaman (1 Kings 5), (2) to save him from leprosy, (3) by means of the water of Jordan. (4) When he used the means by dipping seven times in the river (5) he obtained the result—salvation from his disease.

Once more, we notice God's special power in the case of the blind man (John 9:1-7). (1) We have the blind man, (2) who was saved from blindness, (3) by means of clay and the pool of Siloam, (4) when he used them, (5) to obtain the result of salvation from blindness. This, then, brings us to the final thought—the sinner's salvation from sin. Is he saved by the power of God? If we answer, "yes," then I ask, are we justified in calling it "water salvation?"

While God has other powers to save from trouble and distress, He has only one power to save from sin, and Paul says the Gospel is God's power to save. (Rom. 1:16-17). Then as the Gospel is that power which moves, or puts in motion, this power must act on the sinner to save him. As it must come to the sinner through the law of adaptation, the question comes up, "How does it come? Does it come direct, in some better-felt-way-than-told, or in some mysterious way that is above our comprehension?"

Paul says it comes through preaching, (1 Cor. 1:21), Jesus said go preach it to all the world (Mark 16:15), and the Holy Spirit affirms that the faith we must have in order to be saved comes by hearing the word of God. (Rom. 10:17).

Now we can make the application of God's special power in the salvation of sinners. (1) We have the sinner, (2) God saves the sinner from his sins. (3) The gospel is the means God provides. (4) The sinner must use the means, i.e., obey the gospel, (5) to obtain the result, or salvation from his sins. (Rom. 1:16).

Just as positive as God affirms that the gospel is His power to save those who believe it, just that positive He pronounces condemnation upon those who do not obey it. (2 Thess. 1:7-9). As it is impossible for God to lie, and as God's mercy cannot go beyond

his law, and God's law states that He will punish those who do not obey the gospel, the idea that is prevalent that God will save many who never obeyed the gospel, is not taught in God's word.

All persons who are saved by the power of God must come under said power for that salvation. As God's power is located in the Gospel, then it is necessary to come to the Gospel, and use all the means as God has ordained we should.

What are the means ordained in the gospel for man's salvation? (1) Man must hear God's word (Acts 3:22). (2) A man must have faith in Christ (John 20:30). (3) A man must repent of his sins (Acts 17:30). (4) A man must confess the Son of God (Matt. 10:32; Acts 8:37). (5) A man must be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). This is God's law and the result will be salvation from sin (Mark 16:16).

Sinner, will you not lay aside prejudice and do God's will that heaven may be your home?

Editor's Travels and Writings

Preaching appointments kept us on the road in October. On Sunday, Oct. 4, we were at Willow, Okla. for morning worship and at Yukon, Okla. that evening. We were with the Eastside church in Lexington, Okla. Sunday morning, Oct. 11, at Yukon for both morning and evening worship on Oct. 18, and at Chillicothe, Texas Oct. 25.

Requests continue to come in for our latest book, *"The Thing That Hath Been...": The Cycle of Apostasy* and we are grateful for them all. The book is in its Fourth Printing and is mailed **free of charge** to anyone who requests it. The **postage is also free**.

Writing continues on Volume 2 Revised and Enlarged Edition, which should be ready for printing in late Fall or early Winter. It contains a lot more material on mainstream churches of Christ, their Pentecostalism, their preaching schools, their tangled webs of fellowship with error, and an in-depth look at the use of pornography in Freed-Hardestman University's art classes.

"What Saith The Scriptures?"

Harrell Davidson

The question this month comes from some brethren who are interested in and offered the following situation in which they are engaged. I have omitted all names of the congregation and another institution they named for this study. I appreciate so much the question.

Question: A congregation received an inheritance from some stock in a popular large company. They turned to stock over to an investment firm for future use. Some time went by and the congregation sold the preachers house which was no longer needed and applied these funds also to the same mutual funds. Today the congregation is applying these funds for daily or weekly expenses. Is this scriptural?

Nowhere in the Scriptures is a congregation granted the opportunity to own or be in a business venture. We must function by the authority of the Scriptures (Col. 3:17) both in word or deed—what we say and what we do.

The Lord's church is commanded to come together on the first day of the week. Not forsaking such (Heb.10:25) for the purpose of worship (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2 etc). This is a direct command. "Not forsaking the assembly" implies a place to assemble. This could be any place that elders and/or brethren decide but they cannot breach the command to assemble under normal circumstance except sickness etc. We know of a congregation that meets under two giant shade trees. This is most certainly Scriptural. It is a known place where brethren can assemble to worship according to the

commands of the Bible. Their climate is suited for such but not all are.

There are brethren who rent a place to worship and this too fulfills the inference–implication–to assemble to worship. We are not discussing whether renting is better than owning property. One congregation rented a Masonic hall for worship but they were not Free Masons. This may not be the best but it was what they could, and did, do. In that case, the building was later donated to that congregation and they made rulings in the deed that Masons could no longer meet there. Surely no one would think that the church could not receive such a gift. It actually belonged to a family that was letting the Masons meet there also but not at the same time.

There are other brethren who meet in someone's home. That also is Scriptural (cf. Rom. 16:3-5; 1 Cor. 16:9). In every imaginable situation a place to assemble is implied. This finally gets down to one central question: Is it scriptural for a congregation own and maintain property?

It is inferred that a congregation may own property to fulfill the command to assemble just like the command to sing and make melody in the heart (Eph. 5:19) implies some standard such as a book of songs to sing from or song pages so all could be using the book or pages to sing the same song. It would be disorderly for a hundred or five people to be singing different songs at the same time.

In owning property, as well as other things mentioned, the church should have an expense. This involves the business side of a congregation. While the church is not a business, it involves itself necessarily to pay for utilities, insurance, janitors, preachers, and the list goes on and on. The larger the congregation the more involved in these matters they become. Very small congregations have the same expenses but not as much. Every congregation we know of has a treasurer. His function to the congregation is to pay all bills and be ready to give an accounting of same when needed. These funds come from free will offerings (1 Cor. 16:1-2).

It was from a free will offering that some individual or individuals saw fit to leave a contribution of some shares of a stock company for the church to have the proceeds to function as they see fit. When they sold the house those funds were not needed at the time so these were also invested in the same body of mutual funds to have these as needed.

Let's now apply the principle given in Matthew 25:14-30. This is the record of parables that Jesus was giving in view of judgment. One man was given five talents another two talents and the last servant one talent. A talent is a value of money or monetary use that amounted to from sixteen to eighteen hundred dollars per talent. These talents were given according to each one's ability (v. 15). The Lord, having given these talents, went into a far country. Remember that Jesus is teaching about judgment to come.

The five talent man and two talent man both doubled the investment that was given them. Out of fear, the one talent man dug a hole in the earth and hid his sixteen hundred dollars and presented it to the Lord when he came back for those then to give an accounting of their use of the talents given.

The Lord said to the one talent man, "Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury" (Matt. 25:27). Notice the words "exchangers" and the word "usury." The exchangers in our day could very well be the investment institutions such as banks and other ways of investing that which belongs to the Lord. Usury is interest on the principal. Remember that there would be no talent to use unless the Lord provided such (cf. Hag.2:8; Psa. 50:10).

Most all agree that a congregation may have certificates of deposit if such sum is not needed in the short term. Can, or may, these instruments rise or fall in value from one time to the next? Of course, they do or can. Mutual funds do the same. They rise and fall as time goes by but like certificates of deposit the brethren have invested these for protection of said funds for future use as needed.

Let's revisit the matter of owning a building for a moment. May property fluctuate in value as time passes by? Sure, and it does. In the last several months, during this awful

pandemic, property—dwellings in particular—have increased on the average of 17 percent. However, 40 years ago when interest rates were 16 to 20 percent property was almost useless in the short term. So, a congregation that owns property could see the same fluctuate according to the times in which we/they live. This is the natural ebb and flow of earthly possessions. They fluctuate from day to day, week to week, or year to year. Must the church cease to use what they have been given for the Lord's cause and to His glory by not keeping good saving—use—principles?

It is our view that neither the family who left said investments nor the church that has tried to use them faithfully has erred in any way. If this is incorrect, what scripture has been violated? Personally, I find none. Thanks for the question.

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

How The Holy Spirit Leads Men

Dub Mowery

Just **how** does the Holy Spirit lead a person in this present age? Many mistakenly think that their own subjective feelings are the supernatural actions of the Holy Spirit. If this were so, how would a person distinguish between his natural inner feelings and those brought on supernaturally?

Solomon warns, “He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered” (Prov. 28:26). Again, “There is a way that seemeth right unto a man; but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Prov. 16:25). These two passages reveal that our inner feelings are not a reliable source of determining right from wrong.

This is especially true in respect to morals and learning what the Lord would have us to do to be saved. Our philosophical outlook on life is determined by how we were raised, our experiences in life, knowledge we obtain by observation, and by what we were taught. From these sources, we develop a philosophy to guide us in life. This internal understanding of right and wrong may not coincide with the inspired Word of God. That's the reason different people, who think their inner feelings mean they are guided by the Holy Spirit, arrive at opposite concepts from each other and from what the Bible actually teaches. These conflicting claims of being guided by the Holy Spirit cannot be blamed upon the Lord. The apostle Paul informs us that, “...God is not the author of confusion...” (1 Cor. 14:33).

In reality, how does the Third Person of the Godhead communicate unto mankind? From the beginning of time, divine messages were **always** delivered in a language understood by the recipients of those messages. No person has ever received communication from heaven by way of his inner feeling. How did Adam and Eve come to a knowledge of God to them in the Garden of Eden? It was by **words**: “The Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but, of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen. 2:16-17).

Several passages of Scripture reveal that the Holy Spirit used words to communicate to man. David declared, “The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue” (2 Sam. 23:2). The apostle Peter said, “Men and brethren, this scripture must have needs been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them which took Jesus” (Acts 1:16). The apostle Paul wrote, “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith” (1 Tim. 4:1).

The Holy Spirit did not communicate heavenly messages to **everyone**, but, rather, inspired certain men as spokesmen. Moses received the Decalogue for the children of Israel at Mount Sinai. The apostle John pointed out that, “...the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (John 1:17).

During the Mosaic dispensation, God chose certain men as prophets to deliver His

word to the Israelites. The apostle Peter, in referring to the writers of the Old Testament, said, "...holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Pet. 1:21). At Hebrews 1:1, the Scripture states that, "God...spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets."

For the New Testament dispensation, Jesus Christ promised to send the Holy Spirit unto the apostles to guide them into all truth (John 14:26; 16:13). Not only did the apostles and the New Testament prophets **speak** by inspiration, but they also **wrote** as they were guided into all truth (2 Tim. 3:16-17). At First Corinthians 2:10-13, the apostle Paul pointed out that the very **words** he wrote were the words of the Holy Spirit.

The days of miracles, and receiving messages from heaven supernaturally, ceased by the close of the first century (1 Cor. 13:8-10; Jude 3; Rev. 22:18-19). The Bible is the complete revelation of the Heavenly Father for mankind's eternal redemption. Those who claim to be led directly by the Holy Spirit today are either deceived, or they are false prophets (Matt. 7:15; 1 John 4:1).

Lost and Found

Fred E. Dennis

By the above title, we refer to things that have been all but lost in the maze of denominationalism and sectarianism, but are found plainly revealed upon the pages of the New Testament. I believe that a careful study of a few of these things will prove beneficial.

The disciples of the Lord are called *Christians* in the New Testament; in fact, we have a specific prophecy regarding this name in Isa. 62:2: "And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name." Just as soon as the Gentiles had seen the righteousness of the Lord, this new name was given. In Acts 10 we have an account of the conversion of the first Gentile, Cornelius, and then in the very next chapter we have the new name: "And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch" (Acts 11:26). Again we have this name in Acts 26:28: "Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." Well did this heathen king know that if he obeyed the Gospel which Paul preached he would be a Christian. If we obey the Gospel as Paul and the other inspired preachers preached it, we, too, will be Christians only. This word *Christian* is in the New Testament once more: "Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on his behalf" (1 Pet. 4:16).

Another thing that most religious people have lost is the fact that there is but one body, or church. This is too serious a matter to take the word of any man for it, but we must take the word of the Lord for it. In Eph. 4:4 we are told in so many words, "there is one body." What is this body? Let us read the answer: "And he is the head of the body, the church." (Col 1:18.) Once again: "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body" (Eph. 1:22, 23). The body of Christ is the church of Christ, and the church of Christ is the body of Christ; and do not lose this fact: "But now are they many members, yet but one body" (1 Cor. 12:20).

Another **lost** thing is that faith comes by hearing the word. This we are told in Rom. 10:17: "So then faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God." Faith not only comes by hearing, but by hearing the right thing, and the right thing is "the word of God." The inspired John in his record of the Gospel wrote it this way: "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (John 20:30-31).

Upon one occasion Peter said this: "Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe" (Acts 15:7). Thus it has been and thus it is. We "hear the word of the gospel, and believe." Too many are trying to believe in the absence of "the

word of the gospel.” This is an utter impossibility.

Repentance is produced or brought about by godly sorrow. This we are told in 2 Cor. 7:10: “For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.” Godly sorrow is not repentance, but it worketh repentance. We must not lose the fact that we must repent in order to be saved. Jesus said: “I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3, 5). On the birthday of the church, when men had been caused to believe by hearing the word of the gospel, they cried out, asking Peter and the other apostles what they must do to be saved. They were told to “repent, and be baptized...for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:37, 38). This made them Christians, members of the body of Christ. It will make you the same thing.

In becoming a Christian we must be buried in baptism. This is all but lost in the religious world today. How anything could be lost that is so plainly taught in the word is beyond my poor powers of comprehension. Jesus said: “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:15-16). From such passages as Rom. 6:3-5; Col. 2:12; and Heb. 10:22 we learn that baptism is a burial in water. These passages are too plain to be misunderstood by an honest soul who is seeking the truth.

Another thing that is all but lost is the fact that Christians are to eat the Lord's Supper on each Lord's day. Thus they did in the early days of the church, and thus faithful Christians are to do until time shall be no more. “And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them” (Acts 20:7). What did these disciples at Troas come together for? The record says that they “came together to break bread.”

The way to raise money to support New Testament religion has been lost by very many. But this has not been lost because it is not taught in the New Testament. The very first inspired statement about the church after it came into being is this: “And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42). We learn that the church at Corinth was instructed this way: “Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him” (1 Cor. 16:2). If all Christians will give as they have been prospered, we will have the money with which to do the things that the Lord wants done. Of course it could be possible that we might want to do something that the Lord does not want done.

The kind of music God wants in the church has been lost sight of by very many. Of course we would not know what kind of music the Lord wants if it were not for the fact that he has told us. Men want certain things, and they make these wants known by what they say. God wants certain things in the church, and He has made these known by what He has said. For several hundred years, men have wanted instrumental music in the worship. God does not want this. I know He does not want it. for at least two reasons: First, He has not said that He wanted it. Second, the early church, guided by inspired men, did not have it. However, God **does** want vocal music. How do we know this? There are two reasons: First, He says so (1 Cor. 14:15; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). Second, vocal music was the kind, and the only kind, used by the early church. Instrumental music is a comparatively modern innovation without one syllable of authority from God's blessed Book.

Before closing this article I want to call attention to one more **lost** thing. Many of us have lost it. That thing is godly living. “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Tit. 2:11-12). My dear reader, do these three adverbs describe the way you are living? If God were giving your record, would he say that you are living “soberly, righteously, and godly”? And please note that this living is to be done now—“in this present world.” “Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Cor. 6:2).

What Must We Do?

James A. Allen

All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world (Matt. 28:18-20).

Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned (Mark 16:15-16).

Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem (Luke 24:46-47).

Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do? And Peter said unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:37-38).

They then that received his word were baptized: and there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls (Acts 2:41). And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved (v. 47).

But when they believed Philip preaching good tidings concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women (Acts 8:12).

Then 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? And 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. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing (Acts 8:35-39).

And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 10:49).

And he called for lights and sprang in, and, trembling for fear, fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house. And they spake the word of the Lord unto him, with all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, immediately. And he brought them up into his house, and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, with all his house, having believed in God (Acts 16:29-34).

And many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized (Acts 18:8).

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

Every man in all the nations, unto the end of the world, must do what the above Scriptures command him to do to be saved. To be unsaved and lost is to be ruined world without end. A man can have assurance from the Word of God that he is saved only when he does what the Word of God commands him to do.

No man can be baptized without believing in Christ. Hence infants are not subjects of baptism. Not until they can hear the gospel and believe can they repent and be baptized.

Sprinkling and pouring are not baptism. There must be a “going down into the water” and being baptized, and after baptism a “coming up out of the water.” Baptism is a burial and a resurrection. No man has been baptized unless he was “buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

No man has a communication from the Spirit directly from heaven, giving him to know that he is saved without doing what the Word of God commands him to do to be saved. The Spirit does not speak to any man except through the Bible. The Spirit does not come to any man and communicate any thing that contradicts what the inspired men of the Bible said “as the Spirit gave them utterance” (2 Pet. 1:21).

There are no unbaptized Christians. A man is not a Christian until he is “baptized into Christ.” He cannot be a Christian out of Christ. He may be very active in some man made church, and may be a good neighbor and a prominent citizen, but whatever else he is, he is not a Christian until he obeys the divine command to repent and be baptized. Only those who are saved are Christians. “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” A man who has not been baptized does not have the promise of Jesus that he “shall be saved.”

All Christians are members of the same church. The same thing that makes a man a Christian makes him a member of the church. God adds to the church every one who is saved. Hence all who are saved are members of the same church. Any church that a man can be saved without being a member of is not the church to which God adds all who are saved. Any church that a man can be a Christian without being a member of is not the church that Christ established.

When people decide that they will get away from “the precepts and commandments of men” and be guided only by what God says in his Word, then—but not until then—will they “make their calling and election sure.”

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Take Heed How You Hear

James Burton Coffman

The message of John the Baptist, when he came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, was not, “Smile, God loves you!”

It was “O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” (Matt. 3:7)

The prophet Jeremiah was not cast into the miry pit for preaching, “I’m OK; You’re OK!” He suffered the wrath of his contemporaries for crying out against their adultery, idolatry, violence, injustice, and shameful indifference to God’s commandments.

Noah’s message from the steps of the ark was not, “Something good is going to happen to you!” He condemned the world and was called by the Holy Spirit, “A preacher of righteousness” (2 Pet. 2:5).

Jesus Christ was not crucified for saying: “Consider the lilies, how they grow.” He went to the cross for demanding of all the dwellers in Jerusalem, “...except ye repent...Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites...child of hell...fools...blind guides...ye are children of your father the devil” (Luke 13:3; Matt. 23:14-16; John 8:44).

Paul was not commissioned to write about half the New Testament because he taught that men are “saved by faith only.” He taught,

...vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ...wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness...obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, in-

dignation and wrath, Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil (2 Thess. 1:8; Rom. 1:18; 2:8-9).

There is no record of Jesus Christ trying to help men find out who they were. When they went up into the mountain, Jesus did not ask, "Peter, who are you?" The Lord never directed any follower to try to identify himself, but He did demand, "What think ye of Christ; whose son is he?" (Matt. 22:42). It is not, who am I, but who is He!

God's Temple Prepared

Ron Cosby

John the Baptist knew he was the messenger send by Jehovah who went before the Lord. His work was to make ready the way of the Christ by preparing the people of the Lord. His work prepared the material for the temple of God.

John was in the midst of the house of Israel, and out of this house came the people made ready. Draw a circle and in the midst of the circle a second circle, then draw a third circle. In John 1:11-12 you see these three circles:

He came unto his own (circle number one), and they that were his own received him not (circle number two). But as many as received him (circle number three), to them gave he the right to become children of God, *even* to them that believe on his name:

The "they that were his own received him not" is a narrower group than the house of Israel. They were the ones whom John prepared for Jesus. The apostle is saying that some of those that John prepared did not receive Jesus. However, those that did "gave he the right to become children of God." They were given the privilege or authority to become what they were not, that is, children of God. The phrase "children of God" is used to refer to a different people than simply being a Jew (John 3:3-5). He gave this right to them that believe on His name.

Okay, let's put some things together. We have concluded through the Scriptures that John the Baptist came to prepare the people (Matt. 11:9, 10; Luke 1:16-17). The receiving ones were the prepared material for the spiritual temple of God, and on Pentecost those who accepted Him became the church (Acts 2:41, 47).

Let me give an analogy. Just as King David prepared the physical material for the temple in Jerusalem, so John had prepared the material for the church which is the spiritual temple of God. The following passages concerning David's preparation will help us to see the point.

King Solomon built the temple (1 Kings 6:1). "[I]n the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month Ziv, which is the second month, that he began to build the house of Jehovah" (1 Kings 6:1). What material did Solomon use? David's. "[T]he house that is to be builded for Jehovah must be exceeding magnificent, of fame and of glory throughout all countries: I will therefore **make preparation for it**" (1 Chron. 22:5). So David prepared abundantly before his death. "**Now I have prepared** with all my might for the house of my God" (1 Chron. 29:1-2). David's supernatural preparation enabled the temple to be erected without hammer or axe. "[T]he house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready at the quarry; and there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building" (1 Kings 6:7).

Just as Solomon took the material and built the physical temple, the apostles on Pentecost began to build the spiritual temple of God. Paul and Peter inform us of the material and the finished product.

So then ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone; in whom each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit (Eph. 2:19-22).

...ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 2:5).

The Lord's temple (the church, Eph. 2:21-22) was built on Pentecost in Acts 2. Today, and for all time, the spiritual temple itself continues to grow by efforts of the fellow-workers of God (1 Cor. 3:9-16). John's work, David's work, and the work of the Apostles has presented us with the exceeding magnificent temple of God. We are that temple!

They Delivered Him Up

Cled E. Wallace

The chief priests and the rulers delivered Jesus to Pilate for one reason only. They had no love for Pilate, but they hated Jesus even more than they hated Rome. Their one reason for delivering Jesus to Pilate was that He might be crucified. There was neither honor nor fairness in their purpose or their methods. In their own council they condemned Jesus to die on the charge of blasphemy. This charge carried no weight before a Roman tribunal. Therefore, when they brought him to Pilate they hypocritically changed the charge to treason. And in their hearts they were all traitors and haters of Rome.

Pilate was no fool, nor as big a coward as some have made him out to be. Their chief priests and rulers had a powerful political weapon in their hands, and Pilate was playing for bigger stakes than merely seeing that a penniless Galilean prophet got justice. But even at that, he did what he thought he could afford to do on the side of justice: "And Pilate said unto the chief priests and multitudes, I find no fault in this man" (Luke 23:4 ASV). "...And behold, I having examined him before you, found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him; no, nor yet Herod: for he sent him back unto us; and behold, nothing worthy of death hath been done by him" (Luke 23:13-15 ASV).

The apostle Peter commented later on this dramatic scene when he stood before these same rulers: "...Whom ye delivered up, and denied before the face of Pilate, when he had determined to release him. But ye denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted unto you, and killed the Prince of life..." (Acts 3:13-14 ASV).

Behold, then the crime that grew out of envy. And this envy had a doctrinal basis. It is often said that the Jews knew their prophets. They could **quote** them and knew the number of pages in their manuscript and the numbers of letters on every page. Their thoroughness overlooked not a jot or a tittle. In reality, they understood their prophets no better than they did their Messiah. One of the weirdest and most absurd theories of modern times is that Jesus and the Jews understood the prophets alike on kingdom matters, and that Jesus offered the Jews the very kingdom they were looking for, but they rejected His offer and enviously had Him crucified on a charge of treason. Although **the time was fulfilled**, the prophecies were **not**, but were **postponed** out of deference to Jewish **perfidy** to a **future** age. This unmitigated foolishness of future kingdom advocates has as little support in the Scriptures as the Jewish attitude toward Jesus had endorsement in the prophets, and that is **exactly none**.

Jewish theories regarding the kingdom, which they identified with the teaching of the prophets, were materialistic. The teaching of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount and the parables was a clear repudiation of them. The power of Jesus deeply impressed the rulers. Their interest in Him was measured by their desire to use Him to further their own plans. They measured everything and everybody by their theories. Had He fit into their schemes, they would have used Him as avidly as they did Judas; and had He been as mean as Iago, it would not have disqualified Him. When they perceived that the divine program of a kingdom "not of this world" (John 18:36) would cancel out their ambitions for earthly rule, even though Jesus was the sinless Son of God, they decreed that He should "die for the nation." Blinded by false doctrine and hate, they could fea-

ture no good for the nation outside their own prophetic program

They employed means consonant with their resources to destroy Jesus. They resorted to ridicule that reflected on his family, his father and mother, brothers and sisters. This was ineffective. They boldly put forward chosen and astute men to confuse Him with captious questions. They hoped that in the heat of controversy He would make some unfortunate statements they could use against Him. He so completely routed them that they did not dare ask Him any more questions. He confused and discredited them before the multitudes.

With wounded pride, hearts poisoned by envy, and enraged over the prospects of a complete frustration of their schemes, they resorted to slander faultfinding, and conspiracy. They reached a state of desperation and said, "Let us kill him." This led to the cross. Incidentally, they aroused the "lion" that was in Jesus; and although He submitted meekly to mockery and death, He called them "hypocrites," "whited sepulchres," "a generation of vipers," and "sons of hell" (Matt. 23). Yet we are seriously told that Jesus offered the Jews the sort of Kingdom they were looking for, and this fatal conflict was the result! Anybody who can believe it must be as blind as the Jews were—**and are**.

It is significant that the Judaizers, after the establishment of the church, continued to employ the same methods to stop Paul that had been used against Jesus. They could not risk an honorable, upstanding meeting of the issue. Character assassination was a favorite weapon with them.

It cannot escape notice that some slanderous, whispering campaigns against prominent advocates of the truth of the Gospel have, within the last few years, been timed to offset some effective offensives against compromisers of the Gospel. Some of the Judaizers, at least, have changed little since Paul's day. The sheep's clothing of piety does not cover the fangs of the wolf.

Paul's Justification by Faith and James' Justification by Works

Doug Post

Paul: For what saith the scripture? **Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.** Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness (Rom. 4:3-5).

James: And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, **Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness:** and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only (Jas. 2:23-24).

Quoting from the very same passage (Gen. 15:6), both the apostle Paul and James arrive at different conclusions. Paul says Abraham was justified by faith and not by works, while James says Abraham was justified by works and not by faith only. How can two inspired men reach different conclusions regarding the same verse? This causes us to compare and contrast each of the contexts in which Genesis 15:6 is found.

In Romans, Paul is arguing that Abraham lived long before the time of Moses and the law. Therefore, he could not ever have been justified by the works of the law of Moses. The Judaizers were forcing the law of Moses upon the Gentiles, namely circumcision as a means of justification. However, the law of Moses, which included circumcision, was removed by Christ and the cross (Rom. 7:1-6; Eph. 2:11-17; Col. 2:14-15; Heb. 8:13; 9:15-17; 10:9).

Circumcision as a means of justification was only for the Jews, not the Gentiles, and was part of the law of Moses, not part of the law of faith/Gospel/the faith (Rom. 3:27; 8:2; cf. 1:16-17). Neither Christ nor His apostles, ever taught circumcision as being part of the Gospel. Within the context of Romans three, it is undeniable that Paul is discussing the works of the law of Moses, contrasting it with the law of faith (3:27),

which, again, is simply a reference to the Gospel of Christ (Rom. 1:16-17), also referred to as “the faith” (3:30).

We then arrive at chapter four where Paul makes the point that the Jews viewed Abraham as their father (4:1), but they condemned the Gentiles because they were aliens and strangers to the law of Moses and the covenants of promise (Eph. 2:11-12). Paul establishes the fact that since Abraham lived before the law of Moses, He never did the works associated with the law of Moses. However, the Jews accepted Abraham as their father, but condemned the Gentiles, even though they never did the works of the law of Moses either. Paul then goes on to say:

Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe (Rom. 4:9-11).

The above text explains exactly what Paul has been discussing within the context, especially as it relates to 4:2-5:

For if Abraham were justified by **works**, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that **worketh** is the reward not reckoned of **grace**, but of **debt**. But to him that **worketh not**, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

Romans 4:2

If Abraham did the works of the law of Moses, being circumcised according to that law, he had something in which to boast (glory). Note the relationship to what Paul just discussed:

To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore, we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also:

There was indeed a time a Jew could boast, believing and teaching that justification for anyone, Jew, or Gentile (proselyte), could only come by submitting to the works of said law. But now, **all** men (Jew and Gentile) are to believe in Jesus—not Moses—and the law God gave. Now, all men are to submit to the law of faith (“the faith”)—the Gospel—for justification.

This is the exact same point Paul makes in Ephesians 2:8-9:

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands.

In a previous article, we referred to the fact that there is a textual variant here, where a definite article is placed before the word “faith.” Therefore, “**For by grace are ye saved through the faith...**” One is saved by grace through the faith—the Gospel—not through works of the law of Moses. Now just here, we know this is the meaning of the passage because of the context. Paul describes how the Jews were saved **first** (Eph. 1:1-12). He then describes how the Gentiles were saved by the very same process following the Jews (1:13-14). The same process made one new man out of the two, being in one body (1:15-2:22). There could be no boasting of being saved by works of the law of Moses because the law, which was only for the Jews, had now been removed and taken out of the way. Instead, it was now through **the faith** by which grace is granted.

Do we not boast in Christ? Do we not boast in His saving message? Do we not boast in the things He has commanded us to do? To boast in Christ is to boast in everything that Christ has provided for our salvation. We boast that we are children of God because of Christ, His grace, and His word. There is nothing wrong with boasting. Context determines meaning, and in the context of boasting, the Jewish Christians at Rome were boasting out of the wrong motive, to make themselves distinct from the Gentiles, and to force the law upon them. Such boasting was seriously at odds with the Gospel of Christ.

Abraham could not boast of such a law or of such works because God did not provide such works as a means of justification. Such boasting was excluded by the law of faith (*the faith*).

Romans 4:3

The “works” mentioned here are the works of the context – the works of the law of Moses. In this case, “circumcision” (Rom. 3:27-28).

Romans 4:4

The one who “worketh” is the Jew—the Judaizing Christians in the church at Rome who were teaching the Gentiles had to be circumcised in order to be justified. Of course, it would also include the Gentiles who were buying into their false teaching.

Such justification could not come by grace, because both circumcision and the law of Moses were now extinct. Circumcision was given to the Jews, by grace, under the Old Covenant, and to the Jews only. However, it was no longer by grace because it was no longer required for justification, not being part of the Gospel—the New Covenant—to which all Jews and Gentiles are now amenable.

No reward could ever come from God because He had not commanded the working of the law of Moses while simultaneously providing works under the law of Christ (Eph. 2:10). God dispenses grace, or favor, in relationship to the system of law and works a person lived under (Rom. 2:26-27). Abraham lived under the Patriarchal law and will be judged thusly. The Jews lived under the Mosaic economy and will be judged accordingly. We live under the New Testament law, or Gospel, which the Jews and Gentiles in Rome lived under (Rom. 1:16-17). This very same system requires works, but not works of the law of Moses:

But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his **deeds** (*works*, DP): To them who by patient continuance in **well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life**: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; **But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good**, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: For there is no respect of persons with God (Rom. 2:5-11, Emph., DP).

The above serves as part of the context which so many ignore when they read Romans chapter four. It demonstrates the necessity of **works** in relationship to the Gospel. It also demonstrates that works/obedience are necessary since God will judge all people on that very basis. The working and/or producing of “works” is connected to doing good, seeking glory, honor, immortality, and eternal life. Do we not seek these things knowing they are part of God’s judging process? Do we not boast in the gospel, so much so, we teach it? Do we not glory in this very *power of God to salvation*? Do we not glory or boast in the cross and in the blood from which the New Testament of Jesus Christ flowed (Matt. 26:28)? Brethren, this is **appropriate** boasting, not misplaced boasting. I suppose the question ought to be, why are we not boasting in these things? Are we ashamed of them? Some folks seemingly are. Note the following comments on Romans 4:4, which are typical among us:

“Now to him that worketh”—It is important to realize the “kind” of work Paul is addressing. The verse itself provides the answer. It is the “kind” of work that results in the “reward” being given out of “debt” on the part of the giver. A man who works,

fulfilling all the essential elements of a contract, is **owed**.”

The above philosophy is, unwittingly, teaching that if we obligate God to ourselves, doing “works” in order to obey Him, because we are placing God in a position where He owes us something. In other words, we are guilty of severing ourselves from Christ. Quite simply, that is repeating denominational hogwash. Yes, it is about the “kind” of works under discussion, but the context has nothing to do with “ill motive” but doing what God requires of us, which, of course, does include having the proper attitude. Paul just finished speaking about seeking glory and honor from God in doing what He asks us to do (Rom. 2:5-11). Paul already defined *faith* as being “obedience of faith” (Rom. 1:5).

Knowing God will render to us according to our works contradicts the argument “debt owed” on the part of God. Paul just said God gives back (*apodōsei*) according to what we have done. That is **reward**, brethren: “But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: For there is no respect of persons with God” (Rom. 2:10-11). Remember, Paul said: “To them who by patient continuance in **well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life.**”

If God provides us a means by which we can be saved, in the form of promises and commands and, in so understanding, I do (perform) them, have I obligated to myself? If anything, God has obligated Himself to what He said and promised, has He not? If I then tell others that they, too, **must** do these certain things in order to be saved, of what would I be guilty? How in the world can someone understand an “if/then” proposition from God and then, somehow, ignore the results that are to follow knowing that carrying out said proposition, produces the intended results? Did not Paul say that doing good (“well doing”) is spiritually appropriate because such means one is seeking glory, honor, immortality, and eternal life? How is that sinful? The notion is preposterous.

Such a philosophy flies in the face of every passage we have quoted and dismisses every command God gives. It is a philosophy that minimizes the plan of salvation by minimizing “works.” Martin Luther condemned God’s word by calling the epistle of James a “right strawy epistle.” In much the same way, for some the plan of salvation becomes a “right strawy plan” because they are unwilling to accept that “works” are necessary for salvation.

Moreover, we are to walk worthy, and therefore we are to be worthy of the Gospel and of God (Eph. 4:1; Phil. 1:27; Col. 1:10; 1 Thess. 2:12, 2 Thess. 1:5,11). Since we are to examine ourselves and know whether we are in the faith (2 Cor. 13:5; cf. Col. 1:23, John 8:31; 1 John 1:7), we can know whether we are worthy. There is no shame in knowing this because it is exactly what God’s word teaches. We may “cringe” upon hearing this, but that is because we have been beaten down by denominational dogma concerning, grace, faith, and works.

Furthermore, Romans 4:4 may be translated as, “**to the now working one the reward is not reckoned according to favor but according to what is due.**” The “now working one” was the one to whom Paul is writing, who was performing works from an extinct law, expecting justification. However, they were actually perverting the Gospel (cf. Gal. 1:6-9; Acts 15). The one who “**worketh not**” is the Gentile, who is not relying on the law of Moses for justification. Like Abraham, the Gentiles had no part in the law of Moses, not being subject to circumcision.

Finally, I would like to note that the Jews wandered from God. They were not keeping God’s law—the law of Moses. Instead, having violated the law many times, they also added to the law many traditions. These traditions voided God’s law (15:9). What they were actually keeping was terribly hybrid, placing more stock in their traditions than God’s word. However, they were staunch supporters of circumcision.

James 2:14-26

Now we come to James who is, most certainly, discussing a different kind of “works.” These works were separate and distinct from the works of the law of Moses. The works under consideration in this context are those things God desired of Abraham, i.e., the

works God wanted the Patriarch to perform. Quite simply, God desired obedience from Abraham (Gen. 22:18, 26:5; cf. Heb. 5:9; 11:8). God had assigned works for Abraham to carry out. This is Bible faith (Rom. 1:5; 16:26). Like Abraham, God has assigned us works to carry. One universal work assigned to us is “faith” itself (John 6:29; Rev. 2:19; cf. Heb. 11:6).

The obedience of faith must produce repentance, confession, and baptism, and faith must endure by continuing in the word of God. Of course, love is the greatest work of all (1 Cor. 13:13; Rev. 2:19). Faith works through work of love: “For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love” (Gal. 5:6). Of course, Paul also said, “Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God” (1 Cor. 7:19).

Abraham was not assigned works of the law of Moses because he did not live under Moses, but some 400 years and more **before** Moses. Of course, we live under Christ, not Moses. The works Christ has assigned were not under that law. As was true with the Gentiles in the church at Rome, it is also true for Christians today. We have been assigned works today, but they are not the same as Abraham's, nor are they the same works that were assigned to the Jews to perform. We, as Christians, carry out the works assigned to us because we are amenable **only** to the law of Christ—the gospel (the faith).

It must be noted that when Abraham believed God it was counted to him for righteousness. It was **not** by “faith alone” or “faith only.” Rather, it was **faith and works** together. The word *faith* is often used as a figure of speech, called a synecdoche, where a part stands for the whole. However the Holy Spirit teaches us that: 1. Faith works (Gal. 5:6) 2. Faith is, itself, a work (John 6:29, Rev. 2:19) 3. Faith involves obedience (Rom. 1:5; 16:26). Anything less is not Bible faith—the faith God demands. For instance, when Paul came across some disciples in Ephesus, he asked them:

“Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism” (Acts 19:2-3).

Aside from other doctrinal matters here, I simply want to show the relationship faith has with works. The phrase “**since you believed**” is equated, by Paul, with “**Unto what then were ye baptized.**” Paul is pointing out that if they had “**believed**” it was because they were “**baptized.**” The word “believed” (faith) is a synecdoche for having been “baptized” (Mark 16:16). Moreover, it is a synecdoche for having been “saved.”

Of course, some will claim baptism is not a work of man but of God, based upon Colossians 2:12. Certainly, the forgiveness of sins (washing by Christ's blood) is connected to baptism. On one hand, baptism is considered a passive act (Acts 2:38), because God does the forgiving of sins. On the other hand, baptism is an action on the part of the one being immersed. The person who does not bring him or herself to be baptized does not have the forgiveness of sins (washing away of sins). Paul was commanded to arise and be baptized, and that is what he did (Acts 22:16). He brought himself to the spiritual cleansing (forgiveness of sins) by virtue of being physically immersed (middle voice) in water. When an activity is in the active or middle voice, the subject is the one doing the acting, but when the activity is grammatically passive, then the subject is being acted upon. Therefore, when it comes to baptism, it not **either/or**, but **both/and**.

Finally, we note how the relationship between what Paul said (Romans 4), and what James said (James 2) harmonize. The phrase, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness” (Rom. 4:3) is equivalent to, “Was not Abraham our father justified by works...” “Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only (Jas. 2:21, 24).

Just like Abraham, (not the Jews), we, too, are “justified by works, and not by faith

only.” So, as Paul said, let us “walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised” (Rom. 4:12; Gal. 3:6-9)..

“The Thing That Hath Been...”: The Cycle of Apostasy, Volume 2, Revised and Enlarged is now in preparation and should be ready for publication later this Fall. It will include a lot more material documenting the apostasy of mainstream churches of Christ and—like the first volume—will be **free of charge**.

Effects of Gospel Preaching

Gordon Wilson

And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter. So Paul departed from among them. Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed: among the which was Dionysis the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them (Acts 17:32-34).

The above verses conclude the remarks of inspiration concerning Paul's labors in Athens. He had preached the Gospel faithfully and these verses sum up the effects of his preaching on the hearers.

There are three attitudes toward the truth manifested by different portions of his audience. Some mocked, or frankly disbelieved it. Others showed a passing interest, or indifference toward it. Some believed and embraced the Gospel. I believe it would be worthwhile to inquire as to why the Gospel did not have the same effect on everyone. Why the differing attitudes toward the preaching of the Gospel? Could it be that some of their personalities matched Paul's, while others clashed, and thus their feeling for the preacher influenced them? Do you suppose that the Lord was responsible for their obedience or disobedience by electing some to salvation and others to damnation? I suggest that these are not the causes for the effects of gospel preaching.

There is one gospel for everybody. “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). The effect of preaching the Gospel depends entirely on the hearts of the hearers. Some prepare their hearts to receive the truth, whatever it may be, and others condition their hearts to oppose anything which they do not think to be approved by human wisdom. “For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it” (Ezra 7:10). Before a person can be favorably impressed by the truth his heart must be prepared to receive it. If he listens with a prejudiced heart the effect of the Gospel preaching will be negative. That would seem to be the meaning of 2 Thess. 2:10-12: “...They received not the love of the truth that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them a strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” This does not mean that God told anyone a lie, or that He is responsible for anyone believing a lie. Rather, the strong delusion was sent by the preaching of the Gospel. Those who prepared not their hearts to receive the truth, (they had not the “love of the truth”), believed a lie instead. The Lord was not responsible for their ungodly attitude, but they had pleasure in unrighteousness. The truth that could save them if they believed, could condemn them if they disbelieved.

In this connection we may refer to an Old Testament incident. Exodus 4:21 says: “And the Lord said unto Moses, When thou goest to return to Egypt, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in thine hand: But I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go.” Here God said that He would harden Pharaoh's heart that he should not obey Moses. How did He do it? All of the force in the world could not have hardened anyone's heart who wanted to receive the truth. How can it be said then that God hardened Pharaoh's heart? Was it by withholding the truth? To the contrary; it was by sending Moses with his miraculous signs that the Lord hardened the heart of the Egyptian monarch. If Pharaoh had taken the right atti-

tude toward the message of Moses, the effect of the preaching would have been good. But he rejected the truth, thus his heart was hardened.

Surely all of this is sufficient to show that effects of gospel preaching depend entirely upon the disposition of heart among the hearers. It is only our responsibility to be sure that we are preaching the truth. We cannot be responsible for how it is received.

The Gospel Preceptor

Published Monthly at Elk City, Oklahoma

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

Staff Writers

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

Repentance and Salvation

M.C. Cuthbertson

Repentance is a change of mind, or heart. By repentance, then, we mean the work accomplished by the word of God in the heart of man, whereby he has a changed attitude toward sin and God. “For godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation...” (2 Cor. 7:10). Thus, we learn the cause of repentance.

By salvation, we mean the forgiveness of sin. It makes no difference whether we have in mind the sin of an alien or the sin of a child of God. Of course, the forgiveness of sin here looks to the eternal state of heaven. Having clearly made known what we have in mind by the two terms of our study, we are ready to consider the relation they sustain to each other.

It is not our aim here to study all the conditions of salvation imposed upon men, so we are not suggesting that repentance is the only condition unto salvation. Indeed, repentance is not possible, and even if it were it would not be acceptable to God, unless we first believed. “But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Heb. 11:6-7). So repentance cannot take place until one has become a believer in God, and in the plan of God to save man.

Also the Scriptures teach us that the only way to get into Christ and to put on Christ is to be baptized into Him (Gal. 3:26-27). We then need to do more than repent in order to complete our part of obedience to the plan of salvation.

Christ said, “I tell you nay, but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3). Words could not be more direct than these and they leave no doubt at all as to repentance being a condition of our salvation. According to Christ, then, repentance must take place in our hearts before we can receive salvation or the forgiveness of sin.

It is not only true that we must repent, but this command is universal in its application to all men.

And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead (Acts 17:30- 31).

Here we have repentance set forth as a condition of righteousness before Christ in the day of judgment and that for all men. Man who has not repented of his sins cannot be considered righteous before God in the final judgment. A failure to repent means one will be rejected in that great day. Repentance, then, is essential in the judgment if we are to be saved eternally.

When the day of Pentecost was come, following the ascension of Christ to glory, men for the first time heard the full gospel of Christ, and having heard, they believed. Upon

this belief, they cried out, “Men and brethren what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). They were believers already, for it was that belief that prompted them to cry out. Then Peter answered their question in inspired words: “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins.” (Acts 2:38). Thus, the Holy Spirit declared through the inspired Peter in the first gospel sermon that repentance is a condition of salvation. All of Peter's hearers were to repent, and they were all to be baptized in order to have the remission of sins.

Simon the sorcerer is an example of a Christian who sins to whom the command to repent also applies.

And Simon also himself believed: and being baptized, he continued with Philip (Acts 8:13 ASV).

Now when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay my hands, he may receive the Holy Spirit. But Peter said unto him, Thy silver perish with thee, because thou hast thought to obtain the gift of God with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right before God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray the Lord, if perhaps the thought of thy heart shall be forgiven thee." (Acts 8:18-22 ASV).

Here we have an example of one who had become a child of God, but who had sinned. In this case—as in the case of the alien sinner—repentance is a condition of salvation. No, not the only condition, for the Christian must pray for God to forgive him of the thought of his heart. But before he prays, he must repent of his sin. Therefore, whatever the state or condition we are in, or the relationship we have with God, when we sin, we must repent of our sin if we are to be forgiven. Repentance is a universal condition of salvation to all who have sinned.

In the great commission, Jesus said remission of sins is a universal offer to all who repent (Luke 24:46-47). Men must therefore repent if they are to be saved. Where there is no repentance, there is no salvation.

Repentance is not suggested as an act of pleasure, or something easy, but something we **must** do if we are to be saved. Repentance demands restitution. When one has repented, he has the desire to restore that which he has destroyed. When he was converted, Paul went about rebuilding the church which he had before tried to destroy. A man could not steal an automobile, repent of his theft, and keep the automobile. Such a state of heart would not be a state of penitence. We cannot substitute good acts on our part for true repentance. We must repent and allow a truly penitent spirit to produce the fruits meet for repentance in our lives.

Preaching the Truth in Love

R.L. Whiteside

Much is said about preaching the truth in love, and so it should be preached. But in love of what? The preacher should so love the truth that he will not sacrifice any of it nor pervert it, and he should so love people that he will not withhold from them even an unpleasant truth. He that does either of these things loves neither the church nor the people.

We frequently fool ourselves, thinking we do thus and so to spare the feelings of others when it is our own feelings that prompt us.

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

“In the Name of Christ” (Col. 3:17)

Jerry C. Brewer

To do a thing “in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ” means that He has authorized us to do that thing. We cannot simply pick out a practice that suits us and say, “this is in the name of Christ.” No one can act “in the name of the State” without authority from that state. One might say he is acting in the name of the state, but unless the state has authorized that person to act, his action is vain and without authority.

Even so, unless Christ has authorized what we preach and practice we are not acting in His name even though we **claim** to do so. Jesus has all authority, (Matt. 28:18), and the Hebrews writer begins with the inspired assertion that God has “spoken unto us by his Son” (Heb. 1:1-2). God has spoken and His final word has been revealed through Christ. For one’s religion to be right, his preaching and practice must be ordered by the word of Christ that is revealed in the New Testament. To do otherwise brings God’s wrath upon us.

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

The above scripture makes it very plain that we **dare not tamper** with God’s word which is revealed to us. But both Catholics and Protestants are guilty of violating this plain New Testament precept. Catholicism relies upon oral tradition from the pope and councils of bishops in addition to the Bible, and the Protestant world is bound by humanly written creeds in addition to the Bible. By adding their own teachings, whether oral or written, the Catholic and Protestant worlds have perverted the gospel of Christ.

Paul said the Gospel is “the power of God unto salvation.” (Rom. 1:16). But when that power is perverted by men’s doctrines it becomes powerless. Water is God’s power for quenching thirst, but salt added to water perverts its power and renders it useless for that which God intended. That’s exactly what human reason—whether expressed in the philosophies of agnosticism and atheism or the oral and written traditions of Catholics and Protestants—does to the Gospel of Christ.

We invite you to stand upon the word of God with us. Reject all human names and practices which aren’t authorized in the Bible and become a Christian only. Believe in the Lord (John 8:24), repent of your sins (Luke 13:3), confess Christ as God’s Son (Rom. 10:10; Acts 8:37) and be baptized into Christ for the remission of sins. When you do those things, the Lord will add you to His church—the **only** church found in The New Testament. Then worship with us as we follow the authority of the **Bible and the Bible only**.

What Must I do to be Saved?

Believe (John 8:24)

Repent (Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30-31)

Confess Christ (Matt. 10:32; Acts 8:37)

Be Baptized (Mark 16:16)

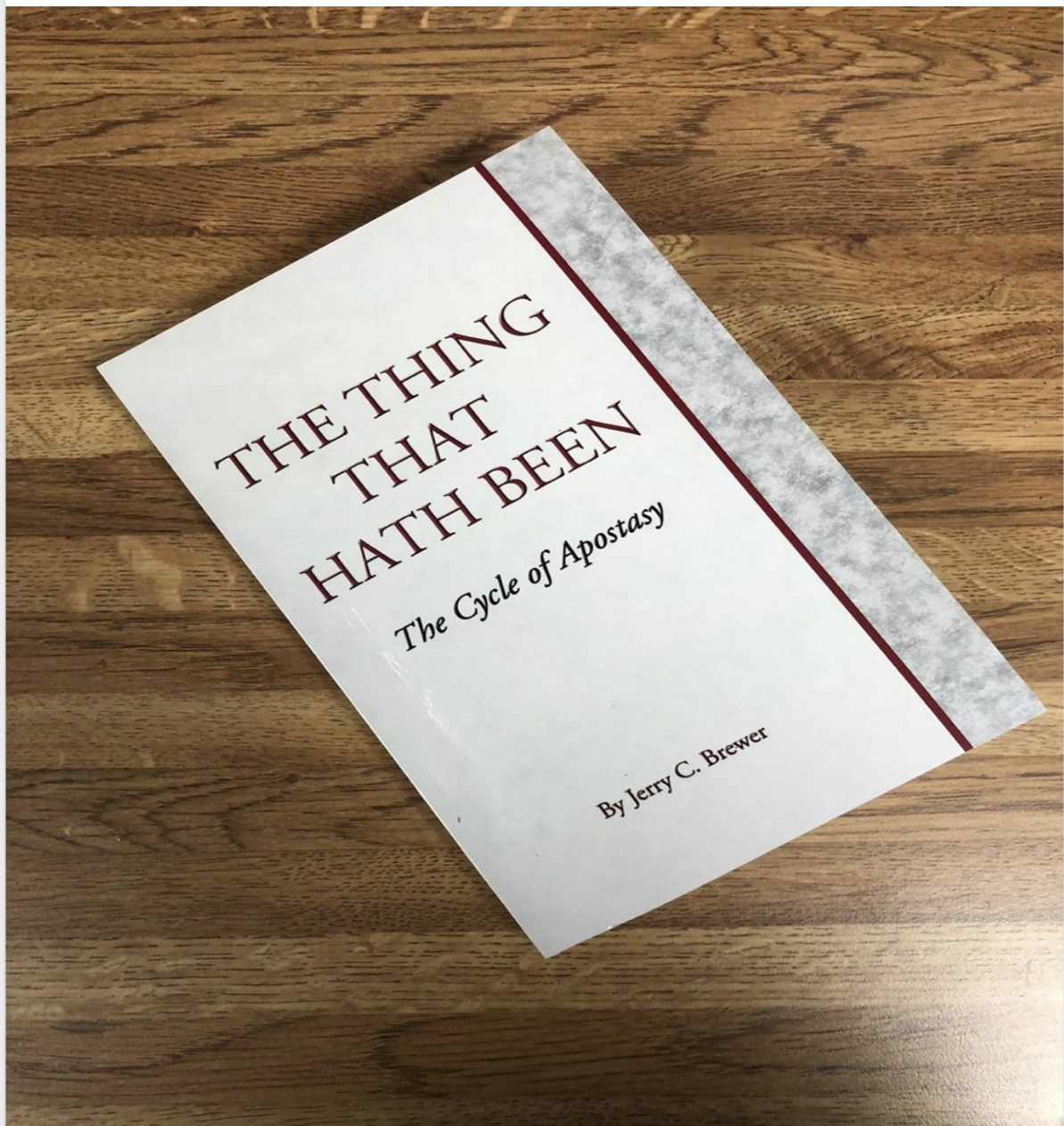
“The Thing That Hath Been...”: The Cycle of Apostasy



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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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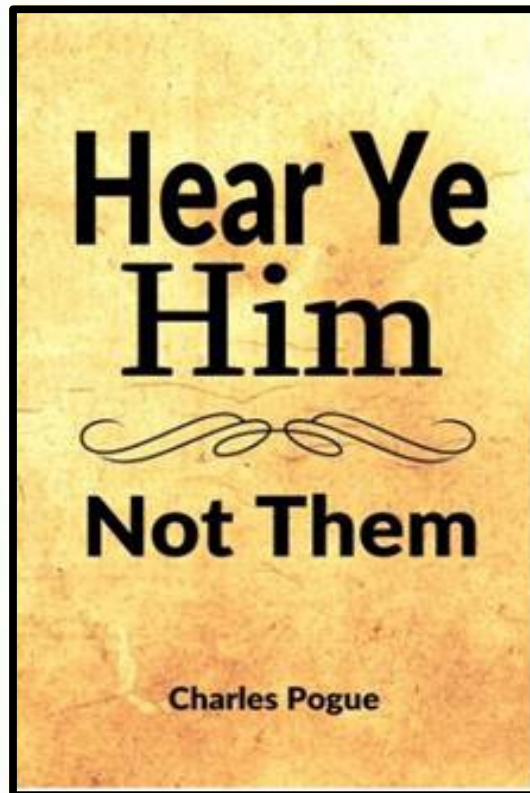
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*A New Book
by Charles Pogue*



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We have known Charles and his wife, Linda, for many years. Charles is a faithful Gospel preacher and a man of conviction, and we recommend his new book to all who have a love for the Lord and His Word.

Jerry C. Brewer
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