

The Gospel Preceptor

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

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“Against All the Gods of Egypt”

Jess Whitlock

“For I will go through the land of Egypt in that night and will smite all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast: and **against all the gods of Egypt** I will execute judgments: I am Jehovah.” (Exo. 12:12). God sent Egypt His “Ten Lesson Correspondence Course” and did battle with numerous “gods of Egypt” and defeated each one! It is my conviction that the date of the Exodus was c. 1446 B.C. It is my intention in this missive to focus primarily on the “gods of Egypt” that should have protected Egypt from Jehovah; but they were helpless and hopeless against the Lord God of Israel.

- The water of the Nile River became blood (Exo. 7:14-24). The Nile River was the “life’s blood” of Egypt. The spirit of the Nile was called **Hapi** (crocodile); the guardian of the Nile was **Khnum** (a ram’s head); and the goddess of the Nile was **Tauret** (hippopotamus). Jehovah said to Moses: “Pharaoh’s heart is stubborn, he refuseth to let the people go” (Exo. 7:14). The Nile had received Hebrew male babies to **Savak** (a crocodile-headed god). Aaron waved the rod of Moses over the waters of the Nile and the Nile along with its streams, canals, and pools were turned to blood along with water stored in vessels. For seven days the water was blood and the dead fish stank. The fish were a staple food in Egypt. Most assuredly “Jehovah had smitten the river...” (Exo. 7:25).
- The plague of frogs covered all the land of Egypt (Exo. 8:1-15). Egypt was accustomed to frogs, as they looked to their goddess of birth, **Heqt** or **Hekt** (frog). “Their land swarmed with frogs in the chambers of their kings” (Psa. 105:30). Imagine the screams of Egyptian women as those frogs invaded their homes, bed chambers, and kitchens. There were frogs; dead “gods” everywhere! They could not even serve up “frog legs” for dinner, because under no set of circumstances could an Egyptian harm a frog. The goddess **Heqt**, was credited with blowing the breath of life into men. Pharaoh was allowed to set the exact time for the removal of the frogs, even though they died in their tracks! Pharaoh was willing to spend one more night with the frogs, by demanding their demise “tomorrow” (Exo. 7:10). The next day the frogs died and the people gathered them up in heaps. What a stench those dead frogs must have caused, (Exo. 8:13-14). “He (God) sent among them...frogs, which destroyed them” (Psa. 78:45). Only the Lord God of Israel could have the frogs come and then die at the moment of His command. That included “...all the gods of Egypt...” (Exo. 12:12).
- Plague # 3 comes in the form of lice (Exo. 8:16-19). The very dust of Egypt was turned into minute, noxious insects. The lice came from the dust as an affront to **Geb** or **Seb**, Egypt’s earth-god. The Hebrew word, kinnim has been rendered as lice, gnats, mosquitoes, and in LXX as sandflies. None can be dogmatic, but the vermin of whatever variety attacked man and beast alike. Notice please the first nine plagues are divided into three groups; the first two plagues in each group are preceded with a warning; the third in each group comes without prior

notice. The third is lice, the sixth is boils, and the ninth is darkness. The priesthood of Egypt was concerned for the cleanliness of their physical bodies. The historian, Herodotus recorded: “So scrupulous were the priests on this point that they used to shave their heads and bodies every third day, for fear of harboring vermin...” (Hero, 2:37). Egypt’s magicians attempted to do likewise, but were unable to compete. The magicians had to admit: “This is the finger of God” (Exo. 8:19). They do not acknowledge Jehovah as God. Their learning was of such a nature, that they confess their “gods” are inferior in power to this divine Being!

- The next in order is the plague of flies (Exo. 8:20-32). These “swarms of flies” comes to all of Egypt, but not in the land of Goshen where the Israelites lived. Such a distinction is miraculous in nature. Egypt had their own “Lord of the Flies” named **Uatchit** (vulture). There was a god of the air and wind, called **Shu**. His name was mentioned often during this plague! The Psalmist relates that God “...sent among them swarms of flies, which devoured them” (Psa. 78:45). Egypt had a military medal known as the “Order of the Golden Fly” awarded to brave soldiers.

Once the plague of flies was removed Pharaoh “hardened his heart at this time also, neither would he let the people go” (Exo. 8:32).

- Now comes the murrain (pestilence) upon the cattle of Egypt (Exo.9:1-7). The word “murrain” is translated “pestilence” 47 times in the KJV. The lexicons are not definitive; the Hebrew word is *deber* and is a vague term for a widespread epidemic. The **Apis** (bull) was sacred to the Egyptian creator-god **Ptah**. The goddess of the desert, **Hathor** (depicted sometimes as a bull or cow), and was highly honored in Egypt. This plague affected all the Egyptian cattle, but none of the Israelite cattle were affected. Note the stipulation: “which are in the field...” (Exp. 9:3). The livestock affected by this pestilence included horses, asses, camels, and sheep as well. Moses informed Pharaoh that this disease would come “tomorrow” and it did (Exo. 9:5). The heart of Pharaoh remained hardened and he would not let Israel go free.
- Plague # 6 brings about the boils and blains on man and beast (Exo. 9:8-12). The Egyptians worshipped an idol known as **Typhon**. Men and/or red bulls were burned as offerings, their ashes were thrown into the air and it was thought that if a particle of those ashes fell on you that you were safe from all bodily defilement. Moses and Aaron used those ashes to bring forth the “boils and blains.” The boils and blains may have been a form of anthrax, but we cannot be dogmatic. **Imotep** (serpent) and **Serapis** (serpent) were their gods of healing. Look at the insignia of medical institutions today, and note the serpent! **Sekhmet** (scorpion), was the goddess of epidemics. Egypt had an epidemic that prevented Pharaoh’s magicians from being able to come into the presence of Pharaoh. The Hebrew terms can refer to a wide variety of skin inflammations which can cause great suffering and had the potential of causing death. (Deut. 28:27,35; cf. Job 2:5). The false gods of Egypt could not heal **chapped lips**, much less the boils and blains. The word “stand” in verse 11 comes from the Hebrew *amad*, and is defined in meaning: “to be present, to endure, to withstand.”
- Now comes the plague of thunder, hail, and fire (lightning) (Exo. 9:13-35). Egypt had a sky-goddess named **Nut** (sky), along with **Isis** and **Seth** who were the protectors of Egypt’s crops! **Ermutedet** was the goddess of agriculture, and **Nepri** was their god of grain. Men and beasts were killed, plants and vines were destroyed, and trees were broken to pieces. The Psalmist recalled, “He gave them hail for rain, and flaming fire in their land. He smote their vines also and their fig trees, and brake the trees of their borders” (Psa. 105:32-33). Again, “He killed their vines with hail, and their sycamore trees with frost (great hailstones). He gave over their cattle also to the hail, and their flocks to hot thunderbolts” (Psa. 78:47-48). Egypt had not seen anything like unto this (Exo.

9:24). The “flax and barley were smitten” (Exo. 9:31). Flax was formed into linen for clothing. Much linen was needed in the preparation of mummies for burial. The “wheat and spelt were not smitten” (Exo. 9:32). Spelt is a type of coarse wheat and both were used in the making of bread. The distinction in this destruction shows God’s mercy to the Egyptian people, who can still have food to eat.

- Then it was time for the locusts to make an appearance (Exo. 10:1-20). The vegetation not lost to the storm was now offered up to a terrible destroyer, a swarm of locusts. Some crops were now mature enough to be destroyed (cf. Exo. 9:31-32). **Serapis** (serpent) was counted in Egypt as a goddess of healing, and to protect the crops from harm. **Isis** and **Seth** were charged with protecting the crops and **Nepri** was counted as the god of all Egypt’s grain! Egypt’s crop loss was 100 percent never seen this many locusts before and would never behold that many again (Exo. 10:5-6, 14-15). The terms “grasshoppers” and “locusts” are sometimes interchangeable. (Discuss). A plague of locusts is unstoppable! Jehovah and “the **east wind** brought the locusts” (Exo. 10:13) and when the deed was done, Moses entreated Jehovah and the Lord God “... turned an exceeding strong **west wind**, which took up the locusts, and drove them into the Red Sea; there remained not one locust in all the border of Egypt” (Exo. 10:19).
- The 9th plague was a darkness that lasted for three days (Ex. 10:21-29). **Ra**, the god of the sun was the most worshipped god in Egypt, after Pharaoh himself. **Atum** (serpent) was revered as a sun-god. **Horus** (hawk/falcon) was counted as the sky-god of upper Egypt. The Egyptians even had a god of the sunset, **Tem**. So many sun-gods, yet, there was no sunrise, no sunset, no light for three days in all of Egypt. There was light in the land of Goshen. The sky-god **Horus**, (hawk/falcon), was often described with the sun being his right eye, and the moon as his left eye. Egypt regularly worshipped the sun, the moon, and the stars. But, for three days they remained in a “darkness over the land of Egypt... which may be felt” (Exo. 10:21). The word “felt” is from the Hebrew mashah, i.e., “to feel of; by implication to grope...” The thickness of that darkness was so intense that “they saw not one another, neither rose anyone from his place for three days” (Exo. 10:23). The sun-gods of Egypt were myriad, but they failed to show their presence for 72 hours! The Lord God was in control.
- The final plague was the death of the firstborn in Egypt (Exo. 11:4-8; 12:29-36). Jehovah “smote all the firstborn in Egypt” (Psa. 78:51). **Heqt** or **Hekt** (frog) was the goddess of birth. **Selket** or **Serqa** (scorpion) was the guardian of life for Egypt. Pharaoh’s own son died (Exo. 11:5), even though Pharaoh and his were thought to be protected by **Sed** (jackal) and **Renenutet** (cobra). **Meskhenet** presided at childbirth for all Egyptians. The tenth and final plague brought Pharaoh and all Egypt to their knees. Exodus 11 begins: “Jehovah said unto Moses, yet one plague more will I bring upon Pharaoh, and upon Egypt; afterwards he will let you go hence” (Exo. 11:1). That word “plague” in the Hebrew language speaks literally of a “stroke or massive blow!” God, as a loving and protective Father will not see His Son (Israel), mistreated any longer by cruel taskmasters. From the beginning God had warned Pharaoh: “Thus saith Jehovah, Israel is My Son, My firstborn...and I have said unto thee (Pharaoh-jlw), Let My Son go...” (Exo. 4:22-23).

God’s Ten-Lesson Bible Correspondence Course is done! “For I will go through the land of Egypt in that night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast, and **against all the gods of Egypt** I will execute judgments: I am Jehovah” (Exo. 12:12). Jethro said: “Now I know that Jehovah is greater than **all gods...**” (Exo. 18:11). cf. Numbers 33:4, “while the Egyptians were burying all their first-born, whom Jehovah had smitten among them: **upon their gods** also Jehovah executed judgments.”

The All-Sufficiency of the Scriptures and the Cessation of Miracles

Dub McClish

Introduction

Among other things that *love*, *grace*, *faith*, *elect*, and *miracle* have in common is that they are all words that have been “wordnapped,” redefined, and misused. *Miracle* is loosely used in reference to a spectacular football catch in the end zone, a person who somehow escaped the wrath of a tornado, or to the providential answer to prayer. The religious shysters on TV greatly confuse and deceive gullible millions with their pseudo claims of miraculous powers.

What is the Bible definition of a “miracle”? The Greek word *dunamis* (ability, power—the origin of our word *dynamite*) is used in an obvious reference to actions and results beyond mere natural means, and is thus frequently translated *miracle* (e.g., Acts 8:13; 19:11; 1 Cor. 12:10, 28–29; Gal. 3:5). Another Greek word, *semeion* (a sign, mark, or token) is often rendered *sign*, indicating supernatural phenomena that are demonstrations of Divine authority. However, this word is also rendered *miracle* in some passages (e.g., Luke 23:8; Acts 4:16, 22). Peter used both of these Greek words on Pentecost: Jesus was “...a man approved of God...by mighty works [*dunamesi*] and wonders and signs [*semeiois*] which God did...” (Acts 2:22).

In the Bible, therefore, a miracle is not merely something unusual or remarkable. It refers to the power God exercises and demonstrates, either immediately or through agents (human or otherwise), which transcends that which men alone can do. The Bible teaches that God no longer thus demonstrates His power. To say that He once did, but no longer does thus act, pertains not to His power, but to His plan. It is not a question of what He **could/can** do, but of what He is doing. Upon what evidence can we positively affirm that miracles have ceased?

Explicit New Testament Teaching

In 1 Corinthians 12–14 we have the most concentrated inspired treatment of the subject of first century miraculous gifts. Paul lists the diverse gifts and appointments that God “set in the church” originally (12:8–11, 28–30). He then states that there is an entity that is superior to them (v. 31), and apart from which the miraculous gifts are vain. That superior element is Biblically-defined love (“charity,” KJV), which Paul defines by personifying it (13:1–7).

Paul’s discussion of the meaning of *love* then leads to a contrast between its duration and the duration of miraculous gifts (vv. 8–13). He uses three lines of argument to declare the cessation of the gifts:

- He explicitly states that the gifts will end. The gifts (all of them represented by *prophecies*, *tongues*, and *knowledge*) would be “done away” (“fail,” KJV), “cease,” and be “done away” (“vanish away,” KJV), respectively (v. 8). Paul used the same word (*katargeo*) twice (in reference to prophecies and knowledge), a word that means to render useless, unproductive, or of no effect. Of tongues, he used a word (*pauo*) that means to cause to cease or refrain, to stop, or to prohibit.
- He explicitly states twice that the gifts were only “in part” (i.e., from a Greek word meaning imperfect, incomplete), this time using *know* and *prophecy* as representative of all of the gifts (vv. 9–10). He places these “in part” gifts in contrast with “that which is perfect” (i.e., brought to completion, entire, as opposed to partial or limited) and that was yet to come (i.e., it was still in the future at the time Paul wrote).
- He employed an illustration of childhood behavior in contrast with adult behavior (v. 11). He identifies childhood behavior with the infancy of the church and its need for imperfect miraculous gifts. He then identifies adult behavior with the mature state of the church, signaled by the arrival of “that which is perfect,” whereupon the infantile behavior would be discarded (same word as for “done away,” v. 8). Paul then used a figure of looking into a mirror to explain his illustration. **See in a**

mirror is a figure for receiving revelation, which was not then complete, making the view in the “mirror” hazy (lit., an enigma). But when “that which is perfect” came the image would be clear; in the light of complete revelation they would no longer have incomplete prophecy and knowledge. They would thus be able to see clearly and to know God’s will fully (v. 12). Some contend that *that which is perfect* refers either to the Lord’s return or to Heaven, but they are wrong. Paul referred to the completed revelation of God’s will through the apostles (John 16:13).

The Purposes of Miracles Have Ceased

God has used miraculous activity for three purposes, none of which any longer exists.

To establish and create

- God brought the material universe into existence by the mighty creation miracles, thereupon enacting His natural laws by which the physical universe has operated—and operates—to this day. All living things since then have come about by procreation rather than by creation (with the notable exception of the Virgin Conception and Birth of the Lord Jesus).
- The Mosaic Age began amidst many mighty miracles, but after the completion of all of the Old Testament Scriptures, miraculous activity disappeared (perhaps partly explaining the 400-year intertestamental silence).
- The Christian Age began with momentous miraculous activity: Jesus’ Virgin Birth, a multitude of signs and wonders, and cases of resurrection from the dead. These were followed by Jesus’ resurrection and ascension and the wonders on Pentecost that gave birth to the church. It is no mere coincidence that miraculous activity ceased soon after the completion of the New Testament revelation.

Unless God decides to establish or create something new, this purpose of miraculous activity no longer exists.

To reveal His Divine Will and Truth

- Jesus promised the apostles that He would send upon them the Holy Spirit, Who would teach them all things and guide them into all of the Truth (John 14:26; 16:13).
- Paul declared that God revealed the words he and the other apostles spoke and wrote (1 Cor. 2:10–13).
- Paul’s words were the “commandment of the Lord” (1 Cor. 14:37), and he did not learn the message he preached from men, but “through revelation of Jesus Christ” (Gal. 1:11–12; cf. Eph. 3:3–5; 2 Pet. 1:21).
- By the end of the first century “the faith [was] once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3; cf. 2 Pet. 1:3).

Therefore, this revelatory purpose of miraculous activity no longer exists.

To Confirm the Truth and its proclaimers as it was revealed

- John stated this as the great aim of His miraculous activity (John 20:30–31).
- The Lord gave first century believers miraculous powers to confirm their preaching (Mark 16:17–20).
- The Lord confirmed the “great salvation” the apostles preached by “signs and wonders, and by manifold powers, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will” (Heb. 2:4).

Since the revelation of God’s will was complete by the end of the first century, and since the purpose of New Testament era miracles was to confirm the Word, with the completion of the revelation, the confirmatory purpose of the gifts no longer existed.

Even so, some allege that the Word still needs confirming. However, note the following:

- The first century saints confirmed **their own words**, not those of Job, Abraham, or Moses.
- Once confirmed (as it was at the time of its revelation) the New Testament

needed/needs no additional confirmation. Just as it was “once for all delivered” it was also once for all confirmed. John thus taught (John 20:30–31).

- Confirmation and revelation are inseparable. If we have miraculous confirmation today, we should have new revelation. If we have no new revelation, there is no miraculous confirmation today.

Conclusion

New Testament miracles are like scaffolding on a building, necessary only during construction. When the building is finished, the builder removes the scaffolding, as indeed God did the miraculous gifts when the revelation was completed. That revelation is all-sufficient to save us (Rom. 1:16), to make us complete unto every good work (2 Tim. 3:16–17), and to take us home to glory at last (Acts 20:32). Neither sinner nor saint needs either (1) any miraculous direct operation of the Holy Spirit or (2) any non-miraculous direct operation of the Holy Spirit in order to be saved from the guilt of his sins or to be saved in Heaven at last. We have the message of Truth, the all-sufficient Scriptures, inspired, revealed, and confirmed by the Holy Spirit.

Identifying The True Church Today

Jerry C. Brewer

How is Christ’s church—the **only true church** Jesus built—to be identified among all the so-called “churches” today that claim to belong to Him? In every age, God has had a pattern for men to follow in worshiping and serving Him. Contrary to the modern concept that man can do as he pleases in religion and still please God, a divinely-ordained pattern exists today for us to follow. That pattern is the New Testament and revealed in its pages is the pattern for the church of Christ. Three times, at strategic points throughout the Bible, man is warned to neither add to nor detract from what God has said. “Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it” (Deut. 4:2). “Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar” (Prov. 30:6). “...If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book” (Rev. 22:18-19). God has given His pattern and we dare not change it.

When God instructed Noah to build an ark, He gave him a pattern (Gen. 6:14-21) and Noah did exactly as God instructed in His word (Gen. 6:22). When God told Moses to build the tabernacle and gave him detailed instructions, Moses did not deviate from those instructions and it was said of him, as it had been written of Noah: “Thus did Moses: according to all that the Lord commanded him, so did he” (Exo. 40:16). The word of God is a divine pattern with which we are forbidden to tamper, and that includes His pattern for the church of Christ.

That pattern is plainly revealed in the New Testament and if we follow it we **cannot be wrong**, but any religious organization that is *not* built according to His pattern is not His church. The **true** church of Christ can be easily identified today by the following:

By Its Builder

When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am? And they said, Some say thou art John the Baptist; some Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, “Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. 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. 16:13-19).

Jesus knew the hearts of all men (John 2:24-25), so it's certain that he did not ask men's opinions of Him to gain knowledge of their thoughts. He put this question to His disciples for their benefit. While others looked upon Him as a prophet—certainly a man from God, as Nicodemus said in John 3:2—they did not understand that He was more than a man. But Peter's confession not only recognized Him as the Messiah, but as "the Son of the Living God." Jesus implicitly affirmed that He is the Son of God, for had Peter been wrong, Jesus would have corrected him (John 14:2).

With the fact of His Sonship firmly established in their minds, Jesus promised that He would build His church upon the bedrock of Peter's confession—Christ's Deity. In this passage, Jesus also used the word "kingdom" interchangeably with the word "church," indicating that the two terms describe the same institution. The church of Christ is the kingdom of heaven. Prior to this statement, the focus of His preaching had been the same as that of John—"the kingdom of heaven is at hand." In this passage, Jesus defined the kingdom He preached as a spiritual entity that He called "my church."

In promising to build His church, Christ also alluded to His death, saying, "and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Noting that even His own death would not prevent His establishment of His church, Jesus then gave the very first prediction of His own death. "From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day" (Matt. 16:21). The link between His death and the establishment of the church had been prophesied in the Old Testament.

Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste. Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place. And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand (Isa. 28:16-18).

When He said, "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it," Jesus alluded to Isaiah's prophecy. The "gates of hell" to which He referred is the same thing as the Jews' "covenant with death," and their "agreement with hell" in Isaiah's prophecy. The word "hell" in Isaiah 28:18 is the Hebrew word *sheol*, and in Matthew 16:18 it is the Greek word *hades*. Neither of these words refer to the place of eternal punishment, but to the unseen realm of departed spirits of men and represent death. When the Jews conspired with Pilate to crucify Jesus, they made a covenant with death to consign Him to *hades*, thinking that would be His end. But Jesus said that even His own death would not prevent Him from establishing His church because their covenant with death and their agreement with hell (*hades*) would be disannulled by His resurrection.

Thus, in the promise to establish His church, Jesus foretold both His death and resurrection. Christ died for the church (Acts 20:28), but even His death could not prevent its establishment. There is not a man-originated church on the face of the earth today that truthfully can claim to be built upon a dead, resurrected, and ascended man. In the above passage, Jesus also referred to the church in the singular. He did not say, "I will build my *churches*," but that, "I will build my church." He promised and built *only one*, and all others are counterfeit. Any church built by one other than Jesus Christ is not the church revealed in the pages of Holy Writ.

By The Time And Place Of Its Establishment

The church of Christ was established on the day of Pentecost which immediately followed the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (Acts 1-2). Any church which had its beginning at another time or place cannot be the one which Jesus built. The Lutheran Church is not the church of Christ. for it does not meet the Scriptural criteria given above.

The Lutheran Church dates from the eve of All Saints Day, Oct. 31, 1517,

when Martin Luther tacked his celebrated 95 theses on the Castle Church in Wittenberg, in protest against the sale of indulgences as carried on by the Roman Church under Tetzel in Germany. Luther had no intention at the time of withdrawing from the Catholic Church, in which he was a priest, or monk, but was striving to put down a great evil. However, unconsciously he had struck a great blow at the papacy and this led to the Reformation and the origin of the Lutheran Church (L. G. Tomlinson, *Churches of Today in The Light of Scripture*, 11th edition, Gospel Advocate Co., Nashville, 1967, p. 32.

The Roman Catholic Church had a beginning much later than the Pentecost immediately following the resurrection of Christ and far removed from Jerusalem.

The Catholic Church had an embryonic beginning. The early church departed from the simplicity of a congregational form of government, guided by the New Testament as the only Rule of Faith and Practice, and permitted more and more authority to be vested in the bishops of the various churches. By the middle of the second century the church was well united under the authority of the bishops who gradually came to be regarded as successors to the apostles...The adoption of a creed as the rule of faith and practice in the third century put forth the bud, the union of church and state under Constantine; and the writing of the Nicene Creed in 325 brought forth the flower; while the setting up a 'papa' or pope as the ecclesiastical head of the church, culminating in the doctrine of his infallibility in 1870, produced the fruit as manifested in the Catholic Church of today (Ibid, p. 17).

The Presbyterian Church began under the leadership of John Knox in Scotland. Its first book of discipline was written in 1560 and it became the established religion of Scotland in 1592—almost 1,600 years too late to be the church of Christ.

The Church of England was established by Henry VIII as a result of his quarrel with the Roman pope, Clement, who refused to annul Henry's marriage to Catherine of Aragon so he could marry Anne Boleyn.

When the pope refused to grant the divorce, which would permit Henry to marry Ann Boleyn...Henry broke with the pope. He then sent himself up as head of the Church of England...Thomas Cranmer who had been Henry's chief advocate in attempts to obtain papal recognition of the divorce was made archbishop of Canterbury in 1533. He immediately pronounced Catherine's marriage to Henry void and the marriage with Ann, which had taken place three month before, legal (F. W. Mattox, *The Eternal Kingdom*, 1961, Gospel Light Publishing Co., Delight Ark., p. 269).

Henry persuaded the English Parliament to proclaim him "Supreme Head" of the Church of England in 1534. This man-originated church—known in America as the Episcopal Church—resulted from a fornicating king seeking to satisfy his own lust, and in our day the American version of this man-made organization elected a sodomite as its bishop. Neither the Church of England nor the Episcopal Church is the church of Christ.

Another man-originated church which was established at the wrong time and place to be the church of Christ is the Methodist Church. Known today as The United Methodist Church, this organization was founded in England in the 1700s.

Methodism was founded by John Wesley, an ordained priest in the Church of England....John and Charles Wesley, with Whitefield and about a dozen other students at Oxford formed themselves into a society for the purpose of overcoming the formalism and ritualism of the Episcopal Church and to stimulate piety and spirituality among its members. Other societies were organized and because of their methodical manner of life they were called Methodists. The appellation obtained currency and upon the death of Wesley these societies banded together under a conference and became known as the Methodist Episcopal Church, although for a time they considered themselves a part of the Episcopal Church...The Methodist Episcopal Church of the United States originated with the Christian Conference held in Balti-

more, Dec. 24, 1784 (Tomlinson, p. 57).

Neither is any Baptist Church the church of Christ. While Baptist origins are somewhat obscure, the first known Baptist Church was organized in Holland by John Smyth and the first Baptist Church in England was organized by Thomas Helwys in 1611. These efforts are 1,600 years too late and at the wrong place to be the church of Christ.

Seventh Day Adventism began in Massachusetts in 1831 under the leadership of William Miller. The Mormon Church—The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints—was established by the false prophet Joseph Smith, April 6, 1830 in Fayette, New York. Russellism, or the Jehovah's Witnesses cult began in the United States in the late 1800s, as did the Christian Science Church of Mary Baker Eddy.

These man-originated Churches bear no likeness to the church promised and built by Christ, the Son of God. They originated too late, at the wrong place, and by the wrong people to be the church Jesus built. They are neither part nor parcel of the church of Christ, but counterfeits palmed off on men to deceive them and destroy their souls. Like tares sown among wheat, the churches of men will be rooted up and cast away at the last day (Matt. 13:24-30). Jesus said, "Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up" (Matt. 15:13). Men's churches were neither planted by God nor have His approval and *none* of them can be found within the pages of the New Testament. That also applies to every other brand of "church" founded this side of Pentecost Day in Acts 2, including—but not limited to—Community Churches, Cowboy Churches, and every other so-called "church" concocted by men.

By Its Nomenclature

The church of the first century had no proper name. The term "the church of Christ" is a possessive term indicating ownership. When one speaks of "the farm of John Brown," he isn't naming the farm, but indicating who owns it. The same is true of the term, "the church of Christ." It is Christ's church and its numerous local bodies were known as "churches of Christ" in the New Testament (Rom. 16:16). As Christ and the Father are one, it was also termed "the church of God" (1 Cor. 1:1-2, cf. John 17:10, 20-21).

Neither do members of the church of Christ denominate themselves into parties by their names. There were no hyphenated Christians in the first century, such as "Baptist-Christians," "Methodist-Christians," "Presbyterian-Christians," or "Anglican-Christians." The saved are **simply Christians** and wear this God-given name without hyphenating it. The name *Christian* is worn by individuals, not the church.

That was the new name of which Isaiah prophesied, and was given in precise fulfillment of his prophecy.

For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. 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 (Isa. 62:1-2).

The fulfillment of that prophecy is found in Acts 10 and 11 in the New Testament. The "righteousness" of Jerusalem and that which the Gentiles would see was the gospel which would be preached among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem (Luke 24:45-47) and which would save Jew and Gentile alike (Rom. 1:16-17; Eph. 2:11-22; 3:1-6).

The apostle Peter was called to preach to the house of Cornelius, a Gentile Roman soldier (Acts 9-10). It was at the house of Cornelius that Gentiles first heard and obeyed the Gospel, and in the exact order of Isaiah's prophecy the disciples of Christ were given a new name—*Christian*—in Acts 11:26. That's the first of three times the word is used in the New Testament. The others are in Acts 26:28 when Agrippa said, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian," and in 1 Peter 4:16 where Peter wrote, "Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed." There isn't a single denominational name found in the New Testament that was divinely applied to the disciples of Jesus Christ.

By Its Organization

The New Testament knows nothing of the councils, conferences, synods, or conventions that characterize modern denominational structure. Each local church of Christ in the first century was organized on a level no higher than the local, autonomous congregation. Under the supreme authority of Jesus Christ as head of the church (Eph. 1:22-23), each congregation worked and worshiped under the oversight of men known as “elders.” Each congregation had a plurality of men serving as elders (Phil. 1:1; Titus 1:5). Divinely ordained qualifications for men so serving are given in First Timothy 2 and Titus 1 and only those meeting these qualifications are fit to serve as elders of the church of Christ.

These men were also known as bishops and shepherds. All three terms—elder, bishop, shepherd (or pastor)—refer to the same office in the New Testament and are descriptive of some aspect of the office. The word “bishop” is from the Greek *episcopos* which means “overseer.” This word indicates that the elder has oversight of the activities of the church, but his oversight extends no further than the revealed word of God through Jesus Christ as the Head of the church (Matt. 28:18).

The word *pastor* comes from the Latin term for shepherd and is another word describing the men who oversee the local church of Christ. The shepherd is responsible for seeing that the flock under his care is fed the pure word of God, and protected from evil teaching and influences. That was the entire thrust of Paul’s charge to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:28-31. The word *elder* indicates a man who is mature in the faith. In fact, all three terms describing the same office are found in Acts 20. In verse 17, Paul, “sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church.” In verse 28, he called them “bishops” and “shepherds.” The Greek for “shepherd” is *poimain* and the verb form is *poimaino*. That is the word translated “feed” when Paul said, “feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood” (v. 28).

By Its Worship

The worship of the church of Christ is devoid of modern trappings of ritualism and show business. We follow the New Testament pattern in our worship to God in its scriptural simplicity and purity. As did the first century church, we sing praises to God, and teach and admonish one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (Eph. 5:18-19; Col. 3:16). This is a reciprocal action as commanded in Ephesians 5:19, so we do not use choirs, “praise teams” or special singing groups. There is no command in the New Testament for the church to use mechanical instruments of music in worship and in keeping with the injunction of Colossians 3:17 we do not use them. They are not authorized by the Lord, therefore we cannot play an instrument in His name (by His authority).

The church of Christ teaches the Bible in its assemblies as commanded in First Timothy 4:1-2, and as the Jerusalem church did when it continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine (teaching) (Acts 2:42).

The church of Christ also observes the Lord’s Supper each first day of the week as we have an example thereof in Acts 20:7. The Lord’s Supper is a memorial feast of unleavened bread and fruit of the vine which represent the body and blood of our Blessed Lord in His death on the cross. He instituted this supper on the night of His betrayal (Matt. 26:26-29) and the New Testament church regularly observed this rite in **each** first-day-of-the-week assembly (Acts 2:42; 20:7).

Prayers led by men (1 Tim. 2:1-8) and contributing money to further the cause of the Lord (1 Cor. 16:1-2) are also part of our worship on the first day of the week. All of these items of worship are authorized by the word of God and constitute the simple New Testament pattern for acceptable worship to Him.

By Its Terms Of Membership

The terms of membership in the church of Christ are not given by human councils, synods, conventions or conferences. They are the terms preached by first century Christians and found in the New Testament. Salvation by “faith only” that is taught by most modern denominations is a concept foreign to the New Testament and is a doctrine of the devil. We are certainly justified by faith (Rom. 5:1) but **not** by “faith only”

(Jas. 2:24). Saving faith is that kind of faith found in the worthies catalogued in Hebrews 11. It is faith that hears the word of God and does what God commands, for “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). Noah heard God’s instructions and **obeyed** them (Heb. 11:7). So did Abel (Heb. 11:4), Abraham (Heb. 11:8, 17), Moses’ parents (Heb. 11:23), and Moses himself (Heb. 11:24-25).

Those who come to God must believe in Him (Heb. 11:6) and in His Son, Jesus Christ (John 8:24). Having done that, they must then repent of their sins (Luke 13:3) confess their faith in Christ (Matt. 10:32; Acts 8:37) and be baptized into Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; Gal. 3:26-27). Having done these things, they are then added to the church by the Lord (Acts 2:47). These are the terms of salvation from sin and membership in the body of Christ that are delineated in the eternal word of God.

Jesus said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). There is no appeal from His word, nor is there a single syllable in the New Testament that indicates one is saved by some so-called “sinner’s prayer.” Obedience to the gospel saves one and makes him a member of the church of Christ. He does not “join” the church, but is added to it by the Lord. These were the same terms preached by Peter on Pentecost in Acts 2 and those who obeyed on that day became Christians and members of the church of Christ. Those same terms, faithfully preached and obeyed today will make men the same thing—Christians and members of the church which Jesus built and for which He died.

Whenever you find a church fitting the above pattern, you have found the one and **only true church** which Jesus built. There is not a denomination on earth that fits that pattern. In fact, **no denomination** can be the church which Jesus built in **any** sense, as succinctly explained by Foy E. Wallace, Jr.:

A denomination properly defined means a religious organization larger than the local church, but smaller than the whole church. It takes many local churches to constitute a denomination. So a denomination is larger than the local church, but it is smaller than the whole church; because no denomination claims to have all the saved in it, they will tell us there are Christians in all denominations. So no denomination has all the saved. It is therefore smaller than the whole church, but it is larger than the local church, because it takes many local churches to compose it. So a denomination is not the church in the whole sense, because it is too small. And, it is not the church in the local sense because it is too large. Our only conclusion then can be that a denomination is not the church in any sense; in no scriptural sense at all, because the word church is never used in the New Testament, in any denominational connotation; that is outside the use of the word church in the New Testament. So that gives us the definition of the church. In the whole sense it is the entire body of the saved, the called of Christ, by the gospel; in the local sense all the saved, or the called, in a locality, meeting together to worship and serve the Lord (*Number One Gospel Sermons*, Foy E. Wallace, Jr. Publications, Nashville, 1967, pp. 2, 3).

Requisites of Acceptable Worship

H. Leo Boles

"God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:24 ASV).

Three requisites of acceptable worship are set forth in this verse:

1. We must worship God.
2. We must worship God in spirit.
3. We must worship God in truth.

The first commandment forbade the worship of any other being. It said, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Deut. 5:7 ASV). Verse 9 of Deuteronomy 5 reads, "Thou

shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them; for I, Jehovah, thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the third and upon the fourth generation of them that hate me." Hence, however sincere might be the idol worshiper, his worship is highly displeasing to God, because it fails in the first of the requisites above given. It is not directed to God.

Second, the worship must be in spirit (i.e. proceeding from a sincere heart and rendered with attention and understanding). This forbids worship that is merely formal—worship that consists of rites and ceremonies in which the worshiper may engage without attention. Catholicism is a system of such worship where the worshiper may not know, and indeed is not expected to know, the significance of much in which he engages.

There is some danger that this type of worship should come to obtain in Christ's church. The unvarying routine of services, the formal and mechanical participation in song, prayer, and the Lord's Supper, the failure to give attention and enter heartily into the worship leads to that which is not in spirit. This is that which Jesus rebuked in the Pharisees in Matthew 15:9—vain worship.

Such people as this worship him with their lips and give utterance to phrases of worshipful nature, but the heart is not in it, and God is not pleased. We should ever be on our guard that we do not fall into a mechanical, formal, heartless type of devotion to God.

Finally, worship, to be acceptable, must be "in truth." To be "in truth" is to be according to God's word. Jesus said, "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth" (John 17:17). Any act of worship—however sincere might be the worshiper—is not acceptable to God if it is not in harmony with the scriptures. This teaches us that God will accept only that which he has specifically set forth in the scriptures for us to do in worship.

We walk by faith and not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7), and since faith comes by hearing God's word (Rom. 10:17), we can offer in faith only that which is set forth in his word. This will exclude from our worship everything not specifically mentioned within Scripture. By this rule, we can never use instrumental music in worship, because it is nowhere commanded or even mentioned in New Testament worship. Therefore, we cannot engage in it "by faith."

True, David used instrumental music, but he also offered animal sacrifices and burned incense in worship. We do not take our orders from David today. Christ is our lawgiver and guide (Matt. 17:5; 28:18; Heb. 1:1-2). He has nowhere authorized instrumental music, the Holy Spirit-inspired apostles did not sanction it, no New Testament writer mentioned it in New Testament worship, and no apostolic church practiced it. To engage in it is to fail to worship "in truth." But God is pleased when one only worships "in truth." Therefore, instrumental music is not pleasing to him.

The items of worship are set forth in Acts 2:42 and Ephesians 5:19. These are:

1. Teaching,
2. Singing,
3. Prayer,
4. The contribution, and,
5. The Lord's Supper

These items were observed on every first day of the week by the church in apostolic times (1 Cor. 16:2; Acts 20:7).

The disciples were directed by men who were empowered with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:42; 2:1). We can do no less than this and be assured of pleasing God today. What pleased him then, will surely please him today. All else must be rigidly excluded from worship and service to God. "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1 Sam. 15:22).

Some Lessons About Sin and Death

Marvin L. Weir

It never ceases to amaze me as to what those who **claim** to be Bible believers will falsely declare. Calvinism and its damnable doctrine of hereditary total depravity is more precious to countless thousands of professing “Christians” than a “thus saith the Lord.” The false teaching that one is “born in sin” is not a new, “Johnny come lately,” doctrine. God charges His people in Ezekiel’s day with misrepresenting the facts. He says to His people of old, “What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge? As I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel” (Ezek. 18:2-3). It could not be clearer that the fathers eating sour grapes did **not** set the children’s teeth on edge. The obvious conclusion is that the children would also have to eat the sour grapes to be affected by them. Who can deny such? Hereditary and environmental influence may be great, but neither negates the personal responsibility of the individual. There is no escape from this truth: “Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: **the soul that sinneth, it shall die**” (Ezek. 18:4, emph. mlw). God continues to deny the false doctrine of inherited sin in saying,

Now, lo, if he beget a son, that seeth all his father's sins, which he hath done, and feareth, and doeth not such like; that hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, hath not defiled his neighbor's wife, neither hath wronged any, hath not taken aught to pledge, neither hath taken by robbery, but hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment; that hath withdrawn his hand from the poor, that hath not received interest nor increase, hath executed mine ordinances, hath walked in my statutes; he shall not die for the iniquity of his father, he shall surely live (18:14-17).

Let us now learn some Biblical truths about sin and death.

All Souls Belong to God

God is the “Creator” of all life (Isa. 40:28; 1 Pet. 4:19). He is the Father of “spirits” (Heb. 12:9). Every soul then belongs to God, and “the soul that sinneth, it shall die” (Ezek. 18:4).

Each Soul is Individually Responsible and Accountable to God

Even a casual reading of Ezekiel 18 impresses one with the truth that it is impossible to inherit another person’s sins. Sixteen verses after verse four God again says, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die: the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him” (18:20). A son of a just and lawful man who chooses to sin will die in his sins, but the father will live (vss. 5-13). The righteous son of a sinful and wicked father will not die because of the iniquity of the father (vss. 14-17). The Bible consistently teaches that every person will give an account of himself unto God. Paul preached this to the brethren at Rome and also to congregations located elsewhere: “So then each one of us shall give account of **himself** to God” (Rom. 14:12; cf. 1 Cor. 4:17). Adam did sin, and sin entered into the world, but people die spiritually not because they have inherited Adam’s sin, but because “all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23).

Righteousness is the Condition of Life

If a man be just...he shall surely live” (Ezek. 18:5, 9). A just man is a man who keeps the Word of God (a lawful or law-abiding man). One is righteous who chooses to do what God declares to be right. John said, “If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one also that doeth righteousness is begotten of him” (1 John 2:29). The righteous man is the one who chooses to live in complete harmony with God’s Word (see Psa. 119:172) and be guided by that Word in all things.

Wickedness is the Condition of Death

“The soul that sinneth, it shall die ...” (Ezek. 18:20). Wickedness is literally **lawless-**

ness and is the very opposite of those who are just and lawful. The KJV says, “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4). Note the ASV rendering of the same verse: “Every one that doeth sin doeth also lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.” Enmity to God’s Word will lead to lawlessness and eventually spiritual death!

Sin and Spiritual Death Are Inseparable

Again, “the soul that sinneth, it shall die” (Ezek. 18:20). The New Testament makes it clear “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). One will most assuredly reap what he sows (Gal. 6:7-8). Just as the absence of light means darkness, the presence of sin means death! Isaiah said, “Behold, Jehovah’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, so that he will not hear” (Isa. 59:1-2). “Wages” are something duly earned, and the just payment for impenitent sin is death (Rom. 6:23).

God Has No Pleasure in the Death of the Lawless

“Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked? saith the Lord Jehovah; and not rather that he should return from his way, and live” (Ezek. 18:23)? God’s will is that all men might be saved by coming to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4). The problem is that many people “have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God” (Rom. 10:2-3). May we learn to trust the Word of God instead of the wisdom of man. Let us learn well the lessons of sin and death before we meet the Word of the Lord at the judgment (John 12:48)!

Biblical Revelation: Complete and Final

2 Timothy 3:15-17; Luke 16:19-31

Kent Bailey

Without a doubt there are many individuals like the lost rich man of Luke 16, who have stated that if God permitted another individual to rise from the abode of the dead, their friends and family would be receptive of such truth. In the text of Luke 16 we are informed by Christ that if individuals refuse to accept the words of truth as set forth by God’s inspired representatives, they would also refuse truth as set forth by one who returned from the abode of the dead.

This introduces us to a fact worthy of careful consideration: The scriptures constitute the completeness and finality of God’s revelation to humanity. One does not need the *Book of Mormon*, the *Doctrine and Covenants* of Joseph Smith. One does not need the revelations of Ellen G. White, founder and first female pope of the Seventh Day Adventist cult. The case being that the New Testament of Christ constitutes God’s **final revelation** that has been confirmed by miracles brought about by the power of the Holy Spirit in the first century, one does not need either additional miraculous power or testimony to give evidence to the validity of the message and power of the gospel of Christ (1 Cor. 13:8-13; Eph. 4:11-16).

What a mighty testimony this is to the weight of God’s completed and final revelation of the Bible, and what a solemn warning regarding the impossibility of producing and obedient faith in the heart of one who rejects that divine revelation.

Consider this: What would a messenger from the abode of the dead be required to give us in the way of testimony that we do not already have clearly set forth in the word of God?

Evidence of the Validity of His message and Work

Even if one returned from the dead, how would anyone come to a knowledge that he was teaching God’s truth? There were numerous means by which those in the first century could determine whether those who were preaching were faithfully presenting divine truth: (1) Their teaching could not contradict other elements of known truth (Gal. 1:6-9). (2) Their pronouncements must be demonstrated to be true (Deut. 18:20-22).

(3) Such messengers who make the claim to speak on behalf of God must never oppose an inspired representative of Christ (1 Cor. 14:37).

Upon what basis would we conclude the message of one risen from the dead would be true other than objective truth (John 8:32; 17:17)? God's truth is real—it **does exist**. God's truth is objective—it exists **independent of human thinking**. God's truth can be altered and/or perverted (Gal. 1:6-9).

When the apostles of Christ presented the truth to those who lived during the first century, they demonstrated the signs of their apostleship (Mark 16:15-20; 2 Cor. 12:12). Even if one were to arise from the dead he could work no signs greater than those of the apostles of Christ.

All Truth Has Been Revealed

No additional truth could be stated in that **all truth** has already been clearly given. The purpose of miraculous activity was to demonstrate the validity of the message preached. When inspiration ceased during the first century there could be no exercise of miraculous power due to the cessation of inspiration (Gal. 1:6-9; 1 Cor. 13:8-13; Eph. 4:11-15; Micah 7:15). Therefore, what would bringing one back from death accomplish?

Logic of Bible Argumentation

No stronger argument could be made nor higher motive given than has already been revealed within the scriptures. While the scriptures do not constitute a text book on logic or argumentation and debate, none the less; the scriptures make numerous flawless arguments to prove the case regarding the message of inspired speakers and/or writers. Again, while the Bible is not a text book on logic or debate it does recognize the validity of critical, logical, rational thinking by making use of valid logical arguments.

Both Christ and Paul were masters of argumentation and debate. They set forth arguments that **could not** be refuted (Matt. 12:22-28; 1 Cor. 15:12-19). Even if one were to rise from the dead, no stronger argument for the cause of truth could be made.

Hardened Hearts Refuse the Miraculous

Individuals from the past have at various times been hardened due to their own stubborn and rebellious hearts in spite of the working of great miracles. Consider the fact that miracles serve as adequate evidence to prove the validity of a newly given truth. Such was the case with Moses and his dealings with the Egyptian Pharaoh (Exod. 2:11-19; Matt. 12:38-45; Rom. 1:1-4).

When one refuses to believe the message of the resurrected only begotten Son of God, who was raised victoriously over death, why would he accept the testimony of a lesser person raised from the dead? When one rejects the miracles recorded in the New Testament, why would one seek a so called modern day miracle that is not going to happen (Heb. 2:1-4). The cry for a modern day messenger to arise from the dead only demonstrates a hard heart of unbelief and a disposition of stubbornness to reject the word of God (Acts 28:23-28).

Bible Testimony is Final

No amount of testimony can make an established fact greater than what it has already proven to be—**the Truth**. A legal document is notarized only once, a certified check is certified only once. A court witness giving testimony is only sworn one time. The word of God has been sealed by the blood of Christ and confirmed by the miraculous working of the Holy Spirit during the first century. Those who reject it today would not accept its message even if one were to rise from the dead.

Food for Thought

Author Unknown

Conductor: I'm sorry, but you are on the wrong train. You want to go to Memphis, but this train doesn't go there. It goes to St. Louis.

Passenger: Don't bother me with that stuff. I sincerely believed I was getting on the Memphis train, so what difference does it make? If a person is sincere in what he be-

lieves, that's all that matters.

Doctor: Madam, your husband is dead. Those pills he took contained poison.

Woman: (Angrily) He **can't** be dead. One pill is as good as another. Besides, he was sincere in thinking they were sleeping pills, so he **can't** be dead.

Surgeon: Sir, that growth you have is malignant and unless it's removed it will kill you.

Patient: Don't be silly, Doc. I feel fine. Forget it. None of my folks ever had such a thing removed. I'm satisfied with the way I feel.

Gospel Preacher: Sir, the way you are traveling is not the way of Truth revealed in the Bible. I implore you to get into the right way and become a Christian before it is too late.

Some People: Don't be so narrow. My folks were members of this church so it's good enough for me. What difference does it make? One way is as good as another. If a person feels his religion is right that's good enough. Don't bother me. I'm satisfied.

“Absolutely the Truth” (Part 3)

Harrell Davidson

The cross of Christ is essentially the central theme of the whole Bible. When you find what is meant by the cross and its significance you basically learned at least a lot about the Bible.

Please note the following Scriptures:

For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom. But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men (1 Cor. 1:18-25).

In plain words the Bible teaches that all that is involved in being saved from sin and that is going to heaven. You cannot die with sin upon your soul and go to heaven. Paul makes it clear that the cross itself is a great Bible—a great teacher. Carry the cross with you wherever you go and remember that the blessed Savior died upon that cross. Is it not the greatest declaration of all as the setting out of the Word and the basic vision of God?

Involved in this is the eternality of God. The truth is that the eternality of God is a crucial matter. Genesis chapter one tells us “In the beginning God created...” The fact of the matter is that God was already there. There was nothing there to create Him. I sometimes am amazed at the foolishness of people who try arguing against the various things of Christianity without realizing that you have to go back to God. Some of these folks cannot answer some of the simplest things about God. If there is no God how did anything get here? If there was nothing how did something come out of nothing? *Cudworth's Philosophical Theory of Necessity* says the following: “Something is, therefore something eternally was for from nothing comes nothing.” It had to be God and God created the universe. He Himself brought things into existence. He did not do it with the hen and chicken debacle or the acorn and the oak tree. God made every thing bearing after its kind being full grown. Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 tells of death as being a planting. We understand that to day we plant an acorn and a mighty oak will grow maybe even to fifty or more feet high, but the oak in the beginning did not begin with

an acorn. It was a mighty tree and it produced acorns that in turn would produce other oaks. I have been a gardener as far back as I can remember. I planted seeds and a mighty plant rose from the ground from that little seed, but the seed had to die in order for it to bring forth life. Try explaining that to someone who does not believe that originally everything came from God and you will likely see how ignorant people are regarding God.

In John 1:1-2 we find the basic statement regarding the essentiality of Jesus Christ the Son of God. It intimates His cross—the cross of Jesus Christ. God did not begin and He will never end. The same is basic to us with one exception. We had a beginning that goes back to God, but there will never be an ending to us. It may not be upon this earth if the Lord comes immediately, but we will be somewhere—somewhere. I do not know! I do not know how it can be that people can be religious, claim to believe the Bible and cannot understand this. I cannot understand why some think that they are just going to vanish when they die.

There is also the truth about the reality of sin. These verses make clear the reality of sin.

Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him (1 John 3:4-6).

We cannot just slough it off! If you have sinned you must repent by changing your mind about it and turning away from sin to the best of your ability. I have to go to God in the proper way in order to receive forgiveness of my sins. Romans 4:13-15 and Romans 3:23 indicates that we have sinned. By a young age I knew that I was a sinner. By the age of twelve I wanted to do something about it. I will never forget the day when my oldest brother baptized me into Christ for the remission of my sins. Then and only then did I have peace in my soul.

According to a *USA Today* poll recently, one of the least liked things that people want to hear is the subject of sin. This was number one and number two was hell. Wonder why people do not like to hear these things? But hear them we must and take action that is made possible by the cross of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins. The entertainment syndrome that now envelopes us is going to cause multitudes by the tens of thousands to lose their souls, but they will be somewhere that for an eternity they will wish they could then revert back to. Too late! The entertainment that they wanted today is soul damning tomorrow in eternity. When will we ever learn that the subjective sermons or Bible class lessons are ripping our soul's right out of our bodies?

The truth about the universality of sin is that it is a reality. It has not been dreamed up by the imagination of someone. Paul addressed this in Rom 3:23. He indicates that we have all sinned and until one is baptized for alien sins or repents, confesses and turns away from sin (cf. 1 John 1: 7-10) we are lost eternally. Sin separates me from God Almighty (Isa. 59:1-2). Do not equivocate about this! Every adult whose mind has developed and has not been baptized according to the Scripture is lost eternally. I have had people to come to me after sermons and say that I was too hard about sin. Visitors to meetings have said that they came to be with us, but I was too strict on sin. How was I too strict on sin, I asked! Show it to me! I would be most happy for someone to tell me something that I said about the Bible that is not true so I could make corrections and save my soul, but I have never had even one individual in the two categories just mentioned that has been able to point that out. Brethren, it is a sad sad thing to me today to see how inoperative most congregations among us are today even those who on the surface are strong. Are we militant? Remember the cross and He who died for us despising the shame. Please do not take the position that I am going to try to do better. The blood of the Christ must be applied or all our efforts to do what is right will be null and void.

The truth teaches the unrighteousness of sin. Romans 8:1-5 shows that sin is bad. There is nothing good about it and something must be done about it just as I have been writing. You must be baptized into Christ and you must walk in the light for the rest of

your life. It is surely the case that one can fall by the wayside and must come back even as the prodigal did in Luke 15. I think all of us can understand this, but is it the case that we do understand this and do nothing about it? One might argue that we are only a small congregation. Alright, train your young men to know the truth and take a stand for it. Teach them how to contend for the faith and be ready to give an answer to any man that asketh you (them) of the reason of the hope that is within you. Many times, a small congregation does more in this regard than larger ones. We need to approach error and know that it is error.

The truth is that without the cross every sinner is helpless to be saved. While we understand this, we need to tell ourselves this every day of our lives. I do not want to do some stupid thing in my thinking that gets me away from the cross therefore I want a reminder. Paul shows in Galatians 2:21 that if righteousness came by the law then Christ died in vain (for nothing). If the Law of Moses could save anyone from sin even though one was faithful to it, they could not be saved without the cross and His precious blood (cf. Heb. 9: 12-15). I have thought many times about how it must have been like to be on this earth with Christ, but then I think about what it will be like to be with Him and the saved of all ages in heaven. How can we then be enticed to do evil; though we all do that somehow or other sometimes through ignorance or weakness at the moment, but we do. Let us focus on this and every day be on our knees and thank God for the blood of Christ. We must not love the world (1 John 2:15-17).

The truth is there is no other Gospel (Gal. 1:6-9). We must not accept a different (perverted) gospel that will not save.

Visit Our Website at www.thegospelpreceptor.com

“They Have Moses and the Prophets”

Marvin L. Weir

One who has only limited knowledge of the Bible is probably familiar with the story in Luke 16 of the rich man and Lazarus. Upon dying, the rich man found himself in torments. His heart's desire was that Lazarus be sent to his father's house to testify to his brethren so that they might believe and obey and avoid the place of torment. The rich man no longer felt that his way of life was good enough for his brothers. Abraham's answer, “They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them” (Luke 16:29) continues to be echoed century after century. People today can and should learn from this incident recorded by inspiration.

The rich man was either willfully ignorant or simply chose to ignore the teaching of Moses and the prophets. The majority of people living today will die lost (Matt. 7:13-14), and in the Hadean realm of torment they will surely have the same desire the rich man had. The plea from every lip in torment will surely be to send one to testify to their friends and loved ones so they will be persuaded to turn from their sins and obey the commands of the Master.

If Abraham were answering one in torment today, his answer would change slightly because all are now living under the New Covenant. He might say, “They have the inspired Scriptures; let them hear them.” The lost one could argue, “No, but if one go to them from the dead, they will repent” (cf. Luke 16:30). Abraham would surely reply, “If they hear not the Holy Scriptures, neither will they be persuaded, if one rise from the dead” (cf. Luke 16:31).

The lessons from this story, applicable to people today, are easily discerned. The atheist who denies the existence of God has chosen to reject the Holy Scriptures. The Psalmist exclaimed, “The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God” (Psa. 14:1). To the Gentiles, Paul said,

For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity; that they may be without excuse: because that, knowing God, they glorified him not as God, neither gave thanks; but became vain in

their reasonings, and their senseless heart was darkened (Rom. 1:20-21 ASV).

The Bible, God's inspired word (2 Tim. 3:16), announces at its beginning, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1 ASV). No, if one will not believe the above Scriptures, neither would he believe if one returned from the dead and testified regarding the existence of God.

The evolutionist who believes that the earth is millions of years old and that man descended from apes and chimpanzees rejects the testimony of the Scriptures. Again, there is the testimony of Genesis 1:1. A few verses later the Bible declares,

And God made the beasts of the earth after their kind, and the cattle after their kind, and everything that creepeth upon the ground after its kind...And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over the cattle... And God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them...God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth" (Gen. 1:25-28).

Exodus 20:9-11 clearly reveals that a *day* is understood to be 24 hours—not millions of years! If one will not believe the Scriptures, neither would he believe if one returned from the dead and affirmed that evolution is farce—not fact!

The one who places his faith in man-made denominations denies the truth of God's Word. The **Lord** built His church—not some man (Matt. 16:18). The Lord's church wears His name (Rom. 16:16), not the name of some man. There is only "one body" and "one faith" (Eph. 4:4-5)—not many. The Lord never promises to save man-made bodies, only **His** body (Eph. 5:23). It is not "worship as one pleases," but one must "worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:24) if his worship is to be acceptable to God. All people are to be of the "same mind" in matters pertaining to the faith, and religious division is condemned (1 Cor. 1:10-13).

Those who precede us in death today would gladly come back to this earth if possible and testify of the folly of failing to recognize the authority of the Scriptures in religious matters. Man, in his wisdom, considers the teaching that man is saved by "faith only" to be a most wholesome doctrine, but the Bible begs to disagree (cf. James 2:24).

Just as the rich man had "Moses and the prophets," folks today have God's Word, the Bible. Will you believe the Word of God or reject it?

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Spiritual Contentment

Lee Moses

The apostle Paul was not one to worry about social status or financial stability. To the Philippians he wrote, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content" (Phil. 4:11). Modern society has most certainly not learned what Paul had. Most people are constantly striving not only to "keep up with the Joneses," but to **surpass** the Joneses in their "standard of living"—materially, that is. It seems that virtually **no one** is physically content. However, **spiritual contentment** can be found every-

where one looks. There are a number of different ways this contentment is seen.

“I believe I’m fine, so don’t waste your time.”

Very few people today believe that they are lost. Recent polls taken reveal that while most people in the United States believe in heaven, they do not believe in hell. The designation “lost soul” no longer refers to one condemned to hell, but to one simply going through a period of uncertainty. Even religiously active people generally believe that there are “many roads to heaven,” although the Bible conclusively teaches that there is only one (Matt. 7:13-14; John 14:6; Acts 4:12). With such a state of affairs, it is difficult to express to a person the importance of securing the welfare of his soul. Even though a person may be lost, others have told him that he is certain to go to heaven. Such a person will generally want to remain comfortable, rather than be urged to make drastic changes in his life.

“I’m outwardly whole, but devoid of soul.”

Some have obeyed the Gospel in years past and continue to attend worship services regularly. However, this is the full extent of their spiritual activity. They have no prayer life outside of the worship assembly; they have no time spent in Bible reading or study other than the prescribed times the church meets for this purpose; and they do not put into practice Biblical principles of living. Their motivation is not to please God; but to show respect to godly parents, to maintain friendships, or such like.

“I’ve done sufficient, to do more is not efficient.”

There are some who feel that they have done their duty in times past. They may have previously been very involved in the work of the church, but now feel that it is the responsibility of younger Christians to accomplish. Some even quit attending services altogether, arrogantly determining that they have “done enough” for a lifetime of service to the Lord. This is practical “once saved, always saved” doctrine. The apostle Paul said, “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do...I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:13-14). There is probably not a Christian living today whose devotion to the Lord could be compared to Paul, yet he had not yet “attained unto the resurrection of the dead,” nor unto perfection (3:11-12). Yet he continued to strive that he might attain these things.

**“No matter whether all else seems to fall apart,
I do the will of God from the heart.”**

There is a sense of spiritual contentment that can be genuinely achieved. “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:67). One who does not focus on the physical things, which can never satisfy, but on the spiritual, can find contentment in both (2 Cor. 4:18-5:1). When one is committed to fulfilling the will of God, he no longer has any need for worry: “For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (2 Cor. 5:1).

What Those who Never Hear the Gospel?

Nana Yaw Aidoo

Introduction

In the Bay of Bengal in India is an island known as the North Sentinel Island. Considered “one of the world’s last uncontacted people,” the inhabitants of this island, some years ago, murdered a young would-be American missionary by name John Allen Chau who wanted to take the Bible to the island. What this means is that, the Sentinelese have neither heard the gospel preached, nor, even as much as heard whether there is a gospel. This leads us to question what the eternal condition of these people would be, if they died in this state. Would these and those who never hear the gospel be lost or would they spend eternity with God in heaven?

While there are some who believe God will give some sort of allowance to the heathen or the untaught, I do not believe that position represents biblical truth and I propose to give the reasons for my stance in this brief article but not before I note some things.

Some things to note

- 1) I am very sympathetic of the plight of the Sentinelese or the heathen.
- 2) In answering this question, the only proper answer is a scriptural one and thus human speculations and personal opinions will not do.
- 3) God's ways and thoughts are unlike that of men (Isa. 55:8-9).
- 4) God is both infinitely good and infinitely severe (Rom. 11:22).
- 5) The heathen will receive a righteous judgment (Acts 17:31).
- 6) If it is the case that the heathen is lost, then world evangelism is not an option.
- 7) Not all judgement is sinful (John 7:24).

Now to the query. Would those who never hear the gospel be lost or would they spend eternity with God in heaven? Whereas I believe only one statement from God will settle this issue for all who love the truth, I want to give three reasons why I believe the heathen is lost for all eternity.

REASON ONE: The spiritual condition of the heathen

The spiritual condition of the heathen according to the Scriptures is this: "...without Christ, being aliens...and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12). A few chapters later, the apostle affirms that the heathen is "...alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them..." (Eph. 4:18). Considering this is the spiritual condition of the heathen, please forgive me for rejecting the position that the just God will grant the heathen eternal bliss.

REASON TWO: The design of the gospel

The Bible teaches that **all** (including the heathen) have sinned (Rom. 3:23) and that the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). Since this is the case, the gospel was revealed for the express purpose of saving sinful man (Rom. 1:16-17). The role of the gospel in the scheme of redemption is that of a lifesaving boat and the role of Christians is that of a rescue team. We need to understand that humanity is drowning in the sea of sin and the gospel is our only hope of life.

Now let us suppose the rescue team rushes out a life-saving boat (via the great commission) to save an already drowning man. If this man refuses to be rescued and drowns, what do you think caused his death? If your response is, "because he refused to get on the boat," you are wrong. The life-saving boat had absolutely nothing to do with his drowning. He drowned because he was in the water and would have drowned just the same had there been no life-saving boat. My friends, the heathen is lost and will be for all eternity, not because he never heard the gospel but because **all** (including the heathen) have sinned or are drowning in the sea of sin. To suggest that the heathen would receive an allowance is to suggest that we potentially (in the case where he refuses to obey) do him great harm when we send him the gospel, which then makes the gospel not good news but bad news.

REASON THREE: The express statements of Scripture

Here are some passages of Scripture to consider concerning this issue:

- a) The Bible teaches that ignorance is no defense. The Jews murdered Christ in ignorance (Acts 3:17) but were charged to repent of the sin nonetheless (Acts 3:19). Consider Acts 17:30-31 also.
- b) The Bible teaches that it is Christ or damnation since "no one comes to the Father **except** through Me" (John 14:6 NKJV).
- c) It is written that those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel will be lost (2 Thess. 1:7-9).

Friends, in view of the foregoing, what sayeth thou about the heathen?

Conclusion

While some may disagree, I believe with all my certainty that the position I take in this article cannot be successfully refuted. This conclusion places much responsibility on us as churches of Christ because if the gospel is not taken to every person, every person would be lost but God will not hold us guiltless (Eze. 3:18). The truth is narrow (Matt. 7:13-14) and it is this; **the heathen really is lost for all eternity without the gospel.**

Links to Bible Study Resources

The Scripture Cache

Precept Upon Precept You Tube

Spiritual Perspectives – Gary Summers

Biblical Articles & More – Gary Grizzell

False Doctrines of Man

Yukon, Okla. church of Christ

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“I’m Church of Christ”

J.S. Smith

No, you're not, and please quit saying that.

It has become increasingly frequent that we hear members of the body of Christ refer to themselves in that fashion when discussing religion with members of various denominations. Perhaps we are trying to accommodate their language and their unscriptural understanding, but you can accommodate to the point of error and such is the case here.

“I’m Baptist.” “I’m Methodist.” “I’m Presbyterian.” “I’m Catholic.” “I’m church of Christ.”

One of these things is not like the other; one of these things just doesn't fit. The first four descriptions share certain things in common. They are all denominational identifiers and none of them has scriptural precedent in the designation of the church. The last is added so that we can parallel the language of our denominational neighbors, but the effect condescends the church of Christ to that same level. Maybe we become ashamed of the claim altogether.

We are making some mighty uncertain sounds with language like this (1 Cor. 14:8). Why not rather say simply, “I’m a Christian”? Does that not communicate the truth and perhaps also make a point about our refusal to create or join any new denomination (1 Cor. 1:10-13)? The phrase “church of Christ” is no more ours to trifle with than the honorable word “Christian.” Our denominational friends have almost given up calling themselves Christians, instead preferring to emphasize what “brand” of Christian they are. Do we resist sectarianism for 1900 years and then surrender because it is more convenient and less likely to get us in a messy discussion?

Such has given religion a bad rap anyway. Sometimes hurt feelings result and sometimes bloody noses. But every once in a while conversions result and every once in a while is worth the risk. Moreover, it demands that we be clear in who we are, not bowing to the ungodly language of church dividers.

When the apostles began taking the gospel into all the world, there was exactly one kind of church in all the world. It was the one that Christ promised to establish (Matt. 16:16) and did purchase with His own blood (Acts 20:28). He both built it and bought it and it was His; it was the church of Christ (Rom. 16:16). There were zero denominations in all the world. No church called itself Methodist, Presbyterian,

Baptist or Catholic. But friend, no Christian ever referred to himself as “I’m church of Christ” either.

Repeat after me: “I’m a Christian. I’m a Christian.” It’s not hard.

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Bad Attitudes Toward Being a Stumbling Block

Charles Pogue

In Leviticus, God commanded His people not to curse the deaf, nor to put a stumbling block before the blind, but instead to fear the Lord (Lev. 19:14). Words that are very familiar to one who cares about pleasing God and loving his neighbor came from Jesus when Luke records, "Then said he, It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe unto him through whom they come!" (Luke 17:1).

Paul declared that one should judge that he not put a stumbling block in his brother's way (Rom. 14:13). Paul demonstrated his willingness, and the proper attitude toward not being a stumbling block when he wrote, "If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend" (1 Cor. 8:13). Paul was writing concerning the eating of meats sacrificed to idols. He understood that an idol was nothing, so if a meat he purchased had been previously offered as a sacrifice to an idol, it was just meat, and one was at liberty to eat it. However, he had warned that one must not allow that liberty to be a stumbling block to someone else (v. 9). That is why Paul wrote what he did in verse 13.

In this modern world with many people, "it is all about me." They are going to do those things God has not ruled against, even if it causes someone else to sin, just because in their minds, whatever it is, it is their selfish right to do it. So, then, there are bad attitudes toward being a stumbling block to another person.

Some people will say, "I don't care if it is a stumbling block to somebody else, I don't care about what they think. If I care about is doing what I'm free to do." What more obvious way could there be for one to demonstrate the selfishness that exists in the hearts of so many? It further shows a disregard for what we call the golden rule (Matt. 7:12).

Some will say, "I don't believe you are really offended, you are just saying that because you do not personally like this thing you claim is a stumbling block to you." It is sad that some of these very same people will say concerning that brother's trouble with his activity, "You aren't my judge." Now look at who is judging whom!

There are some people who may pay lip service to the problem of being a stumbling block by saying, "I am sorry it causes you to fall, but since God hasn't ruled against it, I'm going to go ahead and do it." Herein is the manifestation of hypocrisy. If they really were sorry, they would be like Paul, and not do that thing, whatever the thing is. They would not do it for as long as the world stands. Genuine sorrow leads to the action the claimed sorrow implies.

Finally, there are those who will say: "Okay, you have a problem with it, I won't do it anymore, but I'll always resent it." With an attitude like that, it would not be any worse off for their own soul's sake to keep on doing the thing. Surely no one would think when Paul made his statement about no longer eating flesh, he was saying under his breath, "but I'm not going to be happy about it."

In so many ways people today expose themselves as being selfish, about not caring that their actions may cause someone else to sin. Unless a thing is something that the Bible explicitly or implicitly teaches is sin, there is liberty to do it unless it causes someone else to stumble. We must do what God has commanded us to do. We must not do what God has commanded us not to do. And, we must not do that about which God has not ruled at all if it causes someone else to fall.

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