

The Gospel Preceptor

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

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Hosea, the Prophet

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Historical Background

Hosea means “salvation” (Joshua and Jesus derive from the same word), signifying him as a kind of “savior” to his people. Not only was Hosea a faithful prophet, but he was a powerful type of Christ, especially as it relates to love toward sinners. His prophetic ministry takes place during the time of the expansion of the Assyrian empire in the eighth-century. Israel went into Assyrian captivity in 722 bc. Since Hosea does not speak of these events, it seems likely his prophetic ministry ended prior to 722 BC. Between the death of Jeroboam II and the fall of Samaria, Israel had seven wicked kings. While the focus of his message was directed at the Northern Kingdom, his message encompassed the entire people of God.

In Hosea 1:1 we read: “The word of the Lord that came to Hosea the son of Beerī, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel.”

Hosea’s prophetic work began when the “word of the Lord” came to him during the reign of seven kings. Of these seven kings, five are listed here in our passage. A couple of the ones that followed Jeroboam did not reign very long, which may be why Hosea left them out. Five of these seven kings are said to have continued in the sin of the first Jeroboam. The inspired Record states the same thing about these kings: 2 Kings 14:24, 15:9, 15:18, 24, 28, and 17:21-23: “And he did evil in the sight of the Lord; he did not depart from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin (2 Kin. 14:24).”

What was this terrible sin that Jeroboam I committed that caused Israel to sin (14:16)? He was guilty of several things, which are found in 1 Kings 12: He instituted the worship of golden calves (12:28), he then changed the place of worship from Jerusalem to Bethel and Dan (12:27- 30), he appointed priests that were not from the tribe of Levi (12:31), he changed the time of the feast of tabernacles (12:32), and he devised all of this in his own heart, according to his own desires, not God’s (12:33). In the New Testament, worshiping God according to how one wishes is called “will worship” (Col. 2:23), which is “selfwilled or self-imposed” practices.

Between the reigns of Uzziah and Hezekiah (in Judah), there reigned seven kings in Israel: Jeroboam II, Zachariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah, Pekah, and the last king is, ironically, named Hoshea (in Hebrew the names Hosea and Hoshea are the same). Therefore, we get an understanding of the length of Hosea’s prophetic ministry. Since the prophet Amos, an older contemporary of Hosea, also prophesied during the reign of Jeroboam II (which ended around 747 bc), most scholars place Hosea’s prophetic work from the period of the 740s bc to about 725 bc. The listing of the kings of the Southern kingdom, along with the reference to Jeroboam II, helps determine the approximate duration of Hosea’s prophetic ministry in Israel as being anywhere from the 760s bc to just prior to 722 bc.

God communicated His Will through the prophets, which is the meaning of the phrase “the word of the Lord that came unto to Hosea” (Hos. 1:1). God spoke through the

prophets (Heb. 1:1) by means of His Spirit (2 Pet. 1:20-21; cf. 1 Pet. 1:10-12). Moreover, all of the prophets can be divided into two categories: (1) **Writing Prophets** such as Isaiah, Hosea, Amos, Daniel, and Malachi, and (2) **Non-Writing prophets** such as Gad (1 Sam. 22:5), Nathan (1 Chr. 17:1), and Elijah (1 Kin. 18:36). Coincidentally, there are also “anonymous prophets” in the Old Testament such as the unnamed prophet in Judges 6:7-10.

Outline and Summary of Hosea

Three identifiable themes are evident: (1) God suffers when His people are unfaithful to Him. (2) God never condones sin. (3) God seeks reconciliation. The book may be divided into two sections: (1) Chapters 1-3 discuss Hosea’s marriage to a promiscuous woman named Gomer, a metaphor for the relationship of Israel with God in which Israel was guilty of “spiritual adultery.” It is also here that God makes an indictment or brings a “lawsuit” against Israel. (2) Chapters 4-14 are the “oracles against Israel as a nation and as God’s people.”

God commanded Hosea to take a wife from among the people of whoredom—those who live in fornication and adultery. Hosea married Gomer, who was quite young, and she bore three children. Gomer began to walk the way of her heritage, leaving Hosea for her lovers. Even though she had left him and was living in wickedness and shame, Hosea continued to provide corn, wine, oil, and money for her. Gomer thought these gifts were from her lovers and she praised them. Soon she was brought down to poverty, shame, and loneliness, and was to be sold on the block as a common slave. Hosea loved her yet, and he went to the marketplace and bought her for the price demanded and took her home to be his wife, no more to leave.

Part I—Chapters 1-3

As the **figurative** wife, Israel’s moral condition is depicted. God had committed to her the honor of His name, but she committed spiritual adultery (1:2-3). The names given to the prophet’s children tell us a number of things about the effect of Israel’s sin, giving us insight to how God saw His people:

- Jezreel (1:4-5) means “God sows.” A reminder that God never condoned the sin of Jehu (2 Kin. 10:1-14), and God did not forget.
- Lo-Ruhamah (Hos. 1:6) means “no pity or no mercy,” signifying God’s mercy does not continue indefinitely, but judgment would come.
- Lo-Ammi (1:8-9) means “not my people,” showing that Israel would cease to be God’s peculiar people.

Here we learn of both God’s grief at Israel’s sin and His unchanging love, as demonstrated by His willingness to take her back. Hosea 2:23 is interpreted in Romans 9:26 as referring to the conversion of the Gentiles. Next, the wife of Hosea is bought back (Hos. 3:1-3). Then follows two prophetic statements:

For the children of Israel shall abide many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar, without ephod or teraphim...Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the Lord their God and David their king. They shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days (3:4-5).

Part II—Chapters 4-14

This section concerns the oracles against Israel as their specific sins are enumerated. The Lord said, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (4:6), explaining that they had “forgotten the law of thy God” (4:6). Jehovah spoke boldly, signifying that Israel had insulted His holiness and outraged His love. He delivered a heavy indictment against Israel. Embedded in Part II is the conclusion depicting the conversion and blessing of Israel (13:14-14:9). It begins with the prediction of coming judgment, which was fulfilled when Israel was carried away to Assyria. Judah continued to survive for more than a century and a half, but then she fell. A remnant of Judah returned to Palestine, but Israel did not. The book closes with a description of the day that is coming when Israel and Judah, at the verge of destruction because of iniquity, will return unto the Lord and experience His healing (14:4-9).

Typology of Hosea—A Type of Christ

The main theme of the book also makes the prophet Hosea a type of Christ: “Then said the Lord unto me, Go yet, love a woman beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress, according to the love of the Lord toward the children of Israel, who look to other gods, and love flagons of wine” (Hosea 3:1—KJV).

The Lord put Hosea through this unusual experience to demonstrate His grace, love, and mercy to His people, all of whom have sinned, “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). We did not love Him, but He loved us with an “everlasting love” (Jer. 31:3). The apostle Paul put it this way: “For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly...But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:6, 8).

Even the apostles allude to Hosea 1:10 as having to do with the Messiah (1 Pet. 2:10; Rom. 9:25-26).

There are multiple parallels between the lives of Hosea and Jesus. As Hosea was called to go and take a wife of adultery (Hos. 1:2), so was our Lord (Eph. 5:25-33; Jam. 4:4), reconciling His own back to God (2 Cor. 5:18-19). As Hosea paid the price demanded to redeem a slave for his unfaithful bride (Hos. 3:2), so did Jesus (Lev. 17:11; Heb. 9:22). Finally, just as the amazing, adultery-forgiving love of God portrayed in Hosea was available to Gomer, if she only turned away from her adultery and went to Hosea (Hos. 3:3-5), so it is that the amazing, adultery-forgiving love of God in Christ is available to us if we only turn away from our adultery and go to Jesus (John 3:16; Luke 5:32; 13:1-5; 15:1-10; 17:3-4; 24:44-49).

Moreover, in Hosea 11:1, God says, “out of Egypt I called My son.” Matthew 2:15 tells us that this was fulfilled when, after Mary, Joseph, and Jesus had fled to Egypt, God sent an angel to call His Son, Jesus, out of Egypt (2:19-20). In Hosea 1:7, God promises that He would save His people by the Lord their God—not by bow, sword, war, horses, or horsemen. Of course, God has saved His people by the Lord their God, fulfilling this prophecy. Just as those to whom Gomer was enslaved demanded a price, so our sins demanded blood and death (Lev. 17:11; Heb. 9:22; Rom. 6:23). Like Hosea, Jesus has saved His people through His redemptive work upon the cross.

Work Cited

All Scripture quotations are from the New King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

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Great Speaker but a Dangerous One

Nana Yaw Aidoo

A few years ago I was at a funeral of which I very well remember. The man who preached was an Assemblies of God “pastor.” I haven’t seen a man mesmerize a crowd with oratory, the way this man did. Truth be told he was fantastic. But he was a dangerous speaker because he taught a false plan of salvation. After preaching, he offered an invitation to all who “attend church but haven’t given their lives to Christ.” He was going to teach them what to do in order to have their names written in the Book of Life. Who would balk at such an idea? Then I heard him tell all who desired the gift of salvation to lift up their hands and say a prayer after him. What I saw reminded me of these great words of inspiration, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.”

At the funeral, my mind went back to the most important Jewish Pentecost Day in history, a day in which people were likewise taught how to give their lives to Christ and to have their names written in the Lamb’s Book of Life. When the reality of their sinful conditions hit them, the men and women who heard the first gospel sermon asked what to do in order to be saved (Acts 2:37). Simon Peter, an apostle, one who had been

with the Lord, one who had been given the keys to the Kingdom (Matt. 16:19) and was filled with the Holy Spirit replied; “Repent ye, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38).

Of paramount interest to me is the fact that this apostle upon being asked what to do to be saved neither requested the audience to raise their hands nor asked them to say a prayer after him. “Couldn’t he have done that?” “Why didn’t he?” should be the questions on the mind of every seeker after truth. The audience having been exhorted to “be saved from this perverse generation” (Acts 2:40 NKJV) heeded the words of the apostle and were baptized (Acts 2:41), just like he told them to. Why they did not lift up their hands and say a prayer in order to “be saved from this perverse generation,” if that were God’s plan for saving man, is a question for the sages.

At the funeral however, this great speaker taught a false plan of salvation and deceived many into thinking they were saved when they were not. I could only shake my head in sorrow. “A little learning” they say “is dangerous.” There was no light in this “pastor” and there is no light in anyone who does not speak as God’s Word has spoken, irrespective of how sincere he is (Isa. 8:20).

And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works” (2 Cor. 11:14-15 NKJV).

Indeed he was a great speaker—but a dangerous one.

“Our God, He is Alive”

Jerry C. Brewer

Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord (Eph. 5:19).

What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also (1 Cor. 14:15).

Our singing in worship teaches and admonishes, but is only done in **words**. There is no worship in the tunes of the songs. We want to look at one of the great songs we sing in worship whose words is filled with Bible lessons. It is my favorite song, written by A.W. Dicus, *Our God, He is Alive*.

“God is Alive”

When God commissioned Moses to lead Israel from Egyptian bondage, He appeared on a mountain in Midian at a bush that was burning, but was not consumed. Moses turned aside to see that wonder and God told him,

Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt. And Moses said unto God, Who *am* I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt? And he said, Certainly I will be with thee; and this *shall be* a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain. And Moses said unto God, Behold, *when* I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you (Exo. 3:10-14).

Keil and Delitzsch say Moses' question is:

This name precluded any comparison between the God of the Israelites and the deities of the Egyptians and other nations, and furnished Moses and his people with strong consolation in their affliction, and a powerful support to their confidence in the realization of His purposes of salvation as made

known to the fathers (e-Sword).

The name, I AM, signifies self-existence, as God is eternally. Jesus used I AM of Himself to the Jews, who sought to stone Him.

I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am *he*, ye shall die in your sins...Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw *it*, and was glad. Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am (John 8:24; 56-58).

Notice that the italic *he* follows the words “I am.” The italics were added by the translators. Without them, it reads “... if ye believe not that I am, ye shall die in your sins.”

The Stanzas

Stanza 1:

There is, beyond the azure blue, a God concealed from human sight,
He tinted skies with heave'nly hue__and framed the worlds with His great
might.

God told Moses that man cannot see Him and live. “And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live” (Exo. 33:20), and Solomon wrote, “Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter *any* thing before God: for God *is* in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few” (Eccl. 5:2).

Keil and Delitzsch, “Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter *any* thing before God: for God *is* in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few” (e-Sword).

The words “tinted skies...framed the worlds with His great might” extolled God as the Creator of all heaven and the earth.

By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap: he layeth up the depth in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the LORD: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. For he spake, and it was *done*; he commanded, and it stood fast (Psa. 33:6-9).

The power of God's word created the heavens and the earth from nothing. The creation stood fast, and immovable, and **will** stand until He ends it.

For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day *is* with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. *Seeing* then *that* all these things shall be dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought ye to be in *all* holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? (2 Pet. 3:5-12).

Man **can never** “save the planet.” He Who created it will appoint a day when it will pass away.

Stanza 2

There was, a long, long time ago, a God whose voice the prophets heard,
He is the God that we should know, who speaks from His inspired Word.

This stanza traces the course of revelation from the prophets of ages past, until His Son Jesus Christ Who is the fulfillment of what the prophets spake.

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by *his* Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds (Heb. 1:2-2).

Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, *and* I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I *am* a child. But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I *am* a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces: for I *am* with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD. Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth. See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant (Jer. 1:5-10).

The prophets were God's spokesmen when He spake in ages past unto the fathers. But in these last days, God is not speaking from them, but through Jesus Christ.

That was demonstrated upon the mountain when Jesus was the transfigured.

And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. And when the disciples heard *it*, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only (Matt. 17:1-8).

This passage is how God sometimes reveals His word by **showing** and **speaking** it. When Moses and Elias appeared and Jesus talked with Him, the impetuous Peter spoke up when he should have been watching and listening. God's reply came from the bright cloud that overshadowed them and said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Moses represented the law, and Elias was the representation of the prophets, but God **told** them that His Son would remain as His spokesman. Moses and Elias would fade away, and that was illustrated by when "they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, **save Jesus only**" (Emph. JB, Matt. 17:8). The law (Moses) and the prophets (Elias) were gone.

The song teaches that, "He is the God that we should know, who speaks from His inspired Word." Jesus now speaks by God in the New Testament. Christ sent the Holy Spirit to guide His apostles in God's revelation. The night that He was betrayed, Jesus promised to them,

But the Comforter, *which* is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you...Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, *that* shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. (John 14:26; 16:13).

The Holy Spirit as Jesus promised the apostles, recorded in Acts 2:1-4 and on that Pentecost Day the Gospel preached was salvation by Peter. Three thousand people obeyed the Gospel by hearing the message of salvation. They believed the message,

repented of their sins, and were baptized for the remission for sins (Acts 2:37-38).

Stanza 3

Secure, is life from mortal mind, God holds the germ with in His hand,
Tho' men may search, they cannot find, for God alone does understand.

This stanza teaches that all life comes from God and He holds the secret of all of it. It is beyond the knowledge of mortal men. Despite men having searched for it through the ages, life always eludes men. They cannot find it. God is the “germ within His hand.” He is the First Cause of all life, Man procreates himself according to God's law of bio-genesis (Gen. 1:12), but man will never unravel the mystery of life.

Stanza 4

Our God, whose Son upon a tree, a life was willing there to give,
That He from sin might set men free, and evermore with Him could live.

The stanzas of this great song takes us from the creation, the sorrow of Gethsemane and Calvary, and to the church's final victory. Paul encapsulated the same scheme of salvation in these words:

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified (Rom. 8:28-30).

Only the living **God**, He is Alive. The chorus proclaims that:

There is a God, He is alive, in Him we live and we survive;
Form dust our God created man, He is our God the great I AM!

He is our Creator from dust but, “Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it” (Eccl. 12:7). Beware, those who sing the words of this song, your souls will stand in judgment before God.

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this *is* the whole *duty* of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether *it be* good, or whether *it be* evil (Eccl. 12:13-14).

This song and the mystery of man's purpose, echoes those words from Solomon, “Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this **the whole of man.**”

Editor's Note: Our thanks to Holley Brewer for proofreading this article.

The Need for First Principles

Gene Hill

One of the things I find most fascinating about preaching is that after preaching a basic first principle sermon, the number of more mature Christians thank me and comment on how much such a lesson was needed. I have always wondered why those with the years of experience they possess would say such a thing. I have concluded that the answer is a very simple one. Their years of experience and maturity have led them to conclude that we need constant reminders we are “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people” (1 Pet. 2:9), that we once were “without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world” (Eph. 2:12), and that we, the faithful, “shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 The. 4:17).

In support of this premise let us consider three passages. The first was written by Paul, to the Roman church, a church that had apparently been in existence for a while. It had to have had sufficient time for its faith to be “spoken of throughout the whole world” (Rom. 1:8). Their obedience as well was apparently well-known (16:19). Paul had been familiar with them and had long desired to meet them (1:13; 15:23). Such being true

then we find it a curious thing that he still wanted to preach the Gospel to them (1:15; 1 Cor. 15:1-4; Col. 1:5). The need for the church to hear the Gospel preached to them on a regular basis is not diminished with the passage of time.

Paul's next passage is 1 Timothy 3:15 in which his express purpose was to remind Timothy how to behave himself. Paul left Timothy behind in Ephesus with the intention of doing precisely the same thing for the Ephesian brethren, which he was desirous to do for the Roman church (1 Tim 1:3-7). It must be the case then that preachers also need reminding on occasion.

The last passage is from Revelation 2:1-5 and is Jesus admonishing the Ephesian church. The brethren apparently heeded well Timothy's preaching regarding faithfulness (2:2-3). Their doctrinal and practical soundness had been such that Jesus commended them. The problem for which He chided them was a problem of the heart and not that of the head. They appear to have lost the fervor of their initial conversion that led to great strides for the Kingdom (Acts 19:8-10, 13-20, 23-27).

The need for First Principle sermons is established when we realize brethren are as afflicted by sins of the flesh as are our worldly neighbors. (1 Cor. 1:10-16; 3:1-3; 5:1-13). Spiritually mature brethren are not so beset by sins of the flesh (Heb. 5:12-14).

Just so we are clear on this point, are the following practices a demonstration of a lover for the Lord and His Body:

Consider attendance at various assemblies of the church and how much figures vary from Sunday morning Bible classes to the morning worship assembly to the Sunday evening worship assembly; the fluctuation of the contribution because of vacations (which deficit frequently is not made up); when Bible classes are put off or even ended for lack of teachers; when elderships cannot be maintained much less constituted because men cannot be bothered to qualify themselves to serve; when congregations and preachers refuse to allow an eldership to be formed because they do not want to be held accountable; and the list goes on.

Why is there an ongoing need for First Principle sermons? Because of brethren that are seeking spiritual growth, brethren that have stopped seeking spiritual growth, and stand in need of spiritual revival.

The Church of "Your Choice"

Nathan Brewer

Since the Protestant Reformation of the 1500s and 1600s, the notion has spread among denominationalists and their recent offspring, community churches, that the church is not really important.

This comes from a misunderstanding of what the Bible teaches about the church that Jesus built. Properly understood, the church of Christ would be considered priceless.

Yet the fashionable idea in America is that salvation comes first, and that becoming a member of any church and displaying loyalty to that church are optional afterthoughts. After all, if salvation is not directly linked to a church, and if any church will do, then why not "shop around" for the one that's the most fun, that requires the least, and that offers the most social benefits?

But the New Testament teaches something completely different about the church that Jesus died for. It's not splintered into a thousand denominations, it's not an afterthought regarding salvation, and it requires the loyalty and service of anyone who wishes to name the name of Christ and enjoy the benefits of His death.

Jesus died for His church (Eph. 5:25-27), shedding His blood for it (Acts 20:28). Since Christ's blood makes salvation possible, and since He bled and died for His church, that means Jesus saves His church, the body of Christ (Eph. 5:23).

When the Gospel was preached for the first time, and when believers obeyed the command to repent and be baptized, Jesus simultaneously saved them and added them to His body, the church of Christ (Acts 2:38-47).

Jesus' death and His building the church were part of God's plan to provide salvation

(Gen. 3:15; Isa. 53; Acts 2:23). Paul said this plan—the death and resurrection of Jesus, and salvation being possible in Christ’s body, the church—were in the mind of God from eternity (Eph. 3:1-11; 1 Cor. 2:6-9).

This church began in Jerusalem, but it spread across the globe. Those congregations that Paul and others planted by preaching the Gospel were not denominations or community churches—they were congregations of the same church that began in Jerusalem. That’s what Paul meant when he wrote to the church at Rome that “the churches of Christ salute you” (Rom. 16:16). He was saying that their brethren in congregations of Christ’s church in other places sent greetings to the congregation of the same church in Rome.

And those Christians—members of Christ’s church—all had the same Gospel obligations laid upon them in morals and, yes, even in fidelity to the church, including attending worship (Heb. 10:23-27). Christians have obligations to Jesus Christ, and to each other, partly observed by assembling and helping each other grow.

Obey the Gospel so Jesus will save you and add you to His church. Then associate yourself with a congregation of His church and faithfully serve Him. Instead of the church of your choice, make it the church of **Jesus’** choice.

Is Anybody Going to Hell?

Dub McClish

Anybody who thinks we are not living in an age of super tolerance just hasn’t been keeping up. The philosophies and reasonings of men have convinced most of the world that they can believe anything they want to on any subject or believe nothing at all and they are still all right with God. Underscoring the popularity of this belief in universal salvation was a poll taken in Dallas recently. A large radio station sent a reporter out with a microphone to ask, “Who’s going to Hell?” of a random sampling of people. Of approximately 500 polled, 98% said they didn’t know anybody whom they thought was bound for Hell. Now that’s getting pretty close to universal Universalism.

What does the Bible say about Hell? Is Hell just a place preachers have dreamed up to gain control of people through fear? Hardly. Jesus often spoke of Hell. It is a place where both soul and body will be destroyed (Mat 10:28). It is a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth (Mat. 13:42). It is a place of eternal fire and eternal punishment prepared for the devil and his angels (Mat. 25:41, 46). Other Bible writers speak in plain language of this terrible place. Perhaps the very terribleness of the place is more than men have been willing to contemplate and they have thus tried to deny the existence of it by denying that anyone will go there. However, it must be remembered that there is as much (perhaps more) material in the New Testament to warn men of Hell as there is to promise them Heaven. Men are foolish to believe only the materials about Heaven while disbelieving those about Hell.

The Bible not only teaches plainly that Hell is a real place in the eternal, spiritual world, but it also tells us who will go there. Paul lists some of its populace: “Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with men [homosexuals, DM], nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 6:9–10). He writes a similar list in Galatians 5:19–21 and likewise says that such things will keep one out of the kingdom of God. This is another way of saying that such will go to Hell. John lists several who will be in Hell, including those not written in the Book of Life (Rev 20:15; 21:8; 22:15). Those who do not obey the Gospel will be lost in Hell (2 The. 1:8–9). Lamentably, Jesus said that more will be lost than saved (Mat. 7:13–14).

Editor's Travels

Our travels are preaching again and we are for that. We preached at Chillicothe, Texas to Aug. 15 and the following week, Aug. 22, we preached at Yukon, Oklahoma. We are slowly gaining strength and for that we thank our Heavenly Father.

“It Doesn't Matter What it Says on the Building”

Lee Moses

Not too long ago, I heard a denominational preacher assert, “It doesn’t matter what it says on the [church] building.” He was affirming that how people designate the church of which they are members is inconsequential to God and to their right standing with Him. So, according to this preacher, if people want to name their church after their organizational structure, as do Presbyterian (i.e., governed by elders, Greek *presbuteroi*) churches, they are free to do so. I suppose if they want to name their church after a more obviously unscriptural organizational structure—as with the Episcopal denomination—they are free to do so as well? If “it doesn’t matter what it says on the building,” then they are. But does it matter?

A name says something. If a sign in front of a church building reads, “Church of Wickedness,” does this not convey a message? Of course it does. It conveys a message that is anti-Scriptural (Rom. 6:1-2; 1 Pet. 2:9). As such, it is a name that neither honors God nor pleases Him. Our example is extreme, but the same is true of less extreme examples. Any church who chooses their own name could potentially be conveying an unscriptural message and could be displeasing God.

Additionally, when you name someone, you claim possession of that person. This was made clear when God selected the name “Jesus” for His unborn Son, then Joseph named that child “Jesus” after His birth (Matt. 1:21, 25). God laid claim to the child as His own Son, and Joseph claimed Jesus as his legal son. People name their own children, not others’ children. It would be presumptuous to claim possession of that which belongs to the Lord.

We are to do all things in the name of Jesus Christ: “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him” (Col. 3:17). This means more than printing “Jesus” or “Christ” on a sign. But it does mean that we are to do all things by New Testament authority (cf. Acts 4:7; John 12:48; 1 Cor. 2:9-16). God has already given several designations of His church in Scripture; for example, the church of Christ (Matt. 16:18), the church of God (Acts 20:28), the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:27), the Israel of God (Gal. 6:16), the kingdom of God’s dear Son (Col. 1:13), the house of Christ (Heb. 3:6), the church of the firstborn (12:23), the flock of God (1 Pet. 5:2), and the bride of Christ (Rev. 21:9). To select a different name is to express dissatisfaction with what God has said. Observe that Moses did not simply select a name of his own choosing to apply to the Deity he met at the bush (Exo. 3:13).

Perhaps a church may happen to meet in a building that is not a church building, such as a school, civic center, or other similar facility. In such cases, the sign on the building in no way conveys anything about the church that meets there, and it does not necessarily matter what it says on the building. However, when a church owns its meeting place, it matters what the signage says on or around the building. If it is a Scriptural congregation, it will convey that it is a church of Christ that meets there.

Seven “Musts” Mentioned in Scripture

Jesse Whitlock

Many times we find the word *must* in God’s Word. Many more times that word is implied in certain references. Vine defines this Greek word, *dei*, as “an impersonal verb, signifying ‘it is necessary’ or ‘one must,’ ‘one ought,’” *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, page 775. Let us note the thrust of this little word in seven powerful passages of Holy Writ:

John 3:14, “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so **must** the son of man be lifted up.” If the serpent had not been lifted up in the wilderness the people would have had no cure for the deadly snakebite. Likewise, if God had not allowed His only begotten Son to be lifted up on the cross, we would be without a cure for the deadly problem that confronts all mankind, i.e., sin. Note John 3:15, “that whosoever

believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.”

Acts 4:12, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we **must** be saved.” Every person who is saved must be saved by obedience to the authority of Christ our Lord. Christ is “the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him” (Heb. 5:9b).

Hebrews 11:6, “But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God **must** believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” Trust is a Must! We cannot be pleasing to God without belief. Recall the words of a hymn we sing on occasion: “Trust and obey, for there is not other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.” Don’t forget the definition of the word “must,” i.e., “it is necessary”—“one must”—“one ought.”

Acts 16:30, “And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what **must** I do to be saved?” there is no greater question that any man can ask. Remember the imperative force and thrust of that little word, MUST. Watch this: (v. 31) “they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shall be saved” (v. 33) “and was baptized, he and all his” (v. 34) “and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.” They had to hear the Word of the Lord and obey the Lord’s Word. So **must** man today!

John 3:7, “Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye **must** be born again.” This is the Lord’s instruction to Nicodemus. In the context of John 3 we note that one cannot enter into the kingdom of God unless that one is born again. Christ stated in John 3:3, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” The new birth, being born anew, i.e., New Testament baptism. This **must** is just as imperative today as it was when first commanded.

John 4:24, “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him **must** worship him in spirit and in truth.” We must worship God with the right attitude and with the right authority (dare we say, pattern?)—yea, verily! Our worship then, **must** conform to the powerful and precious truth of God!

2 Corinthians 5:10, “For we **must** all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” All mankind will stand before the judgment seat of Christ and **all** of us will be judged. Quicker than you can say “O.J. Simpson,” the whole world will be judged by God. Your destiny and mine will be based upon our obedience or disobedience to God’s will. (Heb. 9:27; Ecc. 12:13-14; Mat. 7:21-23; Rom. 14:12).

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Theistic Evolution: Trading Truth for Acceptance

Landry Brewer

Are the Bible and the Concept of Evolution Compatible?

Did God Use Evolutionary Processes to Bring About the World?

Does It Matter?

Johnny Oxendine provides this definition of theistic evolution: “The word 'theistic' is an adjective form of the Greek word 'theos' (God), which describes one who believes in God. Thus a 'theistic evolutionist' would be one who believes in both God and evolution...”¹

However, these two positions are so irreconcilable that even Dr. Phil couldn't bring them together.

Theistic evolution allows man to have his cake and eat it too. The adherent may hold on to a belief in God and enjoy association with fellow theists while simultaneously receiving approval from secularists for his “enlightened” scientific beliefs. Regrettably, these beliefs have seeped into the church. “Brethren in... colleges and at various public school levels have welcomed this... to remain academically credible to their secular colleagues while... denying their Creator... it is the perfect prototype for the lukewarm and apostatizing Christian.”²

Oxendine quotes Stanley Beck of the American Lutheran Church as an example of evolution's inroads among religious groups claiming an affiliation with Christianity. “To call himself reasonably well-educated and informed, a Christian can hardly afford not to believe in evolution... And to announce that you do not believe in evolution is as irrational as to announce that you do not believe in electricity.”³

That view was expressed in 1963, and things have hardly gotten better within “Christendom.” We should not be surprised when denominational leaders espouse views that contradict God's word since the existence of denominations depends on such practice. Catholicism promotes theistic evolution and has since the time of Augustine and Thomas Aquinas.⁴ But it's especially distressing when members of the Lord's church embrace this false notion which will have destructive unintended consequences.

Wayne Jackson argues that theistic evolution is accepted by those who claim to be Christians because of intimidation. Fear of being branded “ignorant” coerces many into believing assertions made by evolutionists. The fearful, therefore, are reduced to “textual distortion” to make the Bible harmonize with so-called modern science.⁵

One such attempt is theistic evolution, the “mongrel notion that suggests a supreme Being was responsible for the creation of matter, and... an initial life-force... but for the most part, the world of living creatures is the result of the evolutionary process.”⁶ But there are extreme difficulties with this position.

Evolutionists maintain that land appeared first on the globe, then water. Genesis conveys that water came first, then land (1:2, 6, 9). Moses wrote that plants were alive first (Gen. 1:11), yet evolutionists claim aquatic life preceded plants. Genesis places birds' arrival on the scene before reptiles (1:21, 24), but the evolutionary scenario places reptiles here before birds. Moses and Jesus affirm that God created man fully formed (Gen. 1:27; 2:7, 22; Matt. 19:4), yet evolutionists assert “that a bi-sexual blob evolved into distinct sexes, that, via some ape-like ancestor, ultimately became human.”⁷

The two most popular theories employed by those desiring a belief in God, yet wedded to evolution, are known as “The Gap Theory” and “The Day-Age Theory.” With the help of the erudite Wayne Jackson, we shall deal with both.

The Gap Theory first surfaced in 1814, put forth by Thomas Chalmers of Edinburgh University.⁸ We shouldn't be surprised that the notion was formulated at an institution of higher learning—where so much anti-biblical thought is entrenched dogma. Nearly two hundred years later, colleges and universities remain breeding grounds for atheism, agnosticism and hedonism.

Proponents of the theory claim there is a gap of billions of years between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. Supposedly, during these billions of years there lived generations of men, plants and animals before Adam was created. God destroyed this “original creation” due to rebellion, however. Besides the complete lack of mention of such an event in the Bible, this notion contradicts Scripture. For example, God was pleased with all of creation (Gen. 1:31). How could this be if He was forced to destroy a previous world?⁹

Additionally, Paul refers to Adam as “the first man” in 1 Corinthians 15:45, and Moses writes that Eve is “the mother of all living” in Genesis 3:20. A race of man existing prior to Adam and Eve makes these statements false.¹⁰ If the Gap Theory is true, we can't trust anything written from Genesis through Revelation, and the Bible is not the inerrant word of God.

The Day-Age Theory alleges that the days of creation as recorded in Genesis were not

traditional twenty-four hour days. Instead, the term “day” is symbolic language and refers to vast spans of billions of years.¹¹ This is also fanciful and can be proven false.

If eons of time were meant by the term *day*, how do you explain the repeated phrase “the evening and the morning” in Genesis 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23 and 31? Does a billion-year span begin with a morning and end with an evening? Moses distinguishes days from years in Genesis 1:14 “And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years:” Jackson asks a cogent question. “If 'days' actually represent years, what do 'years' signify?”¹²

Sound interpretation requires interpreting words literally unless the context demands figurative use. Nothing in Genesis 1 demands “days” be interpreted as billions of years. Only an evolutionary predisposition would read such into the account. This is plain when you consider Jewish observance of the Sabbath. The Jews observed a Sabbath day because God rested from creation on the seventh day (Ex. 20:11). The Jews didn't observe a Sabbath day lasting billions of years. The Sabbath was a twenty-four hour period, and so was each day of creation.¹³

In addition, equal periods of light and darkness characterize the creation days of Genesis 1. Vegetation could not have lived during consecutive millions of years of darkness—the night portion of each “day”—without photosynthesis.¹⁴

Finally, plants requiring pollination would not have survived if the Day-Age Theory is true. Plant life arrived on day three, and other living entities came along on days five and six. Plants pollinated only by insects would not have survived the millions of years between “days” and the appearance of those insects.¹⁵

Charles Darwin's evolution is false, and his disciples—theistic or otherwise—find themselves with insurmountable obstacles. Batsell Baxter lists a few.

1. “The atheists have no evidence or information about the beginning of life on earth...”
2. “There are no transition fossils between the simpler and the more complex forms of life...”
3. “There is no adequate theory of a mechanism to explain how evolution occurred...”¹⁶

If Darwinian evolution is true, there should be many, many fossils deep within the earth's surface that evidence the change from one species to another. This is just one of the tenets of the so-called theory assumed to be true.

Paleontologists at five premier natural history museums were interviewed for a study published in 1984 investigating creation versus evolution by the New York State Board of Regents. The paleontologists had affiliations with such prestigious universities as Harvard and Yale. None of these scientists could provide even one chain of fossils showing the evolutionary change from one type to another.¹⁷

Evolutionists such as Dr. Stephen Jay Gould admit that species appear in the fossil record with no preceding or succeeding transitional links. Like Dr. Gould, some “evolutionists have told the truth when they have declared there isn't even a single proven or significant evolutionary transition.”¹⁸ This exposes just one flaw in the evolutionary scenario, yet it is assumed true by multitudes without question.

The slippery slope of theistic evolution leads one away from God and toward hedonism. Evolutionary dogma encourages flight from biblical morality and toward the casting off of any religious faith and, ultimately, atheism.¹⁹ If evolution is true, the Bible is false. No Bible, no God. No God, no morality. Theistic evolution is a step in that direction.

Many have noted that evolution influenced the ideologies of Nazism and Communism. Adolph Hitler made sure German education was saturated with evolution, and he used the doctrine as justification for his atrocities against Jews, gypsies and others as he tried to help natural selection weed out the weak so the strong could thrive. Russian despot Joseph Stalin held similar views, and he slaughtered millions.

Evolution is not subject to testing because it theoretically happens so excruciatingly slowly—over millions and billions of years—and its changes are so infinitesimally small. It cannot be verified in scientific laboratories.

Evidence of evolution in the fossil record doesn't exist. In spite of this and the doubt it necessarily casts upon the truthfulness of God's word, people claiming to be Christians, including members of the Lord's church, cling to evolution. They fail to see the contradiction of theistic evolution's premises in their effort to have acceptance in both religious and academic circles.

Evolution must be rejected on biblical, scientific and philosophical grounds. The end result is immorality and Godlessness. Theistic evolution strives to bridge the gap between two competing views of origins, but bestowing respectability upon Darwin's idea cedes ground in the fight against a philosophy that denies plain biblical testimony about the world's beginning. Never mind that it is unproven and unprovable. Theistic evolution is not the answer—it's a compromise in which Truth is sacrificed for the sake of approval from a group of people who reject God.

End Notes

1: Johnny S. Oxendine, "From Adam to Noah," *Written for our Learning: A Historical Survey of the Old Testament*, ed. Tommy J. Hicks (Lubbock, TX: Hicks Publications, 2002), 52.

2: Ibid.

3: Stanley Beck, quoted by Oxendine, 54.

4: Ibid.

5: Wayne Jackson, *Creation, Evolution, and the Age of the Earth* (Stockton, CA: Courier Publications, 2003), 59.

6: Ibid., 59-60.

7: Ibid., 60-61.

8: Ibid., 61.

9: Ibid., 61-64.

10: Ibid., 64.

11: Ibid.

12: Ibid., 65.

13: Ibid., 66.

14: Ibid., 66-67.

15: Ibid., 67

16: J.D. Thomas, quoted by Batsell Barrett Baxter, *I Believe Because* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1971), 160-161.

17: John Ankerberg and John Weldon, *Darwin's Leap of Faith: Exposing the False Religion of Evolution* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1998), 218.

18: Ibid., 216-218.

19: Baxter, 165.

God Allowed Slavery

Ron Cosby

A host of websites condemn God because, as they see it, He allowed slavery under the Law of Moses. Yet, when the truth is learned, the condemner must acknowledge that his condemnation of God is unjustified. The condemner is simply wrong. Furthermore, his own social system, which he advocates in his own land, is far inferior to God's. Here are three facts that bear heavily upon the subject.

One of the most important things to bear in mind is that slavery under Judaism of old was not equivalent to the slavery system of the Egyptians, or the Romans, or the black

man in America. They are not even close!

Under God's system, so-called "slavery" was basically voluntary. Under the Law of Moses, a man became a servant in one of three ways. 1) He was an enemy in war who volunteered to be a servant rather than to die in war. 2) He was a law breaker who deserved to be punished severely. 3) He was a debtor who volunteered his services to another for the debt that he could not repay. In most of the situations, those who voluntarily became slaves were choosing a better life.

While we are looking at the manner of becoming a servant, take a closer look and note the contrast in facts and details concerning each mode. The first to study is for a soldier to become a slave instead of dying. During World War Two, Americans gave the Japanese the options of either surrendering to the defeating army and becoming their captives or they could fight to the death. God's offer to the war enemy of Israel to become a servant was even better than America's offer to the war captives (Deut. 20:10-11). As far as the sentence toward the law breaker is concern, the guilty felon who decided to become a "slave" in Israel did not have his freedom completely taken away since he was able to avoid imprisonment. This, too, was a better offer than is presented in the legal system of any nation. Then, finally, the man in Israel who had too much debt simply became an indentured servant. At the least, this is equivalent to a low-paying employee. This was much better, both in profitability and dignity, than in going on welfare. More contrasts could be noted but these are sufficient to make an educated conclusion concerning God's slavery system.

Another important issue that bears on the subject is, God regulated slavery. His regulations forbade cruelty, severity, harshness, and physical and mental abuse against the enslaved, making their service more like a contracted employee than a slave (Lev 25:35- 54). Contrast God's mind set with the slavery of Egypt, or Rome, or America. In these systems, if you killed your slave, you simply destroyed your own property Too bad! Who cares?! Not so with God! Slaves were to be accounted as humans, with rights and privileges. Turning to the New Testament instructions, we see the underlying reasons God afforded protection to servants (Eph 6:9; Col 4:1). Slaves were human just like their masters. And, masters needed to remember, the master himself had a far superior Master to whom he would one day give an account.

The idea that most have of slavery today is far, different than the servitude which God allowed. It is better to be a servant in the midst of godly people than to die. It is better to pay your debt to society than be a burden in the prison system. It is better to pay your debts than to beat another out of what you owe. When properly understood, what God instructed men to do is superior to the practice of people today. Those who condemn God for their erroneous view of God's servitude need to rethink and retract their mistaken position. They ought to write a fair assessment of the subject.

The Strictness of God's Law

Roy J. Hearn

It is significant that nothing in the Bible is emphasized more than the demand to respect and obey the commands of God. In both Old and New Testaments it is significant that when people obeyed God they were blessed, but when disobedient and incorrigible, they were punished. To the apostles, Jesus said, "He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me" (Mat. 10:40). Conversely, Luke 10:16 states: "He that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me."

Observe in John 16:13-15 that God gave the Word to Christ, who in turn sent the Holy Spirit, who gave it to the apostles. This is the source of all authority in religion—God to Christ to the Spirit to the apostles through whom the Word was first revealed and now recorded for the world to obey and abide by to serve God and be saved eternally. In the above quotes, our Lord simply meant that those who received the Word received the Godhead, and those who rejected the Word rejected God, Christ, and the Spirit. So it is now. When one rejects the authority of the Bible, he is rejecting the Godhead.

In view of the widespread attitude that God's Word is not binding, that it is not necessary to be so concerned about God's Word as law, it is in order that we are reminded that nobody presumptuously sets it aside without guilt. God's laws are not given according to human wisdom (1 Cor. 1:18-31), and God demands that His Word be respected. Things written aforetime in the Old Testament were written for our learning (Rom. 15:4), and can make us wise unto salvation (2 Tim. 3:15). Wherefore, note:

Some Apparently Foolish Laws of God

The Passover

Unquestionably, God could have saved Israel from Egypt without any conditions, but in preparation for their departure He ordered the placing of the blood of a lamb upon the door posts and lintels of the houses, otherwise the firstborn in every house would be destroyed if not so protected. To fail was folly. God kept His Word and at the appointed time He passed over and the death of the firstborn resulted. Present-day preachers would have rationalized that such an arrangement was foolishness and would have sought to set aside that which became law to Israel on this occasion. Read Exodus 12 and note the results.

The Brazen Serpent

Israel sinned against God by rebelling and complaining (Num. 21:4-9). Fiery serpents were sent among them. Many were bitten and vast numbers died. When Moses asked for mercy, the Lord instructed him to make a serpent of brass, place it on a pole in the midst of the camp, and those who would look upon it would live. This was highly contrary to human wisdom, but not the results. Those who looked in exercise of faith lived, others died. It was strict, but no amount of rationalization could set it aside.

Naaman Healed of Leprosy

This captain of the host of the king of Assyria was a great man, but afflicted with that dreaded disease. After a series of mistakes, he finally found his way to the house of Elisha the prophet. Naaman was instructed to go wash in the Jordan seven times for healing. As with so many today, when God commands, he thought that such was unnecessary and that God's law could be set aside by substitution of prayer and miracle without doing anything himself. But God did not change His Word to satisfy the whims of Naaman. He could obey and be healed, or he could reject God's provision and rot. Read 2 Kings 5 and get the picture.

Other examples could be given, but these suffice to show that God does not order His own ways or design His laws according to human wisdom, but demands compliance, regardless of what man thinks.

Examples of God's Strictness

Cain and Abel

Genesis 4:1-8 gives the first record of worship. God bore witness that Abel was righteous (Heb. 11:4). This testimony was based upon Abel's faithful obedience. Cain's offering was rejected. Why? Cain was a liberal. He felt it unnecessary to abide within the limits of God's law. He seemed to think because he had faith—some kind of faith—that he ought to be accepted. He was not accepted, and should serve as a warning to us today. God is not now pleased with some faith, or some kind of faith, but demands that we stay within the bounds of "the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3).

Strange Fire

Nadab and Abihu offered incense in the tabernacle service, using fire from an unauthorized source (Lev. 10:1-2). The incense burned and the odor ascended, but they were destroyed. They took undue liberty with God's law. The fire they used was not consecrated by the sacrifices upon the altar. When Jehovah tells us what to do and how to do it, that eliminates all else. No act of worship, unauthorized by the New Testament, reaches the throne of God. "Add thou not unto his words, Lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar" (Pro. 30:6).

Uzzah's Innocent Act

In being removed from the house of Abinadab, the Ark of the Covenant was hauled on a new cart driven by Uzzah and Ahio. When the ark was shaken, Uzzah spontaneously

put forth his hand to steady it, and when he touched it, “The anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God” (2 Sam. 6:1-7). Why? Was he not honest? Was his heart not right? Perhaps. But he violated a positive command of God: “neither shall ye touch it lest ye die” (Gen. 3:3).

The liberties taken by the denominational world, and many of our brethren to copy their ways, cannot be classified as innocent as this act by Uzzah. Such departures from God’s Word are generally presumptuous. Upon what ground, therefore, can anyone justify sectarian practices? How can anyone conclude that God does not mean what He says, that one can do as he pleases as long as he is sincere? This is nothing short of perversion and draws the wrath of God (Gal. 1:6-9).

The Law of Christ Is Stricter Than Moses’ Law

Seeing that every transgression under Moses’ law received a just recompense of reward, the question is asked: “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?” (Heb. 2:1-4). Reference is made to that spoken by the Lord. There is no escape! Every soul that will not hear (obey) the voice of Christ will be destroyed (Acts 3:22-23).

To take undue liberty with God’s Word is to despise it. Those who despised Moses’ law died without mercy (Heb. 10:28). The punishment for those who despise the law of Christ will be greater (Heb. 10:29). What can be greater than physical death as punishment? The punishment being greater, we can see that the law of Christ is stricter than the Old Testament law.

The Word of Christ is unalterable and indestructible (Mat. 24:35; 1 Pet. 1:23). Everyone shall meet it at the judgment (John 12:48-50; Acts 17:30-31). To merely call Christ “Lord” is insufficient (Luke 6:46). To be saved, one must obey the will of Christ (Mat. 7:21; Rev. 22:14). Jesus showed that the difference between the wise and the foolish is determined by whether one obeys the Word of Christ (Mat. 7:24-27).

From the examples given herein (which could be multiplied), nothing is more plainly taught in the Word of God than that nobody is allowed the privilege of taking liberties with it. God has always forbidden addition, subtraction, or substitution in any way (Deu. 4:2; 5:32; Gal. 3:15; Rev. 22:18-19).

Those who are inclined to liberalism—in or out of the church—should take another look at what God has commanded and what He requires now. “He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool” (Pro. 28:26). Deceased the New Testament, reaches the throne of God. “Add thou not unto his words, Lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar” (Pro. 30:6)/

Links to Bible Study Resources
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False Doctrines of Man
Yukon, Okla. church of Christ
Berea church of Christ, Rives, TN
South Seminole church of Christ

What it Means to Accept Christ

Kent Bailey

The explicit phrase, *accept Christ*, is not found as a direct statement in the New Testament. Even though such is not explicitly or directly stated, but the concept is set forth within the scriptures. Concerning the incarnate person of Christ, John wrote:

He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God (John 1:10-13).

There is a distinction in the Greek text of the New Testament between **His own** (*ta idia*) to which he came and **His own** (*hoi idioi*) who rejected Him. The former is neuter plural, rendered literally as *His own possession, His own nation*. There, His own people—the Jews—received Him not. These unbelieving Jews did not receive Him in that they rejected His Deity. They refused to accept the truth regarding Jesus as being the promised Christ, Savior, and Lord. They eventually consummated their rejection by calling for His crucifixion. They received Him not (*paralabon*) in the sense that they **refused to receive that which had been handed down from another**. In the very next verse, however, we note that as many as received (*elabon*) Him are given the right (*exousian*) power, or authority to become children of God.

Though his own people, as a nation, rejected Him, many Jews as individuals did receive Him as did a great multitude of Gentiles. In consideration of verse 14 we take note of the fact that **receiving** Christ, i.e., believing on Christ does not bring one into the state or condition of salvation as the advocates of the false doctrine of salvation by faith alone affirm. Those who receive Christ are given the right, authority, or power to **become** children of God, i.e., Christians.

While indeed one's faith is essential to salvation from sin, it is not by itself sufficient to the attainment of such. Faith must be activated in obedience to the gospel by repentance (Acts 17:30), confession of Christ (Rom. 10:9-10), and baptism unto the remission of sins (Acts 2:38).

Thus, accepting or receiving Christ is inclusive of a multiplicity of concepts.

One Must Accept Christ as an Historic Person

One cannot accept Christ and at the same time deny that in reality He lived on earth as a real person (Matt. 1:18-25). One cannot deny the absolute reality and historicity of Jesus and at the same time **receive** Him.

One Must Accept Christ as a Co-Existent Eternal Being with the Father

The scriptures affirm that God does indeed exist as one divine essence comprised of three self-existent, co-existent persons (Deut. 6:4; Gen. 1:1; 1:26; Matt. 28:18-20). Christ is identified as the second member of the Godhead (John 1:1-4).

One Must Accept the Incarnation of the Person of Christ

There was a specific point of time in past history where Christ the eternal Word became incarnate in human flesh and at His birth became the only begotten Son of God (Gal. 4:1-5; John 1:14; Luke 1:26-35).

One Must Accept the Personal Ministry of Christ on Earth as Factual

Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem and lived on earth for a period of 33 years. During this time He, by means of miracles demonstrated Himself to be the Son of God and the promised Christ. During this period of His earthly ministry He prepared a people to constitute his kingdom upon His return to Heaven (John 20:30-31; Mark 9:1).

One Must Accept the Culmination of the Earthy Ministry of Christ in His Death, Burial, Resurrection and Ascension

Not only the earthly ministry of preparation, but also the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ was foreknown by God before the foundation of the world (1 Pet. 1:18-23). These elements comprise the facts of the gospel (1 Cor. 15:1-4) resulting not only in His resurrection, but also His ascension and return to Heaven (Acts 1:9-11; Heb. 1:8).

**One Must Accept Christ as Being Both
the Savior of Humanity and King of His Kingdom**

The term *savior* is derived from a *Koine* Greek word that speaks with reference to deliverance. Christ came to offer deliverance or salvation to lost individuals and actually save those who would accept and obey His conditions in one aggregate kingdom, also known as the church (John 4:42; 1 John 4:14; Eph. 5:23). Christ is Savior of the world in that he offers salvation to all. He is Savior of the church in that he actually saves those who comply with his conditions.

One Cannot Accept Christ and Reject His Church

One cannot accept Christ and reject His church any more than one can accept the groom and reject the bride (Eph. 1:22-23; 5:23; Col. 1:13-14)

One Must Accept the Conditions of Christ for Salvation

Such is implicit by the very nature of the Gospel (Matt. 13:10-15; Acts 28:24-27; Rom. 6:17-18).

Accepting Christ is indeed crucial to salvation. Accepting Christ gives one the right to obey the gospel and become a child of God.

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Hell

Brad Green

The Bible description of Hell, the eternal place of punishment and torment, is extremely graphic. No one desires nor enjoys being burnt by fire here on earth, and, therefore, the idea of being continuously burned with fire for all of eternity is a terrifying thought. So terrifying, in fact, that many have begun to dismiss what the Bible clearly teaches about Hell. In its place—a doctrine called “Conditional Immortality” or annihilationism. This teaching claims that while God will reward good people eternally, He will not punish the wicked for the same amount of time. Rather, God will allow the evil doer to be burned up, extinguished, annihilated, and therefore cease to exist.

Annihilationists have decided to make Jesus’ warnings about Hell foolish and out of place. If there was no Hell, no place of eternal punishment, why would Jesus warn of the “danger of hell” (Mat. 5:22)? Man is “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psa. 139:14) in the image of his Creator—God Almighty (Gen. 1:26-27). God is Spirit (John 4:24) and in His image He made man spiritual as well. God is eternal (Rom. 16:26; Heb. 9:14) and by making man, His greatest creation, a spiritual being, He made man eternal also. Jesus said: “I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die” (John 11:25-26). Jesus was obviously not speaking about living eternally in a physical sense because “it is appointed unto men once to die” (Heb. 9:27), and when Jesus returns “the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (2 Pet. 3:10). Thus, the only logical conclusion is that Jesus was making reference to a spiritual life after physical death.

Though annihilationists want to equate Hell to a place where wicked souls are incinerated, the Bible teaches that Hell is a real place “prepared for the devil and his

angels” (Mat. 25:41). Hell is a place with an “everlasting fire” (25:41) that never goes out (Mark 9:48). It is a place of “outer darkness” (Mat. 25:30) and a “lake of fire and brimstone” (Rev. 20:10). It is the farthest place from the presence of God and therefore separated from light. God is light (1 John 1:5) and Jesus is the “light of the world” (John 8:12). Jesus also describes Hell as a “furnace of fire” where there will be “weeping” (Mat. 25:30), “wailing and gnashing of teeth” (13:42). Jesus used the Greek word *Gehenna* when speaking of Hell, the eternal abode for the wicked. *Gehenna* is a transliteration from the original Hebrew meaning “the valley of Hinnom.” The valley of Hinnom was just south of Jerusalem and was known for its garbage dump that was always burning. Thus, when Jesus stated that Hell was a place “where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:48), He meant that the fire would never cease. This “is a picture of the unending torture and destruction of hell” (*Wycliffe Bible Commentary*). Using the word picture created by the use of the word *Gehenna*, Hell can be viewed as a garbage dump for the wicked. Since the grave is never full and opens “her mouth without measure” (Isa. 5:14), the eternal place of punishment will never lack for new occupants. The flames of Hell have plenty of new fuel to keep it burning “day and night for ever and ever” (Rev. 20:10).

Though the Bible states succinctly that Hell is both real and eternal, there are those who still refuse to acknowledge these truths. Jesus proclaims that the wicked “shall go away into **everlasting** punishment: but the righteous into life **eternal**” (Mat. 25:46). Hell and all that accompanies it are forever. Once physical life ends, eternity begins. At that point, man’s fate is sealed. For the wicked, the opportunity to repent and obey has passed. The righteous will enjoy bliss and comfort awaiting these most beautiful words, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (25:34). The Bible teaches that man is a spiritually immortal being. He will be judged by the words and commandments spoken by God and His Christ (John 12:48). Man will be accountable for the way he has lived “For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil” (Ecc. 12:14). Hell is real and it is a place of eternal punishment. No soul has ever nor will ever cease to exist. Annihilationism is a false doctrine concocted by many who are attempting to soothe their own consciences without having to wholly and fully submit their lives to God’s Will. Still others devise such a teaching to help God out of what they see as a dilemma—the dilemma of a loving God sending His greatest creation to a place of eternal torment separated from God’s holy presence. God is not in a dilemma. He is holy (Rev. 4:8) and just (1 John 1:9). It is man who chooses and decides his eternal destiny: Live obediently to God’s Word and be eternally saved. Live contrary to God’s Word and be eternally lost.

Let us heed the multiple warnings given to us in God’s Word and escape the horrible destination of the disobedient.

Hodge-Podge Religion

Cled E. Wallace

According to the *Adult Leader*, an intelligent Episcopalian and a Baptist were discussing denominationalism. The report of their conclusion is interesting. “We finally agreed that we are where we belong; our particular denomination suits us better than any other.” The article logically omits any reference to the New Testament. The standard in this case seems to be what “suits us better.” The modern hodge-podge in religion cannot be justified or defended by the New Testament so it is fitting that this inspired source of wisdom be ignored. It suits some “better” to be unbelievers. Christian Scientists, Mormons, Theosophists, pagans of various schools, and sundry sorts of sectarians after an “orthodox” order. Is it all right to be anything that “suits” you for no greater reason than that?

These modern churchmen reached the conclusion in their confab that “a perfectly unified church is unthinkable” and that division “will result in our being better Methodists and Presbyterians, and Episcopalians, and Baptists.” There are no “Methodists and

Presbyterians, and Episcopalians, and Baptists” in the New Testament “better” or otherwise. If this is doubted, bring up the text that mentions them. Why, should there be any now? Is modern denominationalism an improvement on the church of the New Testament? Hardly!

If “a perfectly unified church is unthinkable” why did Christ pray for it and why did Paul preach it? “Now I beseech you, brethren, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you ; but that ye be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Cor. 1:10). These men who pass judgment on what Jesus prayed for and Paul taught as “unthinkable” think that we ought to take what they think is thinkable instead of what the New Testament teaches. They think that the “several religious types represented by the several larger divisions of Christendom ought to be maintained. These “larger divisions” as well as numerous smaller ones are younger than the New Testament and represent perversions of New Testament teaching.

A return to plain New Testament teaching and a complete restoration of the body of Christ as found in the New Testament would destroy every one of them. To maintain them is to fight against God. There can be no compromise here. They think that it is terrible for anybody to try to “standardize us into a single sect.” Well, suppose we leave the “sect” business all out of it, become Christians according to the teaching of the New Testament and let God place the members in the body just as it pleases him.

Coming to God with an Idol in Your Heart

J.D. Tant

Idol: “An image worshiped by man; something man regards with more reverence than he does the word of God” (Webster).

In the days of the prophets, the children of God frequently became tired of God's control and sought to have their own way. It has always been God's ruling that when men became dissatisfied with divine control that God permitted them to have their own way, yet condemnation came to them when they would forsake God, and follow the teachings of men. Not only is this taught in the Old Testament, but in the new dispensation God threatens to send strong delusions to men who have no pleasure in truth, that they might believe a lie and be damned (2 Thess. 2:11-12).

Jesus tells us to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness with the promise that all needed blessings will be added unto us (Matt. 6:33). In Rom. 12:1, we are commanded to offer our bodies a living sacrifice, which He claims as our reasonable service. In Eph. 4:1, we are taught to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we have been called. In 2 Cor. 5:7, we are told to walk by faith. In Rom. 8:1-2, we are told there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ and who walk after the Spirit, and not after the flesh. So we must conclude that all men are safe who will follow the spiritual law and walk to please God instead of to please man.

A few examples of men setting up their idols and following them may be of help to us in this lesson. In Numbers 22, we read about Balaam, who was an Old Testament character and worshiped God under the Patriarchal Age. Balak was king of Moab, and had noticed the influence and power of Balaam. God's people had to pass through the country of Moab from Egypt to Canaan. Balak had noticed that as long as they were faithful to God and did His will God fought their battles, but when they would forsake God he left them alone to fight their own battles. Balak knew that Balaam was a prophet, and he believed if he could get Balaam to curse the children of Israel that God would help him to overcome them. So he sent messengers to Balaam to hire him to go and curse the children of God. The messengers came to Balaam and told him their mission. Balaam treated them kindly, invited them to come in and stay all night and he would see if God would let him go.

During the night, God appeared to Balaam, and asked him who the men were and their mission. Balaam told God, and God said, “You can not go with them, neither can you curse Israel for they are blessed.” This language was as plain as that part of the Bible

which says, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). But Balaam, like many denominational preachers who have set up their idols in preference to the word of God, did not like God's charge to him. Next morning Balaam reported to the messengers that God would not let him go with them, nor let him curse Israel, which should have been an end of all controversy, but no doubt these messengers saw in his conduct it was not his desire to follow the Lord, and that he was disappointed in not being permitted to go. So they reported their work to the king, and he at once selected men of greater influence, and ability to give larger rewards, and sent them to Balaam and told him to let nothing keep him from coming. Balaam told them if Balak should give him his house full of silver and gold, he could not go beyond the word of God to do more or less. But he invited them in to stay all night and see what God would say more. God, seeing that Balaam had set up his own desire and will to go, and had refused to accept Gold at his word, told him that night to go. Here was a man deliberately setting up his way against the plain statement of God, to go and curse the children of God.

Along the road God sent his angel to make the way rough. The angel stood in a narrow pass, with a great wall on either side holding his drawn sword. The ass upon which Balaam was riding saw the angel and refused to go. Balaam smote the ass, and the ass spoke with man's voice and rebuked the prophet. Still the prophet refused to yield to God's command and went on and burnt sacrifices, and when he opened his mouth to curse the children of God, blessings came out of his mouth instead of cursing. This was done each time until Balak became angry and condemned him for blessing instead of cursing God's children. He drove him away. Later we find this man Balaam killed on the battlefield fighting against God, because he had set up his idol in his heart and turned from God to serve Balak for reward.

We read in the Old Testament that God, through Samuel demanded Saul to go and destroy the Amalekites—men, women and children, as well as all livestock. Saul went forth to battle, destroyed all but the king himself, and the best of the stock to offer a great sacrifice to God. He set up his idol and lost his throne; for God rejected him from being king over Israel. Saul turned from God, consulted the witch of Endor and finally committed suicide and lost all—even heaven, for following his idol instead of the word of God.

Jesus teaches that if we would be his disciples, we are not worthy of him unless we are willing to forsake father or mother, brother or sister for him (Matt. 10:34-36). I often find men and women who claim I am teaching the Bible, yet their mother did not belong to the church of Christ, or their wife belongs to some human church and they can not afford to turn from them, so they set up their idol, and God says, “I'll answer them accordingly and let them believe a lie and be damned because they have no pleasure in the truth.”

Others come like the rich young man, and are wedded to riches and set them up as an idol, and forsake the house of God to multiply riches, and declare they have no time to serve the Lord as it takes all their time to run their business. This kind of a man has set up his riches as an idol in his heart and Jesus says it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for him to go to heaven.

Then here comes the whole system of Protestant churches setting up their idol of “justification by faith only” in their hearts. They will read, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16) and “Repent and be baptized for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38). They read where Ananias told Paul to arise and be baptized and wash away his sins calling on the name of the Lord (Acts 22:16). Then they will hear James say, “Faith without works is dead, being alone” (Jas. 2:17). To all these Scriptures they will turn a deaf ear, and set up the idol of Martin Luther and John Wesley, “Wherefore, that we are justified by faith only is a most wholesome doctrine and very full of comfort” (Art. 9, *Methodist Discipline*).

Others will claim, “I do not know which church is right, therefore I'll set up my idol of goodness and morality.” Notwithstanding the Bible says, “Blessed are they that do his commandments that they may have right to the tree of life,” they will claim that they

know as much about it as God does, and they know they will be saved on their goodness or works of righteousness which they have done, by which Paul plainly says we are not saved (Titus 3:5). Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh to the Father but by me" (John 14:6). Still some, in order to justify the many human churches, will set up their idol of "many ways of salvation" and "it makes no difference which way you go, nor which church you join, as long as your heart is right in the sight of God." Others will set up their idol of infant baptism, declaring their parents had them baptized when children, and to break off from their early training and obey the commandments of God would be a reflection on their dead parents, and they must honor and reverence the commands of man more than those of God. Others will claim that immersion is baptism. They know that people went down into the water, that they were buried in baptism, they came up out of the water, they were born of water, yet they prefer sprinkling and pouring, since their kinfolks all had it that way they are satisfied to fight it out along that line.

I find good people whose clothes are good enough to wear to town each day in the week, to visit all neighbors they desire, to attend every show that comes to town, yet said clothes are not good enough to wear to church. They raise poor clothes far above God, and bring them up as excuses why they do not serve Him. Others claim Masons do more good than the church. And say "The church will go dead without our societies." They forget that any society organized in the church to do the work of the church holds the same relationship to the church that a mob does to the government when it takes the enforcement of law from the government and puts it under mob control. All Christian work should be done by the church, and not by some human organization.

The final thought. Many of my brethren who once loved the word of the Lord and stood firm for it, have today raised instrumental music in the church far above the word of the Lord and will push it into churches over the godly protest of ninety percent of the old members. They often wreck the church and drive out the best members who cannot tolerate innovations in the church. They will rejoice over the division and downfall of the church of God in any community where they can make an idol of instrumental music and they will hear its sound rather than hear the word of God read. Let each examine his own heart, and see what idol he is holding to that will cause him to go down to eternal ruin.

"Ministers," "Evangelists"

Cled E. Wallace

Occasionally I read about some brother "resigning" his position as "minister" of a local church to enter "the evangelistic field." As I view it, the language is unfortunate or else the work as "minister" was unscriptural.

A man may be supported and directed by one church to do the work of an evangelist in a specified field for any length of time circumstances may suggest it to be advisable. He may change fields often and travel much. He may stay in one field a long time and travel little and be doing the work of an evangelist all of the time. Traveling is not evangelizing. He may evangelize while he is traveling as Philip did or he may do it after he arrives, and should do it as long as he stays.

If the preacher of a local church is not evangelizing, what is he doing? If he is not in the "evangelistic field," where is he? I have been an evangelist for lo, these many years. I have traveled much and preached in many meetings, over a wide territory. I have confined my labors to one locality for months or years at a time in what is frequently referred to as "local work." I have preached the same gospel all the time, done evangelistic work all the time, and been in the evangelistic field all the time.

A gospel preacher is in "the evangelistic field" anywhere he is, if he preaches the gospel. If he is not in it, he had better get in it, and stay in it. "Do the work of an evangelist, fulfill thy ministry" (2 Tim. 4:5).

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“Mainstream Churches” are Sinful

The time for recognizing division has come—again. The steadfast, doctrinally sound remnant of the church, in widely scattered (and mostly small) pockets across our land, must mark mainstream churches of Christ as the apostates and sinners they are. God's Word commands us to “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather **reprove them**” (emph JCB). The multitudinous “ministries” of the “Social Gospellers,” their flirtation with the world, and their embrace of doctrinal error aims to “gain thereby the recognition of the conflicting sects about us, to become popular, and be considered orthodox and really one of the branches of the church,” to quote one of them. Such a statement is nothing short of heresy, and the Biblically ignorant masses in mainstream churches of Christ are no longer merely bidding Godspeed to apostates—they themselves are apostate.

These “Mainstream Churches” are **not** in “**ERROR.**” They are plain vanilla “**SINFUL!**”

“What Saith The Scriptures?”

Harrell Davidson

From *The Gospel Preceptor's* website comes the question that we will deal with in this issue. The individual wanted to know something about demons, their origin and where they came from. This has been an intriguing study and mind-boggling thought for many years. We can say without successful contradiction that demons accompanied the age of the miraculous. We can also say that such has not existed since the days of the miraculous. This does not mean that the devil is not mean and can occupy our thoughts day and night and through our own lack of righteousness causes us to commit terrible sins, but this is not the same as being demon-possessed as we read in the New Testament where individuals had little to no control over their own actions.

Matthew mentions them during the ministry of Christ.

And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatick, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them" (Matt. 4:24).

Demon is the proper translation of the word *devils*. As we investigate demon possession further we learn that some demons had supernatural powers as in Mark 5:4 “Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him.” The mind of man was not the source of blindness as in Matthew 12:22 “Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw.” It is also a fact that demons knew Jesus as we learn from Mark 1:24 “Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.” This passage underscores that the demons understood that Jesus came to destroy them and their apparent power. Many other such passages could be used that are similar.

The real question that remains is where demons came from. To this we can give no certain answer from the Scriptures. Many believe that demons were disembodied spirits who in some way escaped the portion of the hadean world where the rich man of Luke 16 abode and came back to this earth and inhabited other evil people.

The late brother Guy N. Woods, quoted from Alexander Campbell's *Lectures and Addresses*, where he wrote,

We conclude that there is neither reason or fact—there is no canon of criticism, no law of interpretation—there is nothing in human experience or observation—there is nothing in antiquity, sacred or profane that in our judgment weighs against the evidence adduced in support of the position that the demons of Pagans, Jews and Christians were the ghosts of dead men, and, as such have taken possession of men's living bodies, and have moved, influenced and impelled to certain courses of action.

Josephus, Philo, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Origen and many others attended this view. This may be the truth, but we do not have a clear passage of Scripture that gives us an explanation of who demons were. Let each of us understand that through the Gospel no one can take control of our lives as demons did to some in the age of the miraculous. Christ conquered Satan.

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Sincerity Is Not Enough

T. Holman

False doctrines among Christians have always been common. In one sense they are a good sign. When bad money is printed by forgers, it's a sign that good money is valuable. When false doctrines are put into circulation, that's a sign that the devil hates true doctrine, knows its value, and wants to prevent it from doing good.

It's a widespread delusion that we ought to be satisfied with the state of any man's soul, if he is only **sincere**, no matter what he thinks is Truth.

This is a common heresy and one against which we all need to be armed. There are thousands today who say, "We have nothing to do with the opinions of others. If they are sincere, we believe they will be saved as well as we." All of this sounds loving, liberal and charitable, they way people like to fancy their own views.

But the Bible does not say anyone was saved by sincerity, or was pleasing to God if he was only **earnest** in maintaining his own views. When the apostle Paul was a Pharisee, he was sincere while he made havoc of the church. But when his eyes were opened, he mourned over this as a special wickedness.

Beware of allowing that **sincerity** is everything, and that we have no right to think ill of a man's spiritual state because of the opinions he holds, if he is only earnest in holding them. That will not stand, nor will it bear the test of scripture. If you once allow such a notion to be true, you may as well throw your Bible aside altogether. Sincerity is not Christ, and therefore sincerity cannot put away sin.

A religion without Christ—a religion that takes away from Christ—a religion that adds anything to Christ—or a religion that puts **sincerity** in the place of Christ—are all alike dangerous. All are to be avoided and all are alike contrary to the doctrine of Scripture. That doctrine is salvation in Christ to the very uttermost, but out of Christ no salvation at all, however zealous and sincere a man may be.

The spirit of our day is not atheistic so much as pantheistic. It is not the spirit which says **nothing** is true, so much as the spirit which says **everything** is true. It is not the spirit which says there is **no** Saviour, so much as the spirit which says there are **many** Saviours, and many ways to the Father. This, of course, violates John 14:6. That kind of spirit is so **liberal** that it dares not say anything is false. It is so charitable that it will allow **everything** to be true. It is this spirit that is ready to honor other religions as well as that of our Lord Jesus Christ—to class them all together and hope well of all those who profess them. It is so liberal that it calls a man a bigot if he dares to say, "I know the Bible is right."

What is this but bowing down to a great idol, speciously called liberality? What is it but a sacrifice of Truth upon the altar of a caricature of charity? Beware of it, reader—beware that the rushing stream of public opinion does not carry you away. Beware of it if you believe the Bible. Has the Lord God spoken to us in the Bible or has He not? Gird up the loins of your mind and look these questions squarely in the face, and give them an honest answer.

Tell us that there is some other inspired book besides the Bible, then we shall know what you mean. Tell us that the whole Bible is not inspired, then we shall know where to meet you. But grant for a moment that the Bible, the whole Bible, is God's Truth and you cannot escape the conclusion that **sincerity alone** will not save your soul. From the postmodernism which says "everybody is right"—from the charity which forbids you to say anybody is wrong—from the peace which is bought at the expense of Truth, may the good Lord deliver you!

Let it be called illiberal and uncharitable, but on this subject God's voice is heard nowhere except in the Bible, and there is no salvation for sinners in the Bible except through Jesus Christ (John 14:6). In Him there is an abundance. Out of Him there is no hope.

If sincerity alone will not save, and there is no salvation except in Christ, make sure you have an interest in that salvation yourself. Do not be content with hearing, and ap-

proving, and assenting to the Truth, and going no further. Seek to have a personal interest in this salvation. Lay hold on it by faith for the sake of your own soul. Rest not until you know you have actual possession of that peace with God which Jesus Christ offers and that Christ is yours and you are Christ's. If there were two or three or more ways of getting to heaven, there would be no necessity for pressing this matter upon you. But if there is only **no** way, you will hardly wonder that I say, "Make sure that you are in it."

If sincerity alone will not save, and there is no salvation except in Christ, then you should want to know how to get into Christ. You cannot pray into Christ, believe into Christ or repent into Christ. The Bible speaks of none of those things as an entry into Christ. You may already believe He is God's Son. If so, you are not far from the kingdom. You need only to repent of your sins (Luke 13:3), confess that faith (Acts 8:37), and be **baptized** into Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16). Baptism is the only thing that puts you into Christ (Gal. 3:26-27), the **only** way to heaven (John 14:6).

No one questions your sincerity in your religion, but sincerity is not the test of whether one is a child of God, a member of Christ's church and a heaven-bound soul. Only by obedience to the Gospel can you be saved (Matt. 7:21; 2 Thess. 1:8). Study on these things and obey Christ today.

New Wineskins

David Ray

In Matthew 9:16-17, Jesus taught the following:

No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse. Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved.

Contextually, Jesus is comparing the things practiced by the Pharisees with the new plan He was bringing. Their way of thinking would not allow them to accept what He was saying. It was a mismatch. Jesus' new teaching was a new order and needed to be received in a new framework. If they didn't open their minds to His being the fulfillment of the old covenant, as it predicted (cf. Jer. 31:31-34), then, like the old wineskins expanding and being destroyed by the new wine, they too would perish.

Again, this context is a comparison of the old law of Moses and the new law of Christ. This change happened almost two thousand years ago when Christ nailed the old law to His cross (Col. 2:14).

There are those who have made improper application of this to their own modern hermeneutics. They see themselves as bringing a new teaching that cannot be understood or accepted by brethren who hold to the old ways. This is true, although these false teachers wouldn't agree with my assessment, which is that they have altered the teachings of Christ and His apostles in such a way that those who hold to the truth refuse to digress along with them.

In reality, when Jesus made this statement He was comparing His new teaching to the old law, and such a statement does not apply today since there is no new law today. Yet, there really is a similarity to be noted: what the New Testament teaches, and has taught for almost two millennia, is just as foreign to most professed believers today as it was for the hard-hearted Jews of Jesus' day when the teaching was brand new.

Consider a few **biblical** teachings that are considered error and anathema by most believers today:

1. The true purpose of baptism is for the remission and washing away of one's sins and, therefore, is absolutely required for one to be forgiven, saved, added to the Lord's church, and Heaven-bound (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Rom. 6:3-6; 1 Pet. 3:21).

2. The proper attitude God's people are to have toward His word is that it is the complete, all-sufficient, authoritative pattern for the Christian's life, never to be altered (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:3; Col. 3:17; Gal. 1:8-9).
3. There is **but one church** or body of Christ (Eph. 1:22:23; 4:4; Col. 1:18,24), and denominationalism (i.e., division) is sin (1 Cor. 1:10-13).
4. The church of Christ was not an afterthought in the mind of God, but was part of His eternal purpose (Eph. 3:10-11) and a necessity in the scheme of redemption (1 Cor. 12:13; Eph 5:23).
5. Christian music in worship is done with only two instruments: the voice and the heart (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16); mechanical instruments such as the piano, guitar, and drums have never been authorized by God for use in His church's worship of Him.
6. Complete, heartfelt obedience to God's word is prerequisite for salvation; i.e., "once saved, always saved" is a false and soul-damning doctrine (Heb. 5:9; Gal. 5:4; Col. 1:23; 1 Cor. 15:58; Rev. 2:10).

To some of us, these teachings are as clear as the passages that teach them. But most people have been taught opposing doctrines all of their lives and have as hard a time accepting them as the Jews had accepting Christ's teachings two thousand years ago.

It's important to acknowledge that neither of these groups has any excuse; Scripture says what it says regardless of our presuppositions and close-mindedness. But the purpose of this article is to encourage all who read it to put aside the things they've been taught and submit their minds to the teachings of the New Testament without prejudice. None of us will have anything to lose in doing so. Either the things we've been taught are true and accurate and our faith will be solidified, or we will find that our beliefs have been wrong, giving us the opportunity to now hear with an open mind the truth of Scripture and be saved through humble obedience.

God is a forgiving God (Psa. 103:8-18; Heb. 10:16-17). The error we have believed, taught, and done **in the past** means nothing if we change our thinking and become obedient to the teachings of Christ and His apostles now and in the future. This will assure a home in Heaven for us, as well as for those we are able to teach and bring to obedience.

In the World, but Not of the World

Lester Kamp

According to an old fable, three peas lived in a summer garden safely within the protection of a green pod. Their world was, as far as they knew, cozy and comfortable. Suddenly during a late summer day the pod split open, and the peas found themselves, not in their previously comfortable world of green, but now in a frightening brown world.

Their responses were immediate. One pea crawled back into the pod hoping to regain the safety and comfort of the past. The second pea turned brown so it would be exactly like the new world in which it now found itself. The third pea, however, decided that what the brown world needed was a green pea, so it resolved to be the best green pea possible in that brown world.

This fable illustrates well the possible reactions of Christians to the world of sin in which we live. Bear in mind that Christians have always lived in a world darkened by sin. Recall Paul's instructions to the Christians at Philippi: "That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; Holding forth the word of life (Phi. 2:15-16).

Peter on Pentecost encouraged that multitude of Jews to become Christians with these words: "Save yourselves from this untoward generation" (Acts 2:40). Christians live in a world which is hostile to Christ, His teachings, and those that follow Him. Using the

terminology of the fable, we live in a “brown world.” Our reaction to that world can be one of three actions—the same three reactions that we saw in the fable of the three peas. Let us take some time to examine these responses and to examine ourselves.

Isolation from the World

One reaction to the world found among those who claim to be Christians is isolation. Over the centuries, some efforts to do this have resulted in literal, physical isolation from the world. People have actually withdrawn themselves from the world to some isolated place that they might not have to confront the sinfulness of the world. This kind of thinking gave rise to monasticism. Others who have not gone to that extreme have attempted to isolate themselves by ignoring the real world. They may cancel their newspaper subscriptions and refuse to listen to the news for fear of being aware of the problems of the real world. They live in their own dream world without coming to grips with the way sin has affected others.

Though this kind of thinking has its appeal, we should realize that Christians cannot respond to the world in this way. Jesus’ prayer shows the error of His followers when they try to withdraw from the world. He prayed:

I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth (John 17:15-17).

Jesus did not desire that His disciples be “taken out of the world.” Sanctification (i.e., separation from sin and devotion to the service of God) is necessary, but sanctification is not isolation. Christians must remain in the world, but not be of the world. Christians must have contact with those in the world (Mat. 28:19) and help them deal with their burdens of sin (Gal. 6:2, 10), but Christians must abstain from the sins of the world (1 The. 5:21-22). If Christians are to be “the salt of the earth” and “the light of the world” (Mat. 5:13-16), they must be in the world and make contact with that world.

Become Like the World

A second mistake that Christians make is to become like the world. This course is the easiest one to take—just give up and give in. There are members of the church who do not want to be distinctive, to be different. Their lives after baptism are no different from the way they lived before. They have the same companions, their language is the same, they go the same places, and they enjoy the same forms of entertainment that they did before they became “Christians.” These “unconverted Christians” live just as those do who are in the world. For them it is too difficult to change; it is too much to ask of them.

Their concept of being Christians is certainly not what is taught in the Scriptures. Change in the behavior of those who became Christians was noted in the New Testament by their former companions: “Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you” (1 Pet. 4:4). Paul described the sinfulness of the Corinthians before they became Christians in 1 Corinthians 6:8-11. However, it is highly significant that he said that these sins were in their **past**, not their **present**. His words were, “And such **were** some of you” (6:11).

Repentance requires a change of mind, which brings about a change in behavior. Conversion requires a turning around of the believer’s life. A person who is no different in behavior after baptism has neither repented nor been converted. He may have his name on some church roll, but he is not a Christian. The true Christian does not love the world, “neither the things that are in the world” (1 John 2:15). Christians realize that the love of the world causes one to be an enemy of God (Jam. 4:4). Paul wrote, “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed” (Rom. 12:2). Pure religion involves keeping oneself “unspotted from the world” (Jam. 1:27). Paul’s admonition is appropriate here: “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you” (2 Cor. 6:17).

Be a Christian

What this world desperately needs (and can be influenced by) is more who are willing to live the Christian life and display the love of Christ to the world. The world cannot

be improved through the cowardice of those who try to isolate themselves from it in some sort of cloistered environment. Nor can the world be improved by the hypocrisy of those who claim to be Christians but whose lives deny their claims. The world can and must be influenced by those who are dedicated to the Lord and His Word enough to live the Christian life. The words of a Christian are important (Mat. 12:37), but without a life to back them up our words are worthless. Jesus spoke of the experience of some on the Day of Judgment: “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven” (7:21). Paul described the life of the Christian, “That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God” (Col. 1:10). The Christian life must also show a genuine concern for others. Loving our neighbors, those who have needs that we can supply, is one of the greatest commandments (Mark 12:30-31). This is Christ-like! There are those who have physical needs that Christians can supply. John wrote: But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth (1 John 3:17-18).

However, the greatest need of all mankind is the salvation which is only in Christ—in being a Christian. “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). Surely, going to Bible classes and worship assemblies of the church is not enough; the church must also go in service to others. The world can be greatly influenced for good by Christians who do not hide the light of Christ within them, but who live their lives as Christians. “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Mat. 5:16).

The Christian’s life must also be committed to the Gospel of Christ. The Gospel saves, but the Gospel must be taught (John 6:45; 1 Cor. 1:21). Christians have a responsibility to teach the Gospel (that which they have come to know and have obeyed) to others by word and deed so others might also be saved. Someone has well said: “The Gospel is the currency owed to the lost by those who are saved.” Because Christians have been saved by God’s grace through the Gospel, we have a debt to pay. Paul said, “I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise” (Rom. 1:14). Paul realized the existence of that debt, and so must every Christian!

Truly, what this world of sin needs is more who are genuine Christians. May we rise to this task! “And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me” (Luke 9:23).

“The Thing That Hath Been...”

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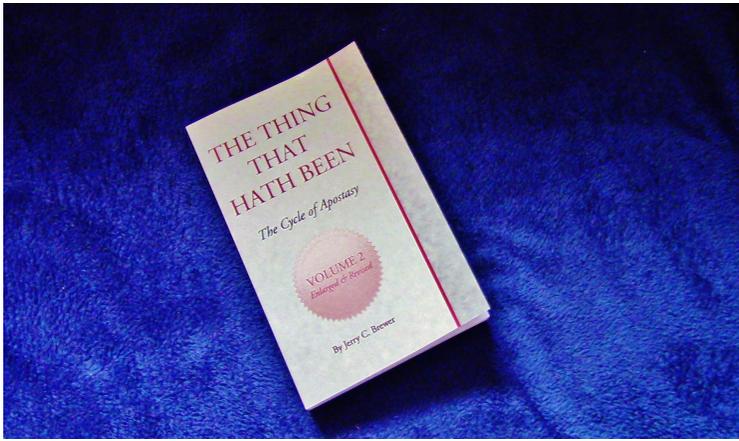
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“The Thing That Hath Been...”



The thing that hath been, it *is that* which shall be; and that which is done *is that* which shall be done: and *there is* no new *thing* under the sun. Is there *any* thing whereof it may be said, See, this *is* new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us (Eccl. 1:9-10).

Apostasy is the bane of God's people as Israel in the shadow of Sinai.

And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for *as for* this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which *are* in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring *them* unto me...And he received *them* at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These *be* thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt...To morrow *is* a feast to the LORD. And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play (Exo. 32:1-6).

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