

The Gospel Preceptor

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

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Biblical Baptism

Dub McClish

Baptism has long been a subject of controversy, especially in respect to its purpose and its action. Uninspired men have written perhaps hundreds of books and millions of words about baptism. Many of these things we can read to our profit, but the only book on this subject that matters is the Word of God. Let us examine what the Bible teaches about baptism.

Before we can study baptism, we must narrow the field of study. Those who are familiar with the Bible know that it identifies several “baptisms.”

1. “Baptism” of suffering on the cross (Mark 10:38–39).
2. Baptism in water by John the Baptizer (Mat. 3:1–5, 11; Mark 1:3).
3. Baptism in water by Jesus and His apostles (John 4:1–2).
4. “Baptism” in the Holy Spirit (Mat. 3:12).
5. “Baptism” in fire (Mat. 3:12).
6. “Baptism” in the cloud and the sea (1 Cor.10:1–2).
7. Baptism of the “Great Commission” (Mat. 28:18–20, Mark 16:15–16). Of these, which baptism is relevant to moderns?

The baptism with which we are concerned is the one described in Acts 8:36, in which a man from Ethiopia said to Philip, “Behold, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?” The baptism relevant to us is the one Peter commanded at Cornelius’s house: “Can any man forbid the water, that these should not be baptized...? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ” (10:47-48). This baptism is the one that same one that Peter wrote about (1 Pet. 3:20-21). He referred to the eight souls that were “saved through water” in Noah’s ark, and then stated: “Which also after a true likeness doth now save you, even baptism, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the interrogation of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

In about A.D. 62, the Apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesians: “There is...one baptism” (4:5). Thus, at the time of this writing only one baptism was in force. All other baptisms had fulfilled their function and were obsolete, or they were not yet in effect. Which baptism was/is the “one baptism”? It was the one of which we have already read in Acts 8, Acts 10, and 1 Peter 3—“Great Commission” baptism, as follows:

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 have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world (Mat. 28:18-19).

Obviously, this baptism is the one that has been in force since the Pentecost following Jesus’ crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension—and will remain be in force until the end.

Mere men did not invent the Bible doctrine of baptism. Jesus, in the Great Commis-

sion (Mat. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16), is its author, and He alone has the right to specify its element, purpose, antecedents, action, candidates, and every other facet of it. The New Testament is the exclusive source of this information.

Is baptism for everyone (i.e., all who are capable of responding to the Gospel)? One correct answer is, “Yes.” The Great Commission indicates that the Lord wants everyone to hear, believe, and obey the Gospel, which includes baptism. However, another correct answer is, “No.” Millions should not be baptized, not because God arbitrarily wills it, but because they are unprepared and unqualified for the act. Scriptural statements abound indicating various ones who should not be baptized:

1. Those who do not believe in Jesus as the Christ: “For except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins (John 8:24). Baptism will not benefit the unbeliever.
2. Those who will not confess their faith, even though they may believe: Before Philip would baptize the Ethiopian, the evangelist required him to confess his faith (Acts 8:36-37; cf. Rom. 10:9-10).
3. Those who will not repent of their sins: To repent means to determine to stop sinning and then to stop sinning. Those brought to believe in Christ by the preaching on Pentecost were told: “Repent ye and be baptized...” (Acts 2:38). Baptism is a hollow act if not preceded by repentance.
4. Those who seek to please others rather than to obey Jesus: It is right for parents, a spouse, or a friend to strongly desire one to be baptized into Christ. However, if one submits to baptism merely to please others, rather than to submit to the will of Christ, the act is vain. Those on Pentecost “gladly received the word” (Acts 2:41). One’s obedience must be “from the heart” (Rom 6:17-18).
5. Those who do not know, or who deny, the purpose of baptism: The Bible states this purpose variously. It is in order to: be saved (Mark 16:16), receive remission of sins (Acts 2:38), wash away sins (22:16), put on Christ (Gal. 3:27), and like expressions. Baptism is the line between those not forgiven and those forgiven, those not God’s spiritual children and those who are, those in the world and those in the church. If one does not comprehend the purpose of the Lord’s supper, he takes it in vain (1 Cor. 11:26, 29). So it is with baptism.

Baptism is for believers who will confess their faith in Christ and repent of their sins—and who understand baptism’s purpose in God’s plan of salvation. Those lacking these Scriptural antecedents are not Scriptural candidates for baptism.

“Will there be anyone in Heaven who has not been baptized?” When one stresses the New Testament’s clear teaching on baptism, a question similar to this often arises. This question does not concern infants or those who are mentally incompetent. Rather, it relates to those who have sufficient mental faculties to make them accountable and responsible beings before God. Will there be any such in Heaven who were not baptized? While such questions often seem to be designed more to appeal to emotions than to seek and accept the Truth, they nonetheless deserve a Biblical answer.

This question has two correct answers. The first correct answer is, “Yes, there will be many, many people in Heaven who were never baptized.” The Bible even calls many of them by name. Jesus said: “And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and the west and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven” (Mat. 8:11). *Kingdom of heaven* in Matthew’s book usually refers to the church (Mat. 3:2; 4:17; 10:7; 16:18–19, 28; et al.), but in this statement it obviously refers to the eternal Heaven. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob never heard of baptism, but Jesus said they will be in Heaven. Hebrews 11 records a long list of great heroes and heroines of the faith. Starting just outside the Garden of Eden with Abel, the writer names many Old Testament saints to the time of the prophets, finally saying that time failed him to list others (v. 32). The writer affirms that each one lived “by faith.” The implication is unmistakable that each one named will be in Heaven at last, but none of them ever heard of baptism. The Bible contains numerous other illustrations of the same fact. So, yes, there will be many people in Heaven who were never baptized.

However, all of these had in common the following: **They all lived before Christ**

died on the cross. Baptism was not a part of the Patriarchal or Mosaic law systems, under one or the other of which every person lived before Calvary. Salvation under those systems required faith in and obedience to God, along with animal sacrifices. However, the blood of bulls and goats could not remove sin (Heb. 10:4). That blood was typical of the sacrifice of Jesus' perfect blood. Thus, the cleansing power of His blood "flowed backward" to redeem those Patriarchs and Jews who had been faithful to God in their respective law systems (Gal. 4:4–5; Heb. 9:15). We should not think this any more unusual than that Jesus' blood "flows forward" to cleanse us of sin today. Subsequently, we will discuss the second correct answer to the question.

Controversy over the Scriptural action involved in baptism has raged for centuries. However, all such controversy would end if all men respected the authority of the Bible. It explicitly tells us the action of baptism.

To Christians Paul wrote: "We were **buried** therefore with him through baptism..." (Rom. 6:4a, emph. DM). Again, he wrote to Christians: "Having been buried with him in baptism..." (Col. 2:12a, emph. DM).

Acts 8:38–39 gives the fullest New Testament description of a baptism: "And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they both went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. And... they came up out of the water..."

What did Philip do to this man when he baptized him? Did he pour some water on him? Did he sprinkle some water on him? He did neither. If we let the Bible answer this question, it tells us he buried him in the water (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12).

One does not have to know the first letter of the Greek alphabet (the original language of the New Testament) to know beyond doubt or question that **Bible baptism is immersion and never any other action.** However, it might be helpful to know that there are three separate words in the Greek language for sprinkling, pouring, and immersion, just as there are in the English language. The Greek word meaning "immersion" is always the word that appears behind our English word, baptism and all its cognate forms (baptism is simply the Greek word *baptisma* spelled in English letters, an Anglicized, transliterated word). The Greek lexicons invariably define this word as an overwhelming, a dipping, a plunging, an immersion, a submersion—a burial.

There is no historical record of any other action related to baptism besides immersion until well into the third century. In A.D. 251, a very sick man by the name of Novation was near death and requested baptism. His attendants feared that immersion would kill him, so they poured some water on his head instead of immersing him. Centuries later sprinkling was added as another substitute for baptism. Both of these practices are unauthorized innovations of men.

The baptism pertaining to those who have lived since the Pentecost of Acts 2 (and that is to be preached and administered until "the end of the world" [Mat. 28:19–20]) is immersion in water (Acts 10:47–48) to save the soul (Mark 16:16; 1 Pet. 3:21). If the action of baptism is unimportant (as millions have been taught), one may as well discard any semblance of the act itself as important or necessary (which millions have done). However, the New Testament teaches that the act of baptism is necessary and that only immersion constitutes that act.

"Does the New Testament say what baptism is for?" Acts 2:38 states (KJV): "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ **for the remission of sins...**" (emph. DM).

While Peter's words seem clearly to teach that men must repent and be baptized in order to receive remission of sins, many argue otherwise. They aver that the preposition *for* is capable of more than one meaning, affecting the meaning of Peter's statement. *For* is indeed capable of two meanings, almost opposites, depending on its usage, as our daily conversations illustrate. We "automatically" interpret the intended meaning, depending on context.

If one enters a store **for** a loaf of bread, he does so **in order to get** a loaf of bread. If, however, one is in prison **for** bank robbery, he is not there **in order to rob**, but

because he has robbed, a bank. In the first case, *for* refers to a desired, unattained, result. In the second case, *for* refers to a result already attained. Those who reject the Scriptural purpose of baptism assert *for remission of sins* in Acts 2:38 means that men should be baptized **because they have received** remission of their sins. This cannot be Peter's meaning for several reasons:

First, Acts 2:38 inseparably joins repentance and baptism by the coordinate conjunction, *and*, which makes them equally related to their common object, "remission of sins." They are spiritual "Siamese twins." Where one goes in relation to remission of sins, the other must go, also. Thus, if baptism is **because of** remission of sins, then so is repentance. However, one will search the Bible in vain to find a single instance in which God promised or pronounced forgiveness of any sin prior to repentance. Since repentance must precede remission of sins, so also must baptism.

Second, in instituting the Lord's supper, Jesus said of the fruit of the vine: "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many **for the remission of sins**" (Mat. 26: 27–28, *emph. DM*). What *for the remission of sins* means in one statement, it must mean in both. Jesus did not shed His blood **because** the sins of men had already been forgiven, but **that they may be** forgiven. So it is with baptism and remission of sins.

Third, the Greek preposition, *eis*, translated *for*, points forward rather than backward, as the American Standard Version correctly reflects: "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ **unto the remission of your sins**" (*emph. DM*).

Fourth, many other passages teach that baptism is a condition of pardon (Mark 16:16; John 3:5; Acts 22:16; Gal. 3:27; Eph. 5:25–27; Tit. 3:4–5; 1 Pet. 3:21; et al.).

Protestantism generally denies that baptism is a condition of salvation from sin. It often does so, averring that it is a "work" and by which one cannot be saved.

Clearly, the Bible teaches that one **cannot be saved** by "works": "For by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; **not of works**, that no man should glory" (Eph. 2:8–9, *emph. added*). But one should "not quit reading too soon." Just as clearly, the Bible teaches that one **is saved** by "works": "Ye see that **by works a man is justified**, and not only by faith...even so **faith apart from works** is dead" (Jam. 2:24–26, *emph. DM*). Since the Bible does not contradict itself, we must conclude that Paul and James wrote of different kinds of "works," for salvation clearly requires works of some sort.

Paul identified the works of which he wrote as those which are "of yourselves" in which one could "glory." Similarly, he further stated the futility of seeking salvation by such works: "Not by **works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves**, but according to his mercy he saved us..." (Tit. 3:5a, *emph. DM*). No one can be morally good (i.e., "righteous") enough or do enough good works to boast, "I have saved myself from sin and condemnation; God owes it to me."

When James wrote that one is saved by works, what sort of "works" did he mean? The context indicates that he referred to **works of obedience to God**, which one's faith causes him to do. He cited Abraham and Rahab as examples of those who were justified before God by such obedient faith (Jam. 2:21, 25). The Bible ever enjoins faith-actuated obedience, requiring our works in response, as necessary to salvation: "And having been made perfect, he [Christ] became **unto all them that obey him** the author of eternal salvation" (Heb. 5:9, *emph. DM*; cf. Mat. 7:21; Rom. 6:17–18; et al.).

Is baptism a work of which one can boast, or is it an act of obedience to Christ, based upon one's faith? The Bible teaches that it is the latter. After stating that one is saved by God's mercy, rather than by one's "works of righteousness" (as noted above), Paul then wrote that God saves men "through the **washing of regeneration** and renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Tit. 3:5b, *emph. DM*). The only thing in the New Testament to which the washing of regeneration can refer is baptism. Notice that Paul specifically **excluded** its being a "work of [man's own] righteousness," but rather

identified it with God's **merciful plan of salvation**. One who is properly taught will trust in the "working of God," not in his own works, in baptism (Col. 2:12). Baptism is not a work of human merit, but a Divine command that men must obey to receive forgiveness of sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; et al.).

For failure to grasp the connection between baptism and the blood of Christ, many people woefully misunderstand the role of baptism in God's plan. Those who understand this relationship do not question the necessity of baptism. Those who deny that baptism in water is necessary for one to be forgiven of sins sometimes accuse those who thus believe of teaching "water salvation." They often make this accusation when we emphasize the unmistakable language of Acts 22:16: "And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name." The accuser may say, "You believe that water will wash away one's sins." However, neither Acts 22:16 nor any other passage of Scripture even hints that water can wash away sins. There is not enough water in all of the oceans, lakes, and rivers of the world to wash away even one sin. Had it been possible for water to wash away sins, the incarnate Word could have remained in Heaven.

Acts 22:16 does not tell us **what** element "washes away" or removes sins. We must look elsewhere for this information. Jesus spoke on this subject when He instituted the Lord's supper: "For this is my **blood** of the covenant, which is poured out for many **unto remission** of sins" (Mat. 26:28, emp. DM). Peter wrote on the same subject: "Knowing that **ye were redeemed**...with precious blood, as of a lamb without spot, **even the blood of Christ**" (1 Pet. 1:18–19, emp. DM). The principle stated in Hebrews 9:22 reaches all the way back to the offerings of Cain and Abel and culminates especially in the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross: "Apart from shedding of **blood** there is **no remission**" (emp. DM). After speaking of the Christ, John explicitly identified the cleansing agent for sin: "Unto him that loved us and **washed us from our sins in his own blood**" (Rev. 1:5, KJV, emp. DM). The old hymn has had it exactly right all along: "What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus."

If Ananias was not telling Saul of Tarsus (Acts 22:16) **what** would wash away his (and our) sins, what was he telling him? He was telling him **when** the blood of Christ would wash away his sins—at baptism. The conclusions are irresistible: No baptism—no blood; no blood—no forgiveness; no forgiveness—no salvation. Paul tied baptism and the blood of Christ together as follows: "Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?" (Rom. 6:4). Obviously, one is not in Christ nor does he have the benefits of His death (i.e., His blood shed therein) short of baptism.

The New Testament teaches by implication when one should be baptized. When the multitudes on the day of Pentecost heard the Gospel, Luke records the response as follows: "They then that received his word were baptized: and there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:41). It is highly unlikely that any of these came to this remarkable occasion with towel and dry clothes under their arms, yet they obeyed the apostolic command immediately.

When Philip "preached Jesus" to the Ethiopian on the road to Gaza, the man did not want to wait until they came to the next town, but besought the evangelist to stop at the first body of water sufficient to immerse him: "And...they came unto a certain water and the eunuch saith, Behold, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" (Acts 8:36). Philip immediately complied with this request (vv. 38–39).

When the jailor at Philippi asked what he should do to be saved, it was already past midnight (16:25). Yet, when told what he should do, he and his household were baptized "the same hour of the night" (vv. 30–34).

Ananias urged Saul of Tarsus to wait no longer to obtain the salvation he sought: "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name" (22:16). Saul responded in obedience immediately.

The immediacy of these baptismal responses in each case is unmistakable. The preachers did not suggest any delay, and the subjects did not request any delay for

even an hour, much less a few days or until a “special baptismal service” could be planned a week later. The reason for such instant response should be equally evident. The faithful men who delivered the Gospel made it clear to these sinners that **until they were baptized, they were still in the guilt and condemnation of their sins**, which would cause them to be lost eternally.

The Bible therefore teaches that, at the earliest moment one learns that he is a sinner in need of salvation and that baptism is a God-given condition of forgiveness of one’s sins, he should be baptized. Baptism is more than a ritualistic act. It is more than a mere topic of theological curiosity or discussion. It is not merely an optional religious act. It is far more than a means of admission to a religious order built by men. It is not an act of human merit or righteousness. Rather, the Bible teaches us that baptism is the very act in which Jesus Christ cleanses and saves the sinner from his sins by His shed blood, whereupon the Lord adds him to His church, which is His earthly depository of those whom God has forgiven and saved from the guilt their sins that alienated them from Him (Acts 2:27–47).

“Absolutely the Truth” (Part Two)

Harrell Davidson

There are five central truths. The Bible is a profound book, but very understandable so that everybody whose heart is right can understand it. The simple mind can make its own conclusion that leads to obedience. There is no middle ground with the truth.

What is your life? What is it all about? Did Jesus tell us? Look at Matt. 7:13-14 “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: 14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” It is my conviction that these passages—two verses—makes clear the will of God. Other verses enlarge these verses. These verses lay out the basics of every human life to be what they ought to be.

There are two inviters. We receive many invitations in life. However, this is an invitation to life. You can live a happy life. No matter how many bad things happen to you you can be happy in this life. You will be involved in things that you do not like, but this does not mean that you cannot be involved with Christ. You can be with Christ and know what He wants you to do. He is the great inviter. He invites us to salvation. Come unto me all ye that labor and heavy laden and I will give you rest. This invitation that we are involved in, we ought to wish that everyone was involved in it. It will be wonderful beyond the pale of death to have a beautiful home in heaven. With this thought in mind, I will never compromise the truth. Jesus wants us to learn the truth, obey the truth and stand by the truth all the days of our lives

Satan is an inviter (cf. I Pet. 5:8). He uses all kinds of people as his servants. He invites us to be his servant while on this earth and to eternal hell when this life is over. Let none of us equivocate for a moment that he will not be as bad as he really is. Do you believe that God would tell us a lie? Do you believe that the Holy Spirit would tell us a lie? Absolutely not! God wants us to listen to the inviter who is the Son of God—not Satan. I used to rejoice at all the schools that were sound in the faith in our country. Now they are gone. I no longer have one to recommend. Our colleges and preacher schools have gone the way of Cain.

There are two messages. John 8:32 indicates to us that we can know the truth and it will make us free. Some say the truth is too complicated. Way back years ago we had such strong preaching in our small country congregations. We were privileged to hear some of the greatest preachers of that era. People revered the truth and they never got tired of hearing it. Some were uneducated as far as formal education, but they understood and could quote the Scriptures. Some were in their cleaned, ironed and starched overalls. Some came in wagons and horse and buggy. Only a few had cars. No one thought that they were better than any other. They were interested in one thing—the message of the Lord.

The other message is false doctrine. It seems that many in the church today do not believe that there is such a thing as false doctrine. Unity in diversity means that if Joe believes that baptism is not essential to salvation and John believes that it is, they can hand in hand together believing that both are right. All they have to do is be loving one toward the other. We cannot have such love for the other when the doctrine is absolutely antagonistic. The soul is loved, but they cannot walk together except they be agreed (Amos 3:3). Unity in diversity ought not be the case. If such were true then a woman could be walking down the street among some awful men and be ravaged and it would be alright. This shows unity in diversity is wrong in any and every situation. If not, why not? We have the obligation to study the Bible correctly, interpreting it, espousing it, obeying it and teaching it. Every doctrine that is contradictory must be denounced in the strongest terms. When the Bible—the truth is taught and rejected people are holding on to error and they are lost in that condition.

The narrow gate is not studied enough. “Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). He cannot enter without meeting certain conditions. Who said it? Jesus did! The man who is sincere will have no excuse. God will not let him out of it. We are baptized into Christ to put on Christ (Rom 6:3, 4; Gal 3:27). There is no way you can make it sound good to say that sprinkling or pouring is scriptural. I learned in the card class taught by my grandmother that one is baptized and it was a burial.

There is another gate—the wide gate. This includes all the gates except the narrow gate. It includes every gate that does not include hearing, believing and obeying the Gospel. This is not the Lord’s gate. I don’t care what kind of gate the other gate is or what denominational gate it may be, any gate that is not of the Lord is doomed eternally. The narrow gate is a straitened way and narrow. Those who care not for the Gospel or the spreading of it are in the wide gate. We must not be afraid to challenge the devil’s doctrines. We need to challenge them all whether they are philosophers or talented false teachers. We have nothing to hide when it comes to the truth. We need to get back to debating errors that are both within and without the church. We need not be afraid to press 2 John 9-11 or Eph. 5:11. Those who are compromisers are lost and have chosen to forsake their Lord over their false notions of fellowship. The strait way is the Scriptures. The broad way represents all the creeds and manuals in the world.

What is the truth? It is something that tells us of two destinies before us. Regardless of where I have been, I have never thought that the Lord did not know where the faithful stood neither did I doubt that He knew where I was. He knew that there will be departures. He knows more about heaven and who will be there. It will be wonderful to be with our mates and children. We will not miss the erring saints. They made their choice here on earth and now the home they have prepared is because they rejected the Christ and the narrow way. The Lord shows that they will be lost eternally. May God help the erring saints to come back as the prodigal before it is everlasting too late? For some there appears to be no turning back. How sad that pride has caused their eyes to be closed, and their ears of dull of hearing. They do not understand with their hearts. God in all His mercy cannot overlook those who have chosen the wide gate that leads to destruction. We weep over the lost especially those who were once faithful brothers and knew better. Hell, some way or another is going to be worse for them than the glorified infidel (cf. 2 Pet. 2:20ff).

Heaven: The Hope of the Obedient

Jerry C. Brewer

“If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable” (1 Cor. 15:19). Though the blessings of God in Christ are a hundredfold in this present world, yet they are as nothing compared to them that shall be revealed in heaven.

Human language cannot adequately describe the beauty of the faithful's heavenly home, nor can the mind of man conceive the splendors adorning that eternal celestial city.

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that were I am, there ye may be also (John 14:1-3).

To escape the horrors of hell and obtain salvation in heaven is the cherished hope of every faithful follower of our Lord. There **will be** a home in heaven for those who have faithfully obeyed the teaching of the New Testament.

The question is often asked, "Is this (or that) essential to salvation?" The answer is easy. **Every** command of God is essential, or the Lord would not have given it. Those seeking salvation from their past sins must, in faith (Rom. 10:17), repent of their sins (Acts 17:30-31), confess the name of Christ (Matt. 10:32; Acts 8:37), and be buried in baptism for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). **Each** act of obedience **is** necessary.

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**"The Thing That Hath Been...": The Cycle of Apostasy
Volume 2, Enlarged and Revised By Jerry C. Brewer**

The Old Jerusalem Gospel (Acts 2:14-47)

Kent Bailey

The gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16). Within this divine scheme is revealed the righteousness of God (Rom. 1:17). The covenant of Moses revealed that God was and is a righteous being, however it took the scheme of Redemption, as revealed in the Gospel, for accountable humanity to be made righteous. The phrase "righteousness of God" in verse 17 therefore does not speak with reference to a personal attribute of God, but rather, such is indicative of the plan of God to make sinful humanity righteous.

The first Pentecost following the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ was the first occurrence of the Gospel being preached. This was the appointed time for the beginning of the New Covenant. It was the day that the kingdom, which had been both prophesied and promised in the Old Testament, was inaugurated. This was also the day upon which the coronation of Christ took place in being crowned King over this kingdom.

Salvation was the theme. Deliverance from the bondage of sin was announced as well as preservation in Christ was offered to those who, not only would obey the conditions of pardon, but also remain steadfast to the truth of God.

The place foretold by the Old Testament prophet Isaiah was that of Jerusalem (Isa. 2:3). From this ancient city, the word of the Lord would go forth offering deliverance from sin to those held in bondage. In consideration of such facts, the gospel of Christ is thus **The Old Jerusalem Gospel**.

As we consider this crucial message we note that on that day: Salvation was preached (Acts 2:14-15). The inspired record states that Peter stood up with the eleven and addressed those assembled. He could address them in one common language. The apostles had earlier addressed them in their native languages, not because such was a necessity, but rather, as a miraculous sign (1 Cor. 14:22).

In this specific sermon we note the first proclamation of the Gospel as the Great Commission began to be executed. The reign of Christ over men transpired and the magnitude of this occasion is clearly stated.

Salvation had been prophesied (Acts 2:16-21). The events that took place on this particular Pentecost did not happen by accident. They were the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. Such was a demonstration of God's eternal scheme (Joel 2:28- 32;

Isa. 2:1-2; Micah 4:1-3).

Salvation was personified (Acts 2:22-24). Peter, within this sermon, uplifted the incarnate person of Christ. He argued that Jesus had been approved of God among them. The term **approved** (*apodeiknumi*) speaks with reference to proving by demonstration. It was by a divine demonstration of miracles, wonders, and signs that Jesus was demonstrated to be the Christ.

Salvation was portrayed (Acts 2:25-36). By the term portrayed, we refer to that of giving a word picture. Here we note Peter's description through the language expressed by David in the Old Testament. Only Christ could have fulfilled such depictions.

Salvation was presented (Acts 2:37-38). As believers, who had been convicted of the sin of crucifying Christ, they confessed their faith in Jesus as the Christ. This awareness of guilt in their lives brought about a desire as believers in Christ to be forgiven of their sins. This conviction of sin in their lives cause them to inquire regarding conditions that they must obey in order to be forgiven. By the inspiration of God Peter told them to repent and be baptized by the authority of Christ **for (unto in order to) the remission of sins**. The terms of faith in Christ, repentance of sin, confession of Christ, and baptism for the remission of sins are the conditions alien sinners must obey in order to receive salvation.

Salvation was provided (Acts 2:41). Those who obeyed the saving Gospel of Christ enthusiastically accepted the truths that they had learned. Our text refers to this as gladly receiving the word. The NT Greek term *apodechomai* means literally to welcome. These individuals welcomed the word of God that moved them to obey what they had learned. Such indeed brought about salvation from sin.

Salvation was perfected (Acts 2:42-46). Salvation from sin obligates the child of God to bring their life into complete submission unto Christ in growth and also in faithfulness to the New Testament pattern.

Salvation was placed (Acts 2:47). If it is the case that **(A)** baptism is for (unto in order to) the remission of past alien sins, and **(B)** that remission of past alien sins is found within the New Testament church, and **(C)** that one must come to understand that the design of baptism is for the remission of sins in order for such to be valid, then **(D)** then one must also understand that remission of sins is found within the confines of the New Testament church for one's baptism to be valid. Such is indeed the case with all of the above stated premises, therefore the conclusion must follow as being true (Acts 2:38, Acts 2:47; Rom. 6:17-18; 1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 1:22-23).

The Old Jerusalem Gospel is God's exclusive appointed means of salvation from sin. We must believe the facts of such and obey the conditions found within in order to be recipients of divine forgiveness. Have you obeyed this saving message of Christ?

The Church of Christ

Nana Yaw Aidoo

The church of Christ originated in the mind of God (Eph. 1:4; 3:8-11) and existed in the promises, types and prophecies of the Old Testament until it was actualized in Jerusalem around A.D 30. The inspired historian affirmed that the church of Christ existed two thousand years ago. When sinners heard the gospel, believed it, repented of their sins, confessed their faith in Jesus Christ and were baptized unto the remission of their sins (Acts 2:38; 8:36-39; 16:30-34; 18:8), they were described as “added to the church” (Acts 2:47).

The church of Christ came together “on the first day of the week” to break bread (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 10:16; 11:20-30), give of their means (1 Cor. 16:2; 1:2; 4:7), pray (1 Thess. 5:17-18), study God's Word (Heb. 5:12-14) and sing (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). There were no mechanical instruments of music, choirs, solos, singing groups, skits, handclapping, and women preachers or teachers (1 Tim. 2:11-14) in the worship of the church of Christ.

The church of Christ was organized with Christ as the Head (Col. 1:18) and Chief Shepherd (1 Pet. 2:25; 5:4) and with men serving as elders or subordinate shepherds (Acts 20:28). There were elders in every church (Acts 14:23; Phlp. 1:1) in every city (Tit. 1:5) when men were available, overseeing the work of the churches in which they were members and only the churches in which they were members (1 Pet. 5:1-4). Deacons and preachers served under the oversight of the elders in the church of Christ.

The churches or congregations were one and united by a common faith or message (1 Cor. 1:10; Phlp. 3:16; Jude 3). There was no earthly headquarters or a national secretariat and the congregations were responsible to no hierarchy. They formed no para-church organizations to do the work of the church but letting the church do its work, Christ received “glory in the church” (Eph. 3:21) and not in a man-made organization.

The church of Christ was non-denominational, being neither Catholic nor Protestant. The members were one body (Rom. 12:5) and were nothing but Christians only (Acts 11:26). The apostles of Christ were all members of the church of Christ.

The church of Christ exists today and you can be added to it. The seed of the kingdom or church, which is the Word of God (Matt. 13:18-19; Luke 8:11) when sown in the hearts of men two thousand years ago, and obeyed by these men, constituted them members of the church of Christ. Today, if we would believe what they believed and practice what they practiced, we would be nothing but members of the church of Christ.

Why not investigate the church of Christ today?

“A Very Lovely Song”

Lee Moses

The preaching of the Gospel should be attractive to God’s people. Although there are certainly those who will plug their ears and run the other way, there are yet many people who appreciate good, sound Gospel preaching. Unfortunately, even among those who appreciate the faithful proclamation of the Gospel, there are many who do not heed the things that are said. “I sure enjoyed that sermon on seeking first the kingdom of God,” one will say, and then miss evening worship because the late football game went into overtime. “Boy, it sure it shameful the way some Christians act,” another will say following a sermon on the Christian’s example; and the following day he will regale his fellow employees with dirty jokes and foul-mouthed tirades against the boss and customers. “That was a great sermon on prayer,” another will exclaim, and fail to utter one private prayer the following week.

Such was the problem in Ezekiel’s day. Ezekiel did not have to face the same persecution other prophets did. He prophesied to Israelites who were in captivity, who could readily observe that God’s warnings were being fulfilled against them. The people, including the elders of the people, would often come to Ezekiel Sermons to receive counsel. And they often enjoyed hearing him, even though he offered stern rebuke against their practices.

Also, thou son of man, the children of thy people still are talking against thee (“of thee,” American Standard Version) by the walls and in the doors of the houses, and speak one to another, every one to his brother, saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the LORD. And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not (Ezek. 33:30-32).

To the people, Ezekiel was a good entertainer. He was probably a very eloquent speaker with a lustrous voice, able to hold the people in rapt attention as he prophesied to

them the word of God. Nevertheless, as they heard his words, they had no intent of doing them.

It is a sad thing that many today hear the preaching of the Gospel and hear it as nothing more than “a very lovely song.” Indeed, the preaching of the Gospel is a very lovely song—even to God it is “a sweet savour of Christ” (2 Cor. 2:15). However, as we are “called by the Gospel,” we are urged and commanded to act upon its teachings: “Therefore, brethren stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle” (2 Thess. 2:14 -15). It is only when we heed and obey the proclamation of the Gospel that we can truly appreciate it for the very lovely song it is.

Watch Yourself

David Ray

The world today, more so than ever, says “don’t judge!” Everyone should be able to live whatever lifestyle, use whatever unwholesome language, choose whatever actions they want without having to be judged by anyone else. This “rule” applies to everyone, with one obvious exception: Christians!

We all know well that **we** are watched, judged, and silenced, and that, even in light of the prevailing attitude against judgment, this is completely acceptable to the “judges.” While we recognize the blatant inconsistency, the fact is that **we are judged!** And we should be, regardless of whether or not anyone else is.

We have been called to a higher code of ethics than the world will ever understand or accept. “Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time” (Col. 4:5). God expects this of us; so, live it! He is watching; and He is the most important Judge.

Likewise, the world is watching you, hoping to catch you in a fault, a bad word, a bad attitude, etc., so they can feel more justified in their condemnation of you and “that worthy name by the which ye are called” (Jas. 2:7).

Don't give them any ammunition against the Cause of Christ. Judge yourself (cf., 2 Cor. 13:5). Watch your words: Eph. 4:29: “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.” Control your emotions: Jas. 1:19: be “slow to wrath.” Eph. 4:26: “Be ye angry, and sin not.” And take advantage of every opportunity, not only to be a good influence, but also to teach the gospel plan of salvation to any who will listen.

What the Church is and Does

H. Leo Boles

No one should be interested in any church except the one that is revealed in the New Testament. Everyone should be interested in the church that Christ built. Jesus said, “Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hades shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 16:18 ASV). Jesus' church is the greatest institution in the world and membership in it is the greatest privilege accorded to man.

What is the Church?

We must let the New Testament answer this question. Man can define human institutions, but only God through the Holy Spirit can tell us what this divine institution is. Since Christ built this church and purchased it with His own blood (Acts 20:28), he can, through the Holy Spirit, define His church.

The New Testament declares that the church is **the body of Christ**. “And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all” (Eph. 1:22-23). Here we have the Holy Spirit saying through Paul that the church is his body. Again, the Holy Spirit calls the church the body of Christ: “Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's

sake, which is the church” (Col. 1:24 ASV). Hence, the church is the body of Christ and the body of Christ is the church.

Moreover, the church is the kingdom of God. Jesus said,

Upon this rock I will build my church and I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven (Matt. 16:18-19).

Here—in one sentence—Jesus calls this institution “my church,” and in the next sentence He calls the same institution “the kingdom of heaven.” Again, the Holy Spirit said, “Who delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love” (Col. 1:13 ASV). These same Colossians who had been translated into the kingdom also constituted the church at Colosse (Col. 1:2).

The church is also said to be **the house of God**. “These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly; but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how men ought to behave themselves in the house of God, which is the church of the living God...” (1 Tim. 3:14-15). The family of God constitutes the house of God. “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named” (Eph. 3:14-15 ASV).

Further, it is called, **the church of God**. Eight times the church is called “the church of God” in the New Testament (1 Cor. 1:2; 10:32; 11:22; 15:9; 2 Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:13; 1 Tim. 3:5, 15). The plural is used three times as **churches of God** (1 Cor. 11:16; 1 Thess. 2:14; 2 Thess. 1:4). One time we have the expression, **churches of Christ** (Rom. 16:16). Here, the term **churches** is used in the local or congregational sense as the churches of Christ in various locations.

Again, the church is called a spiritual house: “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood...” (1 Pet. 2:5). These and other scriptures teach us what the church is. No institution but the church of our Lord answers these statements of the Holy Spirit.

How Many Churches?

Which church is used in a general sense and in a local sense. All Christians constitute the church in the general sense, and the different congregations of these Christians compose the churches in the local sense. There is but one church over which Christ presides as head. There is but one kingdom of God on earth and but one body of Christ. “But now they are many members but one body” (1 Cor. 12:20 ASV) “For even as we have many members in one body, and all the members have not the same office: so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and severally members one of another” (Rom. 12:4-5 ASV). The New Testament frequently declares that there is but one body, and that this one body is the church. “There is one body, and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all” (Eph. 4:4-6 ASV).

When used in the plural, **church** has reference to the different groups of Christians meeting for worship at different places. We have “the church of God which is at Corinth” (1 Cor. 1:2), “the churches of Galatia” (Gal. 1:2), “the church of the Thessalonians in God” (1 Thess. 1:1), “the church which was in Jerusalem” (Acts 11:22), “the church of the Laodiceans” (Col. 4:16), and the church at Ephesus (Acts 20:17).

There are 27 different churches mentioned in the New Testament and all of these churches had the same faith, wore the same name and practiced the same things. Their form of worship was the same. They were not different denominations as we now have them. The New Testament does not teach anything about the different denominations constituting “the church of God.” Each member of a denomination wear the peculiar name of that denomination, believes certain tenets of faith as prescribed by that denomination, and practices different forms of worship as may be outlined by that denomination. There is no resemblance between denominations today and “the churches of Christ” of New Testament times (Rom. 16:16).

How to Enter the Church

The New Testament answers this question as well. It teaches how to get into the church of God, but not how to get into any other church. Thus, if one joins a denomination, the New Testament does not teach him to do so. One who joins a denomination does so without any divine instruction, without any word of God.

The New Testament teaches clearly and definitely how to enter the New Testament church. Surely Christ would not establish a church on earth and not tell people how to enter it. Since the church is a divine institution, we must have divine instructions on how to enter it. Human instructions may guide into a denomination, but it takes divine instructions to guide one into the divine institution, the church.

People are added to the church by the Lord. “And the Lord added to them day by day those that were saved (Acts 2:47 ASV). Here, at the close of Pentecost Day, the day on which the church was established, about 3,000 souls were added by the Lord to the church (Acts 2:41). Acts 5:14 says, “Believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.” Here we learn that only believers were added to the Lord. Babies or infants are not believers and cannot be added to the church. From the above Scriptures, we conclude that Christ adds folks to His church and does not add anyone to any other.

How does the Lord add to His church? Whom does He add to it? These are important questions. Jesus said to Nicodemus, “Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5 ASV). What is it to “be born of water and the Spirit?” That which puts one into the kingdom of God also puts one into the body of Christ, into the church of God.

One must have faith in Christ. Those who hear the gospel and believe it have one qualification of a citizen of the kingdom of God. Without faith it is impossible to please God (Rom. 10:17; Heb. 11:6). Those who heard the gospel preached by Peter on Pentecost and who were convinced that Jesus is the Son of God asked what they must do to be saved. By inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Peter answered, “Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins...” (Acts 2:38). They did what Peter commanded and were thus added to the church by this process. Hence, the Lord adds those to His church who believe on Him, who are penitent of their sins, and who are baptized into Him.

The only way people enter Christ is by baptism:

Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him through baptism unto death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:3-4 ASV).

Again, “For ye are all sons of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ” (Gal. 3:26-27 ASV). This is the way one enters the church. One cannot be in Christ and not be in His church. Neither can one be in His church without being in Christ. The church is His body.

Can One be Saved Out of the Church?

The question is not, “Can one be saved out of a denomination?” but, “Can one be saved out of the church of the Lord?” Many attempt to evade a direct answer to this question by saying, “The church does not save one.” It is true that the church does not save one, but God, through Christ, saves. But where does **God save** one? Does He save in the **church** or out of the church.

God is in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself (2 Cor. 5:19). God saves people in Christ—that is, He saves people in the church. If people can be saved out of the church, then they can be saved out of Christ, out of the kingdom of God, out of the house of God, out of the family of God, out of the body of Christ, out of the building of God, and without becoming living stones in the spiritual house of God. The New Testament declares the church to be all these things, and if one can be saved out of the church, he can be saved out of that which the church is.

Again, if one can be saved out of the church, he can be saved without being redeemed (Eph. 1:3, 7). Redemption and forgiveness of sin are in Christ (Eph. 1:6-7). Therefore, if one can be saved out of the church, then he can be saved without redemption and forgiveness.

Moreover, the blood of Christ is in the church, which is His body (Eph. 1:22-23). If people can be saved out of the church, then they can be saved without coming into contact with the blood of Christ. If salvation is out of the church, there was no use for Christ to establish His church and He paid too much for it when He purchased it with His blood (Acts 20:28).

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Lessons Learned From Noah's Salvation

Marvin L. Weir

Bible history reveals to us that God can grow weary of striving with man. The longsuffering of Jehovah is a marvelous blessing bestowed upon mankind, but the Creator's patience will not endure forever. It was during the life of Noah that "Jehovah saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented Jehovah that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart" (Gen. 6:5-6).

The same God is looking out over the world today. What does He see? Are there multitudes of people everywhere seeking after righteousness? Hardly! Were it not for God's great love and mercy that fuels His desire that no one perish but repent of their sins (2 Pet. 3:9), this world and all therein would have already been consumed with fire (2 Pet. 3:7, 10).

Let us learn that there **will** be a Divine verdict. The wisdom of man will not prevail. The decision of the Supreme Court is not the final decision. God promised, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the ground; both man, and beast, and creeping things, and birds of the heavens; for it repenteth me that I have made them" (Gen. 6:7). God created man to serve Him and to do right, but man chose to do wrong and serve his own selfish interests. God thus told Noah, "The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth" (Gen. 6:13). The cause of this Divine verdict is clearly set forth in Genesis 6:12: "And God saw the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth."

The people of Noah's day did not escape the Divine verdict. Neither will the people of today's world! Man may pride himself in his perverted wickedness and even declare God's laws to be discriminatory and unacceptable. But when God elects to send His Son to judge this world, it will be remembered that He promised His Son would come "with the angels of his power in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus: who shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might" (2 Thess. 1:7-9).

Let us learn that there is a Divine Plan. Most people today subscribe to the "church of your choice" philosophy. Men promote a human plan of salvation while ignoring the Divine Plan of salvation. Just remember that God told Noah, "Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch" (Gen. 6:14). The ark was not to be constructed according to man's imagination. Genesis 6:15 says, "And this is how thou shalt make it"—there was a pattern or Divine Plan to be followed. Noah and his family would not have survived the flood had not God revealed the way of deliverance.

There is a Divine Plan of salvation today. No one will be saved who refuses to comply with the way of deliverance. No one will be saved except by the gospel's saving power (Rom. 1:16). The Gospel must be proclaimed, believed, and obeyed (1 Cor. 15:1-4). The

Divine Plan of salvation involves hearing the Word of God (Rom. 10:17), believing the Word (Mark 16:16), repenting of sin (Luke 13:3), a confession (Rom. 10:9-10), and baptism for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16).

Let us learn that there has been a Divine warning. Did not God declare that He would bring the flood upon the earth to destroy it (Gen. 6:17)? Noah preached for 100 years while the ark was being built, but the people refused to heed the warning (cf. Gen. 5:32; 7:6; 1 Pet. 3:20). God has graciously warned all today that salvation is found only in Christ (2 Tim. 2:10). Only by obedience to the Divine Plan of salvation can one be found in Christ (cf. Heb. 5:8-9).

Let us learn that there is a Divine invitation. People must distinguish between the invitation of man and the invitation of God. He Who provided for the ark extended the invitation to Noah to enter the ark (Gen. 7:1). The Lord Who shed His blood on Calvary to purchase His church (Acts 20:28) invites all to be a member of His church. One must enter the Lord's church on His terms. The Lord is the head of His church which is His body (Eph. 1:22-23), and this leaves absolutely no authority for man. The invitation to Noah was to enter the ark that was built according to Divine instructions. To be saved today, all men have an invitation to enter the Lord's church that was built according to Divine instructions. This rules out all churches that wear the names of men and are built on man-made creeds.

“And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46). We learn from Noah that God's way is not man's way. Just as man's boat would not have floated in Noah's day, **man's church will not save one today!**

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When Will Christ Come Again?

Jess Whitlock

“But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father” (Mark 13:32). The Lord Jesus taught clearly that no man living can know the exact time of His final return. The Bible emphasizes that mankind must be ready at all times, because Christ will come again (John 5:28-29; 14:1-3; Acts 17:30-31; 1 Cor. 15:51-ff; Jude 7; and 1 Thess. 4:13-18).

The **only thing** that Christ emphatically taught about His second coming was that no man knows the time of His return. Christ taught that it would be “like” the days of Noah (Matt. 24:37-39). There will be no warnings, no signs, no clues, and life will be proceeding normally. Jesus likens that day to the coming of a thief in the night (Matt. 24:43). The warning to us is to: “Watch therefore...be ye also ready...for ye know neither the day nor the hour...” (Matt. 24:42, 44; 25:13). A man would need at least two PhD's to misunderstand what the Lord forthrightly taught in those words.

In spite of the clear teaching of God's Word, there have always been false prophets who have insisted that they know the exact time of the Lord's return. It began in the first century with two men named Hymenaeus and Philetus. Paul identifies them as being “...who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already, and overthrow the faith of some” (2 Tim. 2:18). From that time to this we have recorded data of literally hundreds and hundreds of false dates, false prophets (time-guessers), who claim they have knowledge that has been withheld from the angels of

heaven and the Holy Spirit inspired writers of Scripture. These individuals have their work cut out for them, trying to convince me they have knowledge of that which inspiration tells me has been reserved to God the Father **alone!**

One cult, the Jehovah's Witnesses, put forth 70 predictions of the second coming during the 20th century. Every prediction failed miserably. In an effort to get the egg off their face, they came up with a fanciful theory that He **did come in 1914** in an "invisible" coming. They forgot the Bible teaches that when Christ does return it will be a visible coming (Rev. 1:7); that He will come in flaming fire (2 Thess.1:7-ff); that Christ will be accompanied by His holy angels (Matt. 25:31); and that the earth and all its elements would be **burned up** (2 Pet. 3:10). Those events somehow escaped the notice of all news journalists in the year of 1914. Recall some recent false prophets:

- January 1, 2000 ~ Jerry Falwell predicted Y2K would fulfill all prophecy. Many stockpiled water and canned goods to be prepared. Scammers had a field day, the clock struck midnight, and nothing happened.
- May 21 and October 21, 2011 ~ Harold Camping, a California based preacher and president of the Family Radio Network, predicted the so-called rapture would hit at 6:00 p.m. May 21. Oops! He changed to October 21. Wrong again, what do you know?!
- December 21, 2012 ~ We all remember the Mayan Calendar, and the end of the world would end with the calendar's end on December 21, 2012. It never dawned on folks that the Mayans **may have simply run out of paper!**
- October 7, 2015 ~ Mormon author, Julie Rowe, was sure that this date in connection with the blood-moon-supermoon, would be the exact date, marking the return of Jesus Christ. By the way that moon is scheduled to come back in 2033, the Lord willing.
- September 23, 2017 ~ David Meade, a "Christian numerologist" (see Jude 37), wrote a strange book, *Planet X—the 2017 Arrival*. According to Meade's calculations, planet "X" also known as "Nibiru," would collide with earth, and that on that day there would be a 33-day eclipse. Since Jesus was on earth for 33 years, that date would mark the end of time. I have known some folks who would like to take whatever he was on at the time he wrote those words.

The test of a "false prophet" is recorded in Deuteronomy 18:20-22. Christ will come again but **none** of the false prophets **or** their duped disciples **know** that date. Their batting average is 1.000 and it is all **wrong—100% wrong!**

Upon What is the Church Built?

Gary W. Summers

A few weeks ago, included in Spiritual Perspectives [the author's bulletin] was an article in which a woman named Carla attempted to defend Roman Catholicism primarily by asserting that the Apocryphal books were omitted from Protestant Bibles but that Catholics had them—as if that made some sort of difference. Those books were written prior to the New Testament and are not under the new covenant of Jesus Christ. In a later post, she cited Matthew 16:18 and tried to insist that the church was built on Peter. She presented all manner of information from Greek lexicons, as if she were somewhat of an expert (although she failed to list her credentials). She only listed one source for one item in her lengthy paragraph. For all the reader knows, she was copying information from a Catholic Website. In other words, without documentation, she has no credibility. Among other things she asserted:

On him [Peter] he [Jesus] builds the Church....but the primacy is given to Peter, by which is made clear that there is one Church and one chair....if someone does not hold fast to this unity of Peter, can he think that he holds the faith? If he deserts the chair of Peter upon whom the Church was built, can he be confident that he is in the Church? God bless each of you!

Carla clearly stated that the church is built on Peter. If that were so, then several things would have to be true.

1. The church of Jesus Christ would be built on a fallible man. Does this fact even need to be pointed out? Understand that no disrespect is meant to Peter, but he was a human being with flaws. When he stepped out of the boat and walked on water toward Jesus, his faith weakened, and he began to sink. Jesus had to save him (Mat. 6 *Defender* September 2020 14:25-32). Jesus specifically asked him why he doubted. Is this one upon whom the church should be built?
2. Immediately after the passage where Jesus spoke of building His church, He spoke of His coming death in Jerusalem, as well as His resurrection (16:21). Peter rebuked Him, saying, “Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to you!” (16:22). Jesus then said, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men” (16:23). Is the church indeed built upon someone whom the Lord called Satan?
3. On the night Jesus was betrayed by Judas, Peter denied Jesus three times, as He had previously predicted. After the third denial, Jesus turned and looked at Peter, after which he “went out and wept bitterly” (Luke 22:62). Is this one upon whom the church should be built—one who denied Christ?
4. Now someone will surely point out that bringing up these things is not fair—that Peter repented of these things, and that is true. None of these things is mentioned to belittle Peter, but it does show that he made mistakes and was not a perfect being. Nor did he become flawless on the Day of Pentecost after he received the Holy Spirit. He was to be blamed for wrongful actions, as reported by Paul in Galatians 2:11-14. If the church is built on Peter, it is going to be built on an imperfect human being.
5. Peter could not meet today’s qualifications to be a pope because the Scriptures teach that he was married. In Matthew 8:14-15, Jesus healed a woman who is referred to as Peter’s “wife’s mother.” Peter was married! Oh, but that was before he became the pope. Really? Does someone desire to explain when Peter became the pope, then? In the event someone was tempted to say that Peter’s wife died after Pentecost, well—he still was married to her two decades later when Paul wrote 1 Corinthians 9:5, which was about A.D. 57. Furthermore, she traveled with him. Paul asked if he did not have the right “to take along a believing wife, as do the other apostles of the Lord, and Cephas?” Carla has already admitted that she knows Cephas is another name for Peter; so then, she must know that he was married and therefore disqualified from being pope, a word and a concept never mentioned in the Scriptures. So then, how could the church be built upon someone who cannot meet today’s prerequisites?
6. The household of God, the church, is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being “the chief cornerstone,” Paul wrote in Ephesians 2:20. All of the apostles (including Peter) share an equality in this text, as do the prophets. There is only one individual in this passage who is exalted—the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the cornerstone, the most important part of the foundation. Peter himself stresses the same thing concerning Jesus in 1 Peter 2:6: “Behold, I lay in Zion A chief cornerstone, elect, precious, And he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame.” Was Peter speaking of himself? Of course not. It is on Jesus that all men must believe. It was Jesus Who was rejected but has been exalted (2:7-8). If Peter were the head of the church, this would have been an excellent time for him to have made the claim. Instead, he honors Jesus.
7. The Bible actually teaches that Jesus is the head of the church. First of all, He has all authority in heaven and on earth (Mat. 28:18). Notice that the Lord did not say, “I have all authority in heaven, and I have given Peter all authority on earth.” No, the church belongs to Christ—not to Peter. Jesus is the Head of the body, the church (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18). Peter never claimed to be the head.

One Chair?

What exactly does Catholic Carla mean when she says there is “one Church and one chair”? Chair does not appear anywhere in the King James Version of the Bible. It occurs once in the New King James (2 Kin. 4:10), but this text has no relationship to the church. Paul talked about unity in Ephesians 4:4-6. He stated that there is one body (church, cf. 1:22-23), one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all. Try as the reader might, he cannot find one chair anywhere in a text that is promoting unity! She is using terminology that is not Biblical and expects everyone to agree with her! Does she not realize that anyone else could do the same thing—come along with terminology invented after the New Testament was written and then tell everyone they must conform to it?

In fact, Protestant denominations have done exactly that in their assumption that a congregation of Christians is led by “the pastor.” This phrase is not in the New Testament. Pastor does not even appear in the singular anywhere in the New Testament, nor is a church ever said to be led by a single individual. Always we find a plurality of pastors (bishops, elders). The Mormons have their own unbiblical terminology, as do Jehovah’s Witnesses. They insist that God must be called Jehovah even though the word is never once used in the New Testament. Why are people never content to use Biblical terminology exclusively? If they did, they would not be able to teach false doctrines that are different from what the Word teaches. Jesus and Peter Contrasted Not only did Peter never use any title such as pope but he also comes across as being a humble man. When he went to the household of Cornelius, for example, the centurion “fell down at his feet and worshiped him” (Acts 10:25). The apostle did not say, “You are wise to accept my supremacy and to recognize that I stand in the place of Christ.” No, he responded by lifting Cornelius up and saying, “Stand up; I myself also am a man” (10:26). This is strange behavior for one who is supposed to be highly exalted. Jesus did not react this same way. In Matthew 8:2, a leper worshiped Him and said, “Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.” Jesus did not rebuke the man for worshiping Him or calling Him Lord. He simply agreed to heal him (8:3). Jesus agreed that Simon’s assessment of Him as the Son of God was correct (16:13-19). He confessed that He was the Son of the Blessed before the high priest, which led to His crucifixion (Mark 14:61-62). Peter, on the other hand, never accepted the worship or exaltation of men. When Peter wrote his letters, he did not describe himself as the chief apostle, but simply an apostle of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 1:1; 2 Pet. 1:1). In 1 Peter 5:1, Peter addressed the elders receiving his letter and never once mentioned his alleged “primacy.” He merely referred to himself as “a fellow elder.”

Confident About Being in the Church

Carla asked if anyone could be confident about being in the church if he deserted the “chair of Peter” (whatever that means). In reality, confidence can only truly be obtained when a person does what the Bible says. Since Peter’s name has been frequently mentioned, there must be a certain amount of respect for him on the part of Catholics. Therefore, why not consider what Peter taught as he presented the Gospel on the Day of Pentecost? All will agree with the part of his message where he quotes a prophecy from David to show that Christ would be raised from the dead (Acts 2:22-36). Not only had the resurrection been prophesied; Peter and the rest of the apostles had seen Him and were eyewitnesses of it.

The people who were convinced by the evidence realized that they had crucified the Messiah; a violent act that could not be undone. So they asked what they should do (2:37). Peter answered, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Christ for the remission of sins” (2:38). “Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them” (2:41). They continued to preach, and people continued to repent and be baptized. In fact, “the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved” (2:47).

Peter did not mention faith because it was that very thing that prompted the question. Repentance is a Biblical concept that means—not only to be sorry for—but to make a change in the way one is living. In other words, one does not repent of drunkenness when he is planning on getting drunk the same evening. One does not repent of forni-

cation when he continues to cohabit with a woman to whom he is not married. Repentance involves a change in the way a person lives.

Baptism refers to an immersion in water. No one in the New Testament ever sprinkled water on someone and erroneously called it baptism. Since Carla has such a familiarity with Greek lexicons, she can find out that meaning for herself. But Romans 6:3-5 makes it clear that baptism is a burial in water that corresponds to Jesus being buried in a tomb. As a result of repentance and baptism, disciples were added to the church. By doing what Peter said, anyone today can have confidence that he is in the church.

The Rock

The rock to which Jesus referred in Matthew 16:18 is not the fallible human being, Peter. The rock refers to what Peter had just confessed—the Deity of Jesus. It is this fact that sets Christianity apart from every other religion. All other religions (except Judaism, which has been replaced by the covenant of Christ) have a human founder, who is buried somewhere on the earth. Jesus ascended into Heaven (Acts 1:9-11); His tomb remains forever empty. He came down from Heaven and returned to Heaven. He was God in the flesh (John 1:1, 14; Phi. 2:5-8). That fact is the rock of the church on it.

Links to Bible Study Resources

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False Doctrines of Man

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Personal Workers

H.M. Phillips

Jesus set the example in talking with the woman at the well. Philip caught the idea and, guided by the Spirit, preached to the eunuch. Most of those now who are converted can say it was done by personal work.

Every member is a personal worker in his every day life. All are personal workers—some for the Lord and some for Satan. People are watching us and we are having our influence. A real godly life lived is a splendid piece of work for the Lord. A lot of gospel talk is often killed by a lot of worldly life. It is not enough to say, “I do personal work,” but what kind and for whom? No church will greatly grow unless its members are personal workers. Sorry preaching and good personal work will, in the long run, do more good than good preaching and no personal work. Is the church where you are a member a personal working church?

Do Not Forget the Word

H.M. Phillips

“I will not forget thy word” (Psa. 119:16). We are told to remember the words of the Lord Jesus (Acts 20:35). Peter would put us in remembrance (2 Pet. 1:12). We are to be mindful of the words of the apostles (2 Pet. 3:2). From all this we see that we are to be good “rememberers.”

It is not enough to read it, but we must keep our minds full of the word and be ready to give an answer to all who ask us (2 Pet. 3:15). No one is able to give an answer unless he remembers something to answer. The answer should be the word of God for the hope we have. Our “feelings” or our own “thoughts” are not the answers the Lord wants us to give. If so, He would not have given us the word.

What is the answer that you give? It ought to be God's word.

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