

The Gospel Preceptor

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

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Why We Cannot Fellowship Denominations

W.R. Craig

We in churches of Christ who hew to the “old paths and the good ways” are often asked why we do not work with the denominations. It is not a selfish spirit on our part, but a matter of principle. Personally I had rather mingle with all mankind as much as possible than to live in seclusion. But I must abide by the Word of God and not my own feelings. First Peter 4:11 tell; us we must “speak as the oracles of God.” First Peter 3:15 tells me to “be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope.” This means I should be able to give a Bible answer for everything we do or refuse to do. Therefore we do not at any time fellowship any religious program of or with the denominations because:

1. The denominational world has not obeyed the gospel as revealed in the “Great Commission.” If they have, we are not preaching the truth. If we are preaching the whole truth, they lack the obedience that the Lord requires. Read Acts 2:38, Romans 6:3-4, and Romans 6:17. The denominations teach that the things commanded in these passages are “non-essential” to salvation. Can we then fellowship bodies of people who deny these plain Scriptures?
2. The denominations, we admit, use many unscriptural things in their worship and work: Instrumental music, societies usurping the work of the church, human names, creeds, confessions of faith, sensational means of getting a crowd, recreational activities—ball teams, youth camps, car ashes and rummage sales to finance the work and activities of various groups in the church, Junior church services, special devotionals for youth (corporate worship is not sufficient), down grading God’s simple worship and substituting Choirs, choruses, and other entertainment. We have spent years teaching and debating that these things are wrong. Now, if we take part with them in these unscriptural practices (you will be forced to take part in some of them, if you work with any denomination in the country, they will not leave them off in order to get you to work with them), how can we convince them that they are unscriptural?
3. Paul said, “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord” (Col. 3:17). To do a thing in the name of Christ is to do it by His Authority! Can we enter into any unscriptural practices by the authority of Jesus Christ? If so, where is it found in the Bible?
4. John said, “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God” (2 John 9). Denominations do not abide in the doctrine of Christ. They have added things He never authorized, viz. Instruments, etc. Let us hear John again: “If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds” (2 John 10-11).

Briefly, these are a few, among many, of our reasons for not working with the denominations in a religious way. We have friends and relatives among the denominations. We love and enjoy them, but we cannot fellowship them in their religious beliefs and activities. To have fellowship with them is sinful (Eph. 5:11).

Called in One Body

Nana Yaw Aidoo

To the church of Christ at Colosse Paul wrote: “And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful” (Col. 3:15). We call attention to three things in this great text.

First, the fact that the recipients of this epistle are said to have been called. The idea of a calling implies that the Colossians prior to their becoming saints (Col. 1:2) were in a place that at the time of the writing of this epistle, they no longer were. According to Colossians 1:13, that place from which they were called was “...the power of darkness...” It is written that “...the whole world lies under the sway of the evil one” (1 John 5:19 NJKV) and the only way by which one can be delivered from the power of “...the god of this age...” is if such a one were *called*.

To be *called* is to be saved and the means by which men are *called* is the gospel. Paul wrote:

But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thess. 2:13-14).

And in another place he wrote: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Rom. 1:16). Thus, unless a person obeys the gospel from the heart (Rom. 6:17; Heb. 5:9), which culminates in baptism unto the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:3-6; 1 Pet. 3:21), he cannot be *called*.

Second, the fact that Paul in telling the Colossians that they had been called, told them that they were called in the *body*. Not only were the Colossians *called* but they were *called* into a **location**. Salvation has always had a location. In the ante-diluvian age, it was located in the ark, which God commissioned Noah to build. Today it is located in the *body*. Hence, when God called or saved the Colossians, He placed them in the locus of salvation, which is the *body*.

Third, the fact that the body into which the Colossians were called is *one*. The Colossians were *called in one body*. There is a singular body that God in His wisdom places those whom He calls or saves. What is this body? Paul wrote: “Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body’s sake, which is the church” (Col. 1:24). Clearly, the body is the church. Therefore, if God calls or saves men in one body, and if the body is the church, then it follows that God is saving people on one church. There is simply no escape from this conclusion.

Amidst the multitude of religious bodies we ask the question, “which church?” Folks, it is the same one that Jesus Christ built. In response to Peter’s great confession, our Lord said: “And I say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 16:18). Since God cannot lie (Tit. 1:2), this church was built on the first Pentecost after the ascension of Jesus Christ. And just as Paul told the Colossians that they were called or saved in one body, the inspired historian recorded that: “...the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47 NJKV). Because this church belongs to Christ, Paul called congregations of this one church, “...the churches of Christ...” (Rom. 16:16).

There is only one church in which all who are saved are located. It is the Lord’s church, the church of Christ. We quickly note that since the body or church is as one as God the Father is one (Eph. 4:4-6), then denominational churches do not in any way form a part of the Lord’s church, the church of Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 1:10-13; 3:3-11). One church cannot be good as another anymore that one god is as good as another.

Have you been called in the one body of the saved? If not, why not (Acts 22:16)?

The Myth of Relativism

Dub McClish

Is 7 the sum of 2+2? Is “up” above us or below us? Does the law of gravity operate only in certain cultures? Is the rape of a seven-year-old child good, neither good nor evil, or evil? Can black be both black and white simultaneously? Is truth, like beauty, only in the eye of the beholder? Such questions accentuate the philosophical current of our time—**relativism**.

Relativism and its first cousins, subjectivism, agnosticism, and postmodernism, are hardly new concepts, dating at least back to the Greek sophist, Protagoras, 2500 years ago. His credo, a thing “is to me such as it appears to me, and is to you such as it appears to you,” well expresses the mantra of today’s pervasive your-truth, my-truth postmodernism.

Relativism manifests itself in many areas of our lives, including science, art, entertainment, politics, morals, historical perspective, and religion. It has led to the tyranny of “political correctness,” “situation ethics,” revisionism of history, and to displaying human waste as “art.” In religion, relativism holds that there is no one true, exclusive religion; the same religion can be true for one person, while not true for others.

In other words, relativism denies the existence of absolute, objective truth at all, with one notable exception, which is the relativist’s Achilles’ heel: He cannot even state his creed without advocating at least one thing he believes to be an absolute, objective truth. His creed is that **all things are relative**. We immediately want to ask him if his creed is absolute and objective. If he says, “No,” why should we hear his palaver? If he answers “Yes,” he thereby denies what he has affirmed. Absolute, objective truth to the relativist is that there is no absolute, objective truth. Relativism is thereby exposed as the manifestation of irrationality that it is.

Since there is this one exception to his thesis, might there be more? If there is absolute truth in mathematics (i.e., $2+2=4$), might there not be in other areas of thought, including religion—matters of the soul? The relativist despises the Bible, principally because it dares to make absolute, exclusive truth claims: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6).

Relativists charge Christians with arrogance, all the while they arrogantly advocate relativism. Relativists boast of their tolerance, all the while having no tolerance for the Bible’s truth claims. Relativists despise evangelism by Christians, all the while eagerly seeking converts to their irrational dogma.

Doctoring the Bible

Cled E. Wallace

There is no short cut to a knowledge of the Bible. Publishers of and agents for specially edited Bibles with fancy trimmings and helps of various kinds have reaped a considerable profit for themselves by raising false hopes in the minds of the gullible, who would like to have, and imagine they can get, a knowledge of the Book without much hard work. The price tags attached to such wares are far from modest and in some instances so ridiculous they reflect on the intelligence of the customer. When the Bible with “helps” costs considerably more than twice as much as the same Bible without the “**helps**,” it ought to occur to somebody that too high a value has been placed on human help. Some books of the sort are helpful after a fashion but they contain no magic that will cause one to absorb knowledge from sleeping with one of them under his pillow. This is true even of the best ones.

A lot of sectarian and speculative propaganda is spread about with the help of these doctored, high-priced Bibles. Sales resistance is entirely too low among the brethren, and especially the sisters, when some of these talkative vendors ring the doorbell. When one is let in, he should be viewed with enough suspicion to give a healthy curiosity a chance to determine what he is and what he has. A very intelligent sister asked me to inspect a book she had bought from an agent for a financial consideration

of several good American dollars. The agent got the money and she was laboring under the impression that she was getting just what the doctor ordered to help her and her household to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. What she got was "Bible Readings For the Home Circle." Sounds good, doesn't it? And it was mechanically very pleasing to the eye and had pictures in it. The agent of course did **not** tell the sister that he was a Seventh Day Adventist and the book was arranged for the spread of **Adventist doctrine**. When she found that out, was she mad!

There are a lot of people, too, who do not distinguish between the text of the Bible and the comments made upon it in some of these highly specialized editions. Some brethren proudly display their *Scofield Bibles* until somebody tells them that the **Scofield** part is the **rottenest sort of premillennial propaganda**, and then they nearly die from shock. Anybody who buys one of the things without knowing what he is getting is being sadly imposed upon. A lot of men who write Bible "**helps**" are in need of a liberal amount of help themselves, or past the point where any amount of it will do them any good. Brethren can at least take care not to pay out good money in exchange for such blindness on paper. "Our" own publishers are not too careful, conscientious or something, sometimes, when it comes to what is said about such works advertised in their catalogs. In one of them, I have seen the *Scofield Bible* praised as though it were almost inspired exegesis, instead of the pitiful, driveling web of fancy which it really is.

Brother Larimore was wont to say that a fairly intelligent human being of either sex, was very well equipped to increase his knowledge of God, if he had a good text of the Bible, a good English dictionary and a good Bible dictionary. There is some wisdom here. This is no argument against the reading of good books, or the use of any **helps** that are helps. It does add up to this. There is no way to really learn what is in the Bible without reading and studying the Bible itself. Few students are capable of passing an examination on any subject, history for instance, after only one casual reading of a text and listening to a few lectures. The text must be read, re-read and studied. So it is with the books that make up the Bible. And dealing with the Bible after such a fashion yields tremendous and pleasing results. A student should read the gospels until he knows the life of Christ. He should read the book of Acts until he knows the history of the early church. He should read the epistles until he knows what the Lord expects of His church and His people. If he reads these things often enough, he will know them just like he knows other things he is interested in enough to read about.

Some brethren can tell us where Joe Louis landed every punch on Lou Nova and which fist he used, who can't quote a memory verse at a prayer-meeting. There are two reasons for this. In the first place, they are not at prayer-meeting and in the second place they do not know the memory verse. It isn't lack of ability, it is lack of interest. This is really a serious matter. "Wherefore be ye not foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is" (Eph. 5:17). "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly" (Col. 3:16). The prevailing ignorance of the word of God on the part of large numbers in the church is both amazing and appalling. I still think we know more about the Bible than our religious neighbors do, but that just goes to show what I think about how little they know. It is my conviction that if an ignorant brother with a fairly good mind would pick out one book in the New Testament, start with a few interesting facts about it, and then read it over and over until he knew it, he would be so proud of himself and feel so good otherwise that he would keep up the good work and really find out what growth in grace and knowledge means.

Reading the Bible should not be viewed as a task, or drudgery. The pleasure it affords is commensurate with the profit it yields. There is no short cut to a knowledge of the Bible. The man who knows it was not born that way. He got that way by keeping company with the Book and behaving himself intelligently while he was at it.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The numbers of so-called "Bibles" that have flooded the market in the last decades, of "Doctoring" is a frontal attack on the Bible its self. The policy of *The Gospel Preceptor* requires our writers to use only The King James Version (KJV) and American Standard Version of 1901 (ASV). In 1973, during the Freed-Hardeman College Lectureship, G.K. Wallace said of the "new translations" ("no translations"): "If the denominations cannot read their doctrines *from* the Bible, they will *write them into* the Bible." And they have done so!

Which Baptists Believe All the Bible?

W. Curtis Porter

A Baptist preacher recently reporting a meeting which he conducted in the Panhandle section of Texas declared there is “Not a single Baptist in the whole section that believes all they see in the Bible.” (James MacKrell in *Orthodox Baptist Searchlight*).

This charge, according to a later edition of the same paper, raised quite a howl among Baptist preachers of that section of Texas. But I see nothing in it that should create much disturbance, unless it is the implication that some Baptists somewhere believe all they see in the Bible. I have traveled rather extensively over the United States and have come in contact with many Baptists, including a large number of Baptist preachers, but I have the first Baptist to find yet who believes all he sees in the Bible. Since, then, this Baptist preacher implies that some Baptists believe all they see in the Bible, I am asking the question: Which Baptists believe all the Bible?

The very fact that men are Baptists is proof that they do not ‘believe all they see in the Bible, and that they believe a lot they do not see in the Bible, or they would cease to be Baptists. After all, no Baptist has ever seen in the Bible anything about a Baptist Church; nor has any one of them ever seen where the members of the New Testament Church were ever called Baptists. These are some of the things they believe that they do not see in the Bible. The only person to whom the term “Baptist” is ever applied in the Bible was John, the forerunner of Christ, and he was called “John the Baptist” (Matt. 3:1). This statement is easily seen by any Baptist, not only in this passage but in a number of other New Testament references, but what Baptist today believes it? I have never found any who believe it. Even their preachers will constantly refer to him as “a Baptist” or “a Baptist preacher,” when the Bible expressly calls him “**the** Baptist.” There is a vast difference between the meaning of the two statements. Baptist preachers want to refer to him in such way as to make room for a lot of other Baptist preachers. Yet they do not “see in the Bible” anything about these other Baptist preachers. And remember this: John the Baptist died before the Lord ever built the church. It was after the death of John that Jesus said: “Upon this rock I will build my church.” (Matt. 16:18. (cf Matt. 14:1-12). This is a fact that any Baptist can “see in the Bible” if he will just take time to read these references. But do you know of any Baptists who believe it? Well, some Baptist preachers have been so often and mercilessly whipped from the old position that John founded the first Baptist Church on the banks of the Jordan that they won’t take the position any more, but even they do not believe what they see in Matt. 16:18. Although they can easily “see” that Jesus said “I will build my church,” they do not believe it, for they still proclaim that the church had already been built before Jesus ever made this statement. So the fact remains, which any Baptist may see, even if none of them believe it, that the only person in the Bible to whom the term “Baptist” was ever applied was never a member of the New Testament church, and that no member of the New Testament church was ever called a “Baptist.” Is that not strange, if the New Testament church was a Baptist Church? Can you think of a Baptist Church today whose members have never been called Baptists? It might be an eye-opener to many Baptists if they would just take time to look into the Bible to see how many members of the church were ever called Baptists. And when they make that investigation, if they would believe what “they see in the Bible” and give up what is nowhere to be seen in it, it would result in a material decrease in the population of Baptist churches.

But let us look into the Bible to find what Baptists and all others can see. In Mark 16:16, Jesus said: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” But what group of Baptists today believes that? You will hear them all saying that the man who believes will be saved whether he is ever baptized or not. Such statements clearly show that they do not believe what Jesus said. And Peter, on the day of Pentecost, told inquiring sinners “to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38). I wish someone would trot out the Baptist who believes that. They all say that baptism is not for the remission of sins but *because of* the remission of sins. Why even if one of their preachers should

start preaching it as Peter commanded it on the day of Pentecost and would tell the sinners of his audience to be baptized “for the remission of sins,” he would be turned out of the Baptist Church for preaching heresy. Even James MacKrell does not believe that baptism is “for the remission of sins,” for he is constantly claiming that sinners are saved before and without baptism. Why, then, criticize the Baptists of the Texas Panhandle for not believing all they see in the Bible? He is right in the boat with them. He does not believe this part of it any more than they do. Do you know of any Baptist who ever saw what Peter said in 1 Pet. 3:21? Yes, I know many of them have seen it, for I have shown it to them, but I have yet to find one who believes it. Peter said: “The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” What do Baptists say about this when you make them see it? They say that baptism is only a figure of salvation, that it does not save us at all, and that men are saved before the water ever touches them. But the fact remains that Peter says “baptism saves us.” But Baptists say it does not. Does this look like they believe what “they see in the Bible”? The statement, “baptism saves us,” is in the Bible, is it not? Oh, yes. Can Baptists see it? Certainly they can. Do they believe it? If you know of one who does, send me his name and address. That men are “baptized into Christ” is also a statement that is easily seen in the Bible (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27). But all the Baptists I have ever known say that men get “into Christ” without baptism at all.

Perhaps this lack of belief in what can be seen in the Bible has caused Baptists to write creeds and manuals as declarations of their faith and practice. Mr. MacKrell further says in the same issue of the *Orthodox Baptist Searchlight*:

This thing makes my blood boil. I have long been a devotee of the *Baptist Way Book*. When I was led into Baptist ranks I first sought out Dr. Calvin B. Waller of the Convention and Dr. Ben M. Bogard and asked them for a book that set forth the distinctive doctrines of Baptists. “Dr. Waller gave me a copy of O.S.C. Wallace’s *What Baptists Believe* and Dr. Bogard gave me a copy of the *Baptist Way Book*.”

If Mr. MacKrell had “long been a devotee of the New Testament” instead of the *Baptist Way Book*, he would never have been “led into Baptist ranks” in the first place, for the New Testament makes no mention of “Baptist ranks.” Whenever a man is “led into Baptist ranks” he must be led by something else besides the New Testament. Certainly if a man takes “the Baptist Way Book” for his guide and follows it, he will be “led into Baptist ranks,” for that is the purpose of the Way Book. But the New Testament is the “Way Book” of Christians, and it never leads anybody to be a Baptist. In fact, there were no “Baptist ranks” to be “led into” at the time the New Testament was written. Such ranks came into being a long time—many centuries in fact—after the New Testament was written. And when Mr. MacKrell asked Dr. Waller and Dr. Bogard “for a book that set forth the distinctive doctrines of Baptists,” I wonder why the Doctors did not give him a copy of the New Testament. The fact that they did not shows that they knew that “the distinctive doctrines of Baptists” are not “set forth” in that Book. If you are going to give a man a book that sets forth the distinctive doctrines of a church, you will surely give a book that makes some mention of the church. And since the New Testament does not mention the Baptist Church or its distinctive doctrines, the Doctors gave Mr. MacKrell some books that do mention such things; one of them giving him *What Baptists Believe* and the other giving him the *Baptist Way Book*. After examining these books carefully, Mr. MacKrell says, “I settled on the *Way Book* and studied it day and night for weeks, checking and rechecking every statement.”

The reason for this is evident. Had he “settled on the New Testament” and had he “studied it day and night for weeks,” even to the point of “checking and rechecking every statement” found in it, he would have known no more about “the distinctive doctrines of Baptists” than he knew before he started. Since MacKrell did not believe “all he saw in the Bible,” either before or after he was “led into Baptist ranks,” it was only natural for him to settle on some other book. It was just as well that he settled on the *Way Book* as on *What Baptists Believe*. But if a man wants to be a Christian and reach heaven at last, he would better settle on the New Testament.

The Crucial Issue of Authority

Batsell Baxter

Every thinking person realizes that authority plays a very significant role in all of our lives. Before we may drive a car, we must have the authority of a license. A doctor must have a diploma from a reputable medical school before he can practice. A policeman must have a badge which authorizes him to carry out his duties. To get married, we must have a license. There is little that we can do in life without proper authorization.

Especially in the realm of religion must we have proper authority for all that we do. In the worship and service of God, we must do that which we are authorized to do and nothing else.

The question Jesus once faced, “By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?” (Mat. 21:23) is a good one for all of us.

Possible Sources of Authority

Final or ultimate authority in religion rests in one of three possible sources. First of all, there are those who believe that final authority rests in the church. Councils, conclaves, and synods meet and make decisions. From these human deliberations such doctrines as purgatory, the adoration of Mary, the seven sacraments, papal infallibility, and others have come.

It was Martin Luther who pointed out the problem of such human authority when he said, “I cannot trust either the decisions of Councils, or of Popes, for it is plain that they have not only erred but have contradicted each other” (Friedenthal, *Luther: His Life and Times*, 278).

Second, others conceive final authority to rest in the reasoning power of men. One’s own conscience, inner feelings, or reason is the final arbiter. Saul of Tarsus demonstrated this view to be erroneous. In spite of his honesty of purpose and intensity of zeal, he was wrong. Many a person, guided by his own inner feelings, believes and practices what is contrary to the will of God. The whole blight of denominationalism is a result of man’s trusting his own views, rather than conforming his convictions to God’s teaching. Liberalism makes the mistake of thinking that man’s reason is the infallible authority in religion.

The third possibility, as the absolute source of authority, is the Bible, the inspired Word of God. God the creator of the universe and of man is the only ultimate, final source of authority. He has spoken in His Word. It is our responsibility to read the Scriptures, understand them and obey them. Let us say as Samuel did. “Speak; for thy servant heareth” (1 Sam. 3:10).

Never With Men

Authority always rests with divinity. “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1), and in so doing established his ultimate supreme authority. Later, when Jesus was upon the earth He said, “All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth” (Mat. 28:18). He further announced to His apostles that when He left the earth, the Holy Spirit would come in His place and “shall guide you into all the truth” (John 16:13). Authority has always rested with the Godhead, and never with men. The prophets, the apostles, and others miraculously guided by God were simply spokesmen. God’s Word has always been the final authority among men.

Our Only Guide

The Bible is our guide—our only guide. For this reason, it is encouraging to hear people say, “Let us have a ‘thus saith the Lord’ for all that we do in our religious faith and practice.” Still, another way of saying it is “Let us speak where the scriptures speak, and be silent where the scriptures are silent.” Each of these is a statement indicating the acceptance of the authority of the Scriptures.

At this point let us examine two opposite positions on the matter of the authority of the Scriptures. Martin Luther championed the idea that, “Whatever is not expressly prohibited in the scriptures is permissible.” (D’Aubigne, *History of the Great Reformation of the Sixteenth Century*, Book II, 297). Luther’s view opens the door to

all kinds of innovations, such as the burning of incense, the lighting of candles, the use of images, instrumental music, and even adding other elements to the Lord's Supper.

Huldreich Zwingli championed the second view which said, "Whatever is not expressly authorized in the scriptures is prohibited." (W. Walker, *History of the Christian Church*, 1959, 322). This is the view set forth in the Scriptures themselves. In Galatians 1:8, Paul wrote, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema." The apostle John said the same thing in these words: "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son" (2 John 9).

Three Avenues

In determining what the Scriptures authorize, there are three avenues through which we may receive guidance. First, there are direct statements, such as Acts 2:38. In the second place, there are approved apostolic examples, such as the apostle Paul's eating of the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). And, finally, there is implication. Each command of God authorizes whatever is necessary to carry it out. When the Lord commanded Christians to meet for worship, He necessarily authorized the providing of a place for Christians to assemble for worship.

Our religion—our relationship to God—is our most important relationship. We must be absolutely certain about everything that we believe and practice.

Editor's Travels

We preached in Yukon, Okla. on Sunday, Nov. 7, and Nov. 28. On Nov. 14 we worshiped at Cheyenne, Oklahoma, and traveled to Denton, Texas where I preached at Northpoint on Nov. 21. Phil Smith preaches at Northpoint and we stayed with Dub and Diane McLish. At Northpoint was the first time I preached twice on the same day since my stroke, Dec. 15, 2020.

"What Saith The Scriptures?"

Harrell Davidson

We have chosen to give most of the content of a letter that the writer of these lines received from an inmate in the one of the Rosharon, Texas prison units. He said:

Question: "Brother Davidson, I pray that you are having a blessed day. You do not know me, but I have truly been encouraged by the new feature, Questions and Answers (What Saith The Scriptures?) in *The Gospel Preceptor*. I have been introduced to *The Gospel Preceptor* by brethren during Bible classes in the past few weeks.

"My question, is there a way that I can get a copy of your questions and answers and the books that you have written? I loved studying the books (I lost them in hurricane Andrew) of brother Guy N. Woods. His writings were quite helpful in my studies. As a life long student of the Bible, I continuously seek the knowledge of Christ. My favorite Scripture from childhood until now is 2 Tim. 2:15. Due to my current place of abode I am sort of restricted to the access of study materials. I am so thankful that the most important study reference, my Bible, is allowed, praise be to God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I noticed that I could ask you any Bible question. Question: Are God's commands today as clear as they were in the Old Testament, if so where?"

Writer's comments: We asked brother Joe Travis who worships at the Richwood Church of Christ in Richwood, TX if he might be going to the prison and doing this work. He said that he was not the one that was going, but we both observed that someone is, and they are carrying in copies of *The Gospel Preceptor*. Through the pages of this paper someone is advancing the Lord's work. Isaiah said of old that, "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" (Isa. 55:11). Even in prison we have learned Paul and Silas converted the jailer

and his household and these new converts became part of the newly established church in Philippi (cf. Acts 16). The serial killer, who ate some of his subjects, was converted to the Lord through those who were interested in his soul. It was also never that important who established various congregations in the book of Acts. The point was/is that the Gospel was spread by someone. Since the Gospel is God's power to save (Rom. 1:16) when it is preached or taught, it will produce desired results in good and honest hearts. Now to the inmate's question—Are God's commands today as clear as they were in the Old Testament, if so where? We do not know for sure what commandments in the Old Testament he might have reference, but is likely the Ten Commandments. Regardless, the answer is the same. It is very hard to misunderstand, thus easy to understand statements — commands like these:

- He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned (Mark 16:16).
- Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:38).
- And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight (Acts 20:7).

Brother Davidson answers readers' questions in this column each month. If you have Bible questions, you may email them to him at: wd4lar@gmail.com

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Compelled to Blaspheme

Lee Moses

In speaking of his former sinful life prior to his conversion, the apostle Paul shamefully noted some of the atrocities which he, as a person of authority among the Jews, had committed against Christians (Acts 26:9-11). He had imprisoned them, he had participated in putting them to death, and he had punished them often in all the synagogues. These atrocities build up to something even worse: Paul had “compelled *them* to blaspheme” (26:11).

What was the exact nature of this blasphemy is uncertain. The meaning of “to blaspheme” is “to speak in a disrespectful way that demeans, denigrates, maligns” (Bauer, Danker, Arndt, and Gingrich 177-178). As Paul was seeking “to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth,” it was against Jesus Himself that he was compelling Christians to speak in this disrespectful, demeaning, denigrating, and malign manner. Whether Paul was successful in making any Christians blaspheme is uncertain. The language leaves room for the possibility that they all held “fast the profession of our faith without wavering” (Heb. 10:23). But the language also indicates that Paul used force in his efforts to compel them to blaspheme. This force obviously included the threat of death. Unfortunately, it oftentimes does not require much force at all to **compel** many professing Christians today to blaspheme the name of the Lord.

All have heard the vain and degrading ways that the name of the Lord has come to be used. “Oh, my God!” is no longer a distressed plea to the Father, but a mere expression of surprise in which the speaker has no thought of God whatsoever to cross his mind. Some claiming Christianity will attach the name of God to a curse word, thus linking to defilement the One who is “of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity” (Hab. 1:13). Many mock the holy names of God the Father and of the Lord Je-

sus Christ by twisting them into such derisive appellations as “Lordy,” “Gosh,” and “Jeez.”

Some may attempt to justify such breaches of reverence on the basis that the speaker “does not mean anything by what he says.” This, dear reader, is the precise problem. To use the name of the Lord without meaning anything is impossible, because the name of the Lord **means something**. God told Moses: “Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations” (Exo. 3:15).

It was by the Lord’s name that He was to be remembered and worshipped. It was not to be a meaningless word applicable to manifold uses. “That men may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the earth” (Psa. 83:18). The name of God belongs to God alone—it is not to be given to another person, nor to another person’s situational vocabulary. God Himself said, “I am the Lord: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another” (Isa. 42:8). Yet, some would endeavor to take from the Lord His name and His glory in one fell swoop.

The Lord has never taken such misuse of His name lightly. The third commandment stated, “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain” (Exo. 20:7). And indeed under the old covenant such blasphemers were not held guiltless. The Lord commanded Moses:

And he that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him: as well the stranger, as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name of the Lord, shall be put to death (Lev. 24:16).

Immediately after receiving this instruction, the Israelites carried out this very punishment against a blasphemer (24:11, 23).

Blasphemy did not suddenly become pleasing or acceptable to God under the new covenant. Blasphemy is one of the traits a person completely “puts off” when he “puts on” the new man of Christianity (Col. 3:8). The apostle Paul acknowledged that before his conversion he had been “injurious” and “chief of sinners” when he had been a blasphemer, and in need of mercy (1 Tim. 1:13-15). The book of Revelation does not portray blasphemy as a practice of Christians, but of a “beast” (Roman emperor—13:1, 5-6), of recipients of God’s severe wrath (16:9, 11, 21), and of “the great harlot” (Rome—17:3).

What is it that “compels” a professing Christian to blaspheme? It is not love of the Lord. It is not an understanding of His will conjoined with a strong desire to please Him. But these are the things which compel the true Christian to live the life that he does. While many early Christians were “compelled to blaspheme,” there was a stronger force compelling them not to blaspheme. Many resisted even the threat of death to avoid blaspheming the name of the Lord: “And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death” (12:11). Instead of allowing the hot flame of temper or the rolling waves of emotion to compel him to blaspheme, the Christian will allow the worthy name of the Lord to compel him to see it held in the highest regard.

“Let them praise the name of the Lord: for his name alone is excellent; his glory is above the earth and heaven” (Psa. 148:13).

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Bauer, Danker, Arndt, and Gingrich. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*. 3rd ed. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000.

In the Beginning. . .

Jess Whitlock

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1). My wife and I recently watched a fictional movie which revolved around the NASA launched space

probe, Voyager 1. That probe was launched in September of 1977. Voyager 1 races through space at 29,000 MPH. The probe has traveled in excess of 14,000,000,000 miles from earth and still collecting data. In August of 2012 Voyager 1 entered into interstellar space, and still has not entirely left our solar system! Voyager 1 is scheduled to reach the Oort cloud, a group of comets, in approximately 300 more years; but will not pass beyond that cloud until another 15,000 to 25,000 years has passed. Astronomers and scientists at NASA tell us that Voyager 1 should reach our nearest star, Alpha Centauri, which is 4.37 light years away. That is a mere 25 trillion miles, so the probe should reach that point in about 70,000 years! Our Milky Way galaxy is only one out of estimated millions and millions of galaxies. And my God created all of this “in the beginning...”

I can remember as a little one having mom and dad to point to the night-sky, pointing to one star after another. Then it was explained to me that God created the heavens on the fourth day of creation (Gen. 1:16). The astronomers finally had to give up trying to count the number of the stars. Yet, God has numbered the stars and given to each one a name (Psa. 147:4). God commands the sun (Job 9:7). Joshua pleaded with God to command the sun and the moon, to give them more time in battle with the Amorites (Josh. 10:12), and in the next verse: “So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, till the people had revenge upon their enemies.” It is our Lord and Savior that continually is “...upholding all things by the word of His power ...” (Heb. 1:3).

In the fields of all the sciences, man has made many advances, strides, and discoveries of God’s great might and power. Man is miniscule in comparison to the great God and creator of the universe and all that is contained therein.

Yet, God the creator and controller of the universe, “So loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). God’s magnanimous love, like the universe which He created, cannot be completely fathomed by man. The songwriter, F.M. Lehman, was right when he wrote the words of the old hymn, *The Love of God*:

Could we with ink the ocean fill, and were the skies of parchment made;
Were every stalk on earth a quill, and every man a scribe by trade;
To write the love of God above would drain the ocean dry;
Nor could the scroll contain the whole, tho’ stretched from sky to sky.

The Psalmist of old was right as well: “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth forth His handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge” (Psa. 19:1-2).

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Why Do We Whisper?

David Ray

Recently I was sitting in a coffee shop quietly sipping on my latte and working on my sermon when three young people (probably in their twenties) came in. Other than one employee, we were the only four people there, and the employee was in the back of the store at that moment. I continued working, completely oblivious to their conversation...until their voices lowered. Why did they stop and whisper? Funny how

we lower our voices because we don't want people around us to hear, and yet that is the very thing that will get their attention!

The sudden quietness having broken my attention to my own work, my ears naturally tuned in, even though I really didn't want to eavesdrop. Though I couldn't hear very well, I did pick up a few words here and there, such as "Christian," "prayer," and "church." I have no idea what their religious affiliation was, but the fact that they quieted down when the conversation turned to "Christianity" was no surprise. This is what usually happens when these discussions arise. What surprised me was that I was the only person there who could've possibly overheard their conversation, and yet they still decided to speak quietly. Why did they whisper?

Why did they not want me to hear a Christian conversation? Did they not want me to know about Christ? Did they not want me to be saved? Were they afraid of getting into a religious conversation that they were unwilling or unprepared to have? Were they afraid of some type of resulting persecution? Or were they just afraid to offend me? Whatever the case, I was just one person, and not a very scary one at that! Is this really what our society has come to, that if just **one person** is there then we can't have a "Christian" conversation in public? Why whisper??

I don't know the details as to why they didn't want me to hear; but all these speculations seem to lead to one of two reasons: embarrassment or fear. I don't know their religious convictions; but that isn't the point. Members of the church are just as guilty of whispering the truth!

Why are **we** whispering? Are **we** too embarrassed to share our beliefs? Are we too afraid of not being able to defend those beliefs in the face of scrutiny? Or are we too scared of offending one person sitting alone in a coffee shop who **might** get offended at hearing our religious beliefs (even though the average non-Christian is usually more than willing to subject us to his immoral ideas without the least bit of concern for our convictions)? Why do we whisper?

Consider 2 Timothy 1:7-8,

For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God...

If the reason we whisper is that we are **unable** to share/defend our beliefs, then we need to study the Bible more. If the answer is that we are **unwilling** to share/defend our beliefs, then we need to remember our purpose on earth (cf. Matt. 28:18-20). If the answer is that we're afraid to offend someone who might overhear, then we need to stop living in fear, stop putting the feelings of others above the commands of God, and remind ourselves of Romans 1:16: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."

Personally, I'm fed up with society's unwritten rules for Christians. I'm not saying that those three young people had a responsibility to invite me into their conversation just because it was "Christian" related, or that we, as Christians, are required to raise our voices so everyone around can hear when we have a religious conversation in public. I'm saying that we shouldn't feel required to whisper our beliefs so as not to offend anyone; we can be sure that nobody out there is walking on eggshells trying not to offend Christians...nor should they be. We still live in a country that affords us the freedom to be Christians and serve God in our everyday lives, even though these freedoms are being eroded every day. Let's stop whispering!

Speak out, even in a personal conversation that happens to be taking place in public. We'll probably find that, most of the time, nobody is going to be offended or even care. And we might just find someone who wants to know more! Let's stop whispering!

Visit our Website
www.thegospelpreceptor.com

No One had to be a Prophet to See This Coming

Gary W. Summers

When secular humanists began redefining the word “family,” they did so with one goal in mind, and that was to allow for two adults of the same gender to be able to adopt children (since they obviously cannot have any of their own). It took a few years, but sure enough, the Supreme Court decided that two homosexuals can be married and granted family status. When that occurred, many of us predicted that it would not be long until polygamy would be sanctioned because once the definition for a “family” begins to be altered, there is no stopping point. In other words, when it ceases being one male and one female, plus children born to them or adopted, then almost every combination becomes a consideration—not just the ludicrous formation of two of the same gender.

The time has come already—in Canada. According to a post by Ken Ham of “Answers in Genesis,” that nation has just recognized two men and one woman as the parents of one child on the infant’s birth certificate. Although they are not legally married, they are still in a “relationship” together. Sadly, no one needed to be a prophet to see this action coming. How did “homosexual marriages” come to be? Homosexuals complained that they had no legal status; so homosexual “unions” were allowed, but eventually that did not suffice; nothing would do but to have legitimate “marriages.” The process is simply repeating itself. Those in “polyamorous” (many loves) relationships will whine that they have no legal standing, and eventually polygamy will become legal, just as predicted.

The judge who wrote the decision said, “Society is continually changing, and family structures are changing along with it.” Really? Does not this imply that society is the final arbiter of what is right and wrong—and that there is no objective moral standard? So, if drug cartels take over Canada and force through a law that drug dealers cannot be incarcerated, will that be alright? What if the powers that be decided that too much money is wasted on prolonging the lives of their elderly citizens? Will they open “Moving On” centers to hasten departures of seniors? What if the culture desires that solution?

While the judge said that his law was in the best interest of the child, such is clearly not the case. Only one of the men is the father, and the child is inheriting his genic code. Also, this will be a roadblock to genealogical research—especially if a court decides to outlaw a DNA test to find out who the biological father is. How many generations will it take—how many centuries must roll by—how many people must suffer from subjectivism before mankind realizes that God knew what He was doing when He designed the family (Judg. 21:25)?

The Identity of the Church

Foy E. Wallace, Jr.

“Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” Matt. 16:18.

The world hears so much of the denominational in religion, both in pulpit and press, such as Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Catholic, Protestant, Evangelical, etc., that it must be wondering if Christ himself ever had a church, and if he has one today, where is it? How could one find it? Out of the many churches that are in the world today, which church is right—which church did Jesus build?

There is no arbitrary manner or method of settling such questions. It is a matter of identity, and can be determined only by marks, or **characteristics**. If an automobile is lost, it can be identified by make, model, and number. If the church is lost, it may be found only by identification based on New Testament description. The church is a New Testament institution, and hence a perfect description of it is therein set forth.

Being a question of identity, similarity will not do. A thing may be similar, yet not identical. In order to establish identity with the New Testament church, the church today must be Scriptural in every essential feature.

1. It must be Scriptural in origin. Everything began in miracle, but continues through law. First creation, then procreation. God created the first man and woman, and then placed within them the potentiality of procreation. Likewise, God created the church (Eph. 2: 14-16), and then provided for its perpetuity through the potentiality of the seed of the kingdom, “which is the word of God” (Luke 8:11). So long as the seed exists, the power of reproduction is present. Therefore an unbroken line of church succession is unnecessary to be argued. The church today is produced by the word of God, and exists wherever men and women have obeyed it.
2. It must be Scriptural in doctrine. The great commission represents the constitution of the church. The law of pardon, or terms of admission into it, are clearly and unmistakably set forth. Matthew says “teach and baptize”—not baptize and teach. Mark says “preach, believe, baptized, saved”—not believed, saved, and baptized. Luke says “repentance and remission of sins.” The order of these items, both Scripturally and psychologically, then, is preaching faith, repentance, baptism, salvation. On Pentecost, Peter first executed this commission. He preached. The hearers believed, repented, and were baptized “for the remission of sins.” The Lord added them to the church. There is no other way to get into it. The same thing it took to make Christians then, it takes to make Christians now. All who teach or practice to the contrary are unscriptural in doctrine, and that destroys identity.
3. It must be Scriptural in worship. Paul reminds us to keep the ordinances as he delivered them unto us and warns against “will worship,” or self-devised worship, “after the commandments and doctrines of men” (Col. 2:22, 23). Scriptural doctrine is no more important than Scriptural worship. A rigid adherence to correct doctrine and an “expediency” policy in worship is inconsistent. A “Thus saith the Lord” is no more imperative in one than in the other, and the New Testament requires it in both. Therefore, in the worship, the teaching of the apostles and the practice of the New Testament church must be our teaching and practice. The limit of their teaching must be the limit of our practice. And to introduce innovations, such as instrumental music, “which the Catholics foolishly borrowed from the Jews,” is but to destroy identity in worship with the New Testament church. That the Jews used it is a fact, but that Christian Jews did not use it is another fact; and why they ceased to use it, as they did other Jewish observances, has a significant bearing on the issue, and is reason enough for its non-use by Christians today. As well add to the doctrine of the New Testament as to its worship, and as well affiliate with those who do one as with those who do the other.
4. It must be Scriptural in work. Christians are commanded to “work out their own salvation.” For this purpose we have set forth in the New Testament a divine arrangement, the local church. Its organization is simple, not complex. As a perfectly framed, living, working organism, with elders, deacons, and members, it provides all the organization required to do the work that God has commanded the church to do. “Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages” (Eph. 3:21).
5. It must be Scriptural in name. The church of Christ is not a name; it is a thing; and since that is what it is, why call it something else?. We are willing to call the church by any Scriptural name or title, but by no name or title not found in the Bible. The Bible is latitude and longitude enough on both names and things in religion—Bible things by Bible names.

Reverting to the question of identity, when you find a body of people today who are Scriptural in origin, doctrine, worship, organization, work and name, you have by identification found the Bible church.

The Gospel Preceptor May Go Where a Man May Not Go

These are a few countries whose residents visited the www.thegospelpreceptor.com in Aug. 2021: Thailand, Singapore, Russian Federation, China, Vietnam, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Egypt, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Jordan, State of Palestine, Libya, Iraq, Kuwait, Sudan, Somalia, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, Syria Arab Republic. You will note that they are Communist or Moslem countries. In many Moslem countries, a man entering to preach Christ would be killed. We are preaching the Gospel around the world on the internet **where a man may not go.**

Links to Bible Study Resources

The Scripture Cache

Northpoint church of Christ

Precept Upon Precept You Tube

Spiritual Perspectives - Gary Summers

False Doctrines of Man

Yukon, Okla. church of Christ

Berea church of Christ, Rives, TN

South Seminole church of Christ

Doesn't God Want Me to be Happy?

(Prov. 16:4; Rev. 4:11; Rom. 11:36)

Gene Hill

While man is the pinnacle of creation (Gen. 2:5, 7), we are not, nor were we meant to be, the focal point as the texts for this lesson indicate. The Bible clearly states what the business of mankind is to be, as ordained by God (Mat. 5:16; Isa. 61:3; John 15:8; 1 Cor. 14:25; 2 Cor. 9:13; Gal. 1:24; 2 The. 1:10-12; 1 Pet. 2:12; 4:11, 14). It should be noted that since we are in God's image (Gen. 1:26-27), that each of our characteristics must serve some purpose. Our emotional system must therefore serve some purpose intended to glorify God and to serve man in the process. Of what purpose is our emotional system in regards to the condition of happiness?

We must first understand God's purposes to appreciate the role of joy and happiness. God's creative ability was vividly demonstrated in the six days of creation: "And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day" (1:31). Creation was accomplished in a way that was more than merely adequate for man's needs (1:27-2:25; 3:8-9); for his responsibility (1:28), sustenance (1:29), moral consideration (2:9, 16-17), creativity (2:19), socialization (2:20-25), etc. All things were created for His glory (Isa. 43:7, 21), even the evil will glorify God (Pro. 16:4; Rom. 11:36).

In the next place, how do I, as one created in God's image, fulfill my obligation to glorify God? By accepting my responsibility of stewardship (1 Cor. 4:1-2; Tit. 1:7; 1 Pet. 4:10)! Jesus informs us in Luke 12:35-38, 42, that a faithful steward will be one that is anticipating their Lord's return at any moment ready to spring into action (12:35-36)

with such readiness indicating wisdom and faithfulness (12:42).

A steward that is unfaithful is the one that is wasteful and unjust in the handling of his master's wealth (Luke 16:1-8). As a faithful steward what are my obligations in all of this? The Lord provides insight into our responsibilities in the parable found in Luke 19:12-27. A certain nobleman was to go into a far place to receive a kingdom and then return. Prior to his departure he provides money to various servants and then commands them to occupy till he returns whereupon he will have an accounting. Only one of the ten servants did nothing, simply returning what he had been given. It is obvious that the command "Occupy" and the subsequent time of accounting meant that faithful servants will actually be accountable for even minimal activity (19:20-23). It would be profitable for us to note for further study the events related by Jesus in Matthew 25:31-46 and how stewardship relates to the command "Occupy."

I will be a successful and faithful steward by ordering the very core of my being (Luke 6:45; Pro. 23:7) to align my whole life with the Word (Col. 3:17).

Now let us observe the practical effects of ordering our lives along the pathway of faithful stewardship. In carrying out my stewardship, I will have accepted the Lordship of Jesus Christ (Rom. 10:9; Phi. 2:10-11; Isa. 45:22-25; Heb. 5:9; Col. 3:24). I will next recognize that as a bond servant (John 12:26; Rom. 6:16-18; Eph. 1:7, 14), I have surrendered my whole self to Him (Gal. 2:20; Col. 3:1-4). Last, I am taking on the mind of Christ (Phi. 2:5-8) becoming more like Him each day so I will be as He is when He returns (1 John 3:2-3, 7; 4:17).

All of this being the case, what role does my emotional system have as it pertains to happiness and joy as a steward of God? I view temptations differently than before (Jam. 1:2-5). Strong defines temptations as "a putting to proof (by experiment (of good), experience (of evil), solicitation, discipline or provocation); by implication, adversity." Such occasions could be indicators of our faithfulness consequential to my new lifestyle (Mat. 5:10-12; Acts 5:41). It is in such occasions we learn patience because we are in the company of the faithful of the ages that have likewise suffered greatly for the faith (Mat. 5:12; Heb. 12:1).

I understand some suffering may be designed for God's glory (Job 1-3; John 9:1-5; 1 Cor. 10:13). It is possible that suffering can turn us back to God (Psa. 18:6). If we are sufficiently aware, it may be that sins' consequence can cause us to see sin as it really is (Rom. 5:12). Suffering can cause me to realize what is truly valuable.

I ought to learn that there are consequences to my sin that will cause me to lose privileges (Heb. 12:14-17). Even though I repent, I must accept God's judgment and be content with what I do have left to me (Phi. 3:8; 1 Tim. 6:6-9). Paul had a thorn in the flesh, for which he had no responsibility that he adjusted to (2 Cor. 12:7-10).

In closing it should be understood that happiness is not an externally caused emotion. Happiness is internal and a matter of choice and attitude. If the only time I am happy is when I am at Disney World, then, unless I work there, I can only be happy but few times in a year or even a lifetime.

God has constructed this world in such a way that we can be happy and content if we choose to. Likewise, we can choose to live in harmony with God's law and reap the benefits as promised (Mat. 3:7; John 3:36; Rom. 1:18; Col. 3:6; 1 The. 1:10). Since I am also responsible for my words, thoughts and deeds that flow from my heart, then I must subdue my emotions and direct them to be in harmony with God's will. If my sin causes me to lose privileges, then I must adjust to that.

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“Baptism...Also Now Save Us”

Nathan Brewer

When we published an article recently about the New Testament church compared to churches today, a preacher in Elk City (Okla.) wrote to us arguing that baptism is not necessary for salvation. One of the passages he cited was I Peter 3:21.

In the passage’s immediate context, Peter is talking about the disobedient people who were preached to while Noah was preparing the ark, then he writes that in the flood, eight souls were saved by water (1 Pet. 3:20).

The flood waters raised the ark, which contained Noah and his family, while the disobedient were destroyed below. Peter goes on to say in verse 21: “The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

Our friend here in town argues from this verse that baptism “is merely a symbol” of our salvation.

But Peter does not say that. He says baptism is a figure—literally, an “anti-type”—of Noah’s salvation from the destruction that all other living creatures suffered. Peter’s point is that just as Noah and his family were separated from the disobedient by means of the flood, so Christians are separated from the disobedient by means of water baptism.

Just as Noah’s family was “saved by water,” even so “baptism doth also now save us.” Based on our friend’s interpretation of this passage, he would have Peter teach that baptism “doth **not** save us,” which is the opposite of what Peter actually writes.

Peter goes on to explain that baptism is not meant to wash away literal dirt from our bodies, but is “the answer of a good conscience.” Those who’ve been convicted of sin, and who genuinely want to make things right with God, respond by washing away their sins in baptism (Acts 2:33-41; 22:16).

Peter also ties baptism to Christ’s resurrection in First Peter 3:21. “The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us...by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” This is the same point that Paul makes in Romans 6:3-4. A penitent sinner is buried with Christ in the waters of baptism, and he emerges from the water just as Christ rose from the tomb, with new life.

It’s sadly ironic that a passage which is used to try to explain away baptism actually teaches its necessity. Baptism is not a figure of our own salvation—it’s a figure, or likeness, of Noah’s salvation from the world of sin.

And that’s what baptism does. It takes us out of Satan’s kingdom and puts us into Christ’s kingdom. It’s the dividing line between the old life and the new—between being lost and being saved.

Peter told believers in the first recorded Gospel sermon to repent and be baptized so they could be saved (Acts 2:37-38). For those willing to submit to Jesus Christ today, baptism doth also now save us.

Character Studies Surrounding the Crucifixion

Jerry C. Brewer

The gamut of human weakness and strength may be found in the characters who were present at, and/or involved in, the crucifixion of our Lord. A study of their traits can be profitable and aid in our introspection as we consider our devotion—or lack thereof—to the Lord. Some of them were faithful to Him, while others denied Him, forsook Him, were calloused toward him, or simply indifferent to His ordeal. Consider these:

The Traitor

The name of Judas Iscariot is a synonym for “traitor.” As an apostle—the closest of Jesus’ associates—Judas had spent three years with Him, hearing His teaching,

witnessing His miracles, observing His intolerance of religious error, and His love for all with whom He came into contact. But Judas was covetous, and a thief (John 12:3-5), and allowed his love of money to betray the Lord. For 30 pieces of silver, Judas led the mob to Jesus in the garden and betrayed Him (Matt. 26:14-15; Luke 22:47-48).

How many Christians today betray the Lord for love of money? Such persons follow Christ, as Judas did, but are secretly wedded to mammon and the things of this world. They will fellowship error in the church if it means money in their pockets. They will betray the Lord for a dollar fear the loss of funds for their preaching schools. Yes, the church has today has traitors like Judas, who betray the Lord for money.

The Cowardly

When Judas betrayed the Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane, His apostles fled for their lives. “And they all forsook him and fled. And there followed him a certain young man having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him: and he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked” (Mark 14:50-52).

Boldly proclaiming their love for Jesus, cowards today forsake Him when confronted with a crisis. I once knew an elder who resigned, rather than withdraw fellowship from a reprobate. That man was not fit to be an elder. He forsook the Lord when trouble arose. Yes, there are many cowards among us who choose flight instead of fighting the good fight of faith. And like the physical nakedness of the young man, flight from the Lord leaves one spiritually naked.

The False Accusers

The instigators of the crucifixion were not irreligious reprobates, but the religious establishment of the land. Their hatred of Jesus and everything He taught stemmed from their covetous positions of power. They feared their loss of power and wanted Jesus dead. Fear of losing their prestige and position blinded them to the truth. They admitted that Jesus worked miracles, but adamantly refused to accept His claims (John 11:47-48).

The Sanhedrin paralleled today’s denominational world. The “reverends,” “pastors,” “fathers,” and “rabbis” of the religious world have exalted positions in the eyes of their followers. Recent revelations of Catholic priests sexually abusing children decades ago illustrate their power and arrogance over their followers. So-called “Protestant Pastors” revel in their positions of power and the money those positions bring them, and they, too, have been known to abuse young children as the Catholics did. Other than Islam, the denominational industry is the wickedest system under the sun.

Like the Sanhedrin, denominational preachers may acknowledge the truth, but deny and pervert it. Baptist preachers read, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16), then deny that baptism has anything to do with salvation. Methodist preachers can read, “...buried with him in baptism, wherein ye are also risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead” (Col. 2:12), then sprinkle water on a person and call it “baptism.” Mormons give away copies of the Bible, then deny that the faith was, “once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3), by calling Joseph Smith’s book, “Another Testament of Jesus Christ.”

If denominational preachers were as concerned with the truth as they are with their positions of power and prestige, they would preach it as it is revealed. But if they did that, the worldly power and money they gain by deceiving people would be gone. And they fear that as much as the Sanhedrin feared their loss of power because of Jesus.

Jesus’ accusers sought false witnesses against Him, but could find none (Matt. 26:59-60). Then, at the last, they brought two witnesses who twisted Jesus’ words into a lie. At the cleansing of the temple, Jesus was accosted by the Jews and asked for a sign of His authority to do what He did (John 2:18). His answer was, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (v. 19). Blinded to His claims and authority, they said the temple took 46 years to build and asked, “...wilt thou rear it up in three days” (v. 20). But Jesus spoke of his resurrection and “temple of his body” (v. 21). It was this statement that was twisted and used against him to the advantage of the Sanhedrin.

Likewise, denominational preachers twist and pervert the word of God to their

advantage. They refer to denominations as “branches” of the church, twisting John 15:1-6 as their “proof.” Jesus’ meaning is clear in that passage. He had no reference to denominations but to individuals—“**If a man** (not a denomination) **abide in me.**”

As did the Sanhedrin, denominational preachers falsely accuse gospel preachers of being “unloving” and “judgmental” when we preach the truth. They lie and call us “Campbellites” when not a single faithful Christian ever claimed that name, and accuse of being “cultists.”

Without authority to carry out the death penalty, the Sanhedrin assessed it against Jesus and then took him to Pilate. They knew their charge of blasphemy was not punishable by death under Roman law, so they lied again and changed the charge against Jesus to sedition. Again, they lied about the charge against Him. Answering a question from the Jews about paying tribute to Caesar, He had replied, “Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s” (Matt. 22:21). Ignoring His words, their charge to Pilate was that, “We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying himself that he is Christ a king” (Luke 23:2). Then these Jews, who had nothing but absolute hatred for Rome, told Pilate, “If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar’s friend” (John 19:12), and, “We have no king but Caesar” (v. 15).

Yes, the Sanhedrin is alive and well today. It still falsely accuses, perverts God’s word, lies, and deceives, in the guise of denominational “Christianity.”

The Compromising Politician

Pontius Pilate has gone down in history as an example of moral cowardice—a politician who would rather compromise for his personal gain than to do what is right. The Sanhedrin accused Jesus of sedition, “saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a king” (Luke 23:2). When Pilate asked Him, “Art thou a king,” Jesus answered, “Thou sayest it” (Luke 23:3), which was an affirmative answer. All four of the gospel accounts have this same question and answer. However, John’s account gives a fuller explanation. In that account, Jesus explained the difference between His kingdom and those of the men. “My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, my servants would fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence” (John 18:36).

After that exchange, Pilate went out and told Jesus’ accusers, “I find no fault in him at all” (John 18:38). But Pilate was concerned with his position in the Roman government. The Emperor did not take kindly to an underling who could not keep the peace, and Pilate feared an uproar if he refused to have Jesus killed. However, on the other hand, he could find no legal justification for executing the Lord. That’s when he offered a compromise.

At the Passover, it was customary for the Romans to free any prisoner the Jews desired, so Pilate offered them a choice. Should he release Jesus, or Barabbas? (Matt. 27:15-18). They, of course, chose Barabbas and demanded that Jesus be crucified. Probably knowing their answer, Pilate asked, “What then shall I do with Jesus which is called Christ?” (Matt. 27:22). They repeated their demand for Christ’s death. Once more, Pilate feebly protested,

“Why, what evil hath he done?” (Matt. 27:23). Matthew records that this answer brought a tumult, and that Pilate, seeing that reason would not prevail, “...took water, and washed his hands before the multitude saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it” (Matt. 27:24). Rather than do what was right and risk fierce opposition, Pilate ordered Jesus to be put to death. There are Pilates among us today who, knowing the right course to take, would rather appease their crowd of friends and compromise the truth for political gain.

Other Pilates are legion in the church—members who want a watered-down gospel in order not to offend their friends. One church in western Oklahoma fired its preacher for calling denominational names. A family in that church operated a grocery store and would rather have had the gospel compromised than to lose business. The list could go on and on, but these examples will suffice to demonstrate that the spirit of Pilate

thrives in the church today.

A Concerned Observer

We have no idea what the character of Pilate's wife was, but we **do know** that she tried to dissuade her husband from crucifying Jesus. "When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man; for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him" (Matt. 27:19). We are told neither the dream, nor its source, but we know that she called Jesus a "just man." She was concerned that justice be done, but Pilate did not heed her entreaty.

A Man Whom Christ Saved

Pilate tried to compromise and gave the Jews a choice of releasing Jesus or Barabbas. "Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you?" (Matt. 27:21). "And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas: (who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison.) ...And he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they desired; but he delivered Jesus to their will" (Luke 23: 18-19, 25). It is ironic that the man whom Pilate released was a convicted seditionist—the false charge the Jews leveled against the innocent Jesus.

Barabbas' life was distinguished by sin. Matthew 27:16 calls him a "**notable prisoner**" and Mark records that he had made insurrection against Rome and committed murder (Mark 15:7). John records that he was a robber (John 18:40). You'll not find a man more worthy of death than the felon Barabbas. He was imprisoned and marked for execution for his crimes, but he was also eternally lost because of his sinful life (Rom. 6:23). This lost man stood only a few feet from Christ. He was so near the Lord, yet he was still lost, like so many today who know what the Bible teaches concerning salvation in Christ, but who never come to Him in obedience. The name "Barabbas" is a compound word. The prefix *Bar* means "son of" and the word *abba* is the Aramaic word for "father." His name, then, is a generic term and literally means "Son of Father." As Jesus died in the place of this man, so He died for all who are the sons of fathers.

Barabbas was a man unloved by mankind. He was a violent criminal and an outcast, a rebel and troublemaker who was under the sentence of death. Even the world has little affection for its own. The world is selfish and quickly drops a man whose value to them is gone. Millions of people today are in the shoes of Barabbas—unloved and unappreciated by the world, but loved by God. Jesus said, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

Yes, God loved Barabbas as He loves all mankind. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10). When Jesus died that day in the place of Barabbas, He died for **all of us** whom Barabbas represented, and though Barabbas was unloved by others, God loved him, as He loves all of us.

Of all the people in Jerusalem on that day, Barabbas had the best opportunity to understand Christ's atoning sacrifice. When Barabbas was released, he was not only saved from physical death, but he represented all who are released from the guilt and consequences of sin when they believe in the Lord (John 8:24), repent of their sins (Luke 13:3) and are baptized into Him (Acts 2:38). Barabbas could have accompanied John and the women to the cross, but the door of history slams shut without further mention of this poor wretch's name. Pilate nods, the guards unlock Barabbas' chains, they clang to the pavement and he dashes into the milling crowd. The condemned is free, Christ is beaten, and the rough cross is thrust upon Him. Friends, you are Barabbas. What will you do? Flee with your guilt, or obey Him who died in your place? Only you can decide.

**Download "The Thing That Hath Been..." Vol. 1, Or Read It At:
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“Thou Art the Man”

Fred E. Dennis

David was a man after God's own heart, but he was guilty of some of the blackest sins of which any man can be guilty. The Bible tells the truth about men and women. It tells the bad along with the good. Men do not write history that way. They are partial in their judgments.

David's sin began with a beautiful woman. Beautiful women have been the cause of the downfall of many men. David looked upon this woman, and his baser passions were aroused. That is one of the most damning things about the modern stage, including the modern picture show. Beautiful women are shown almost in the nude. Men and women and boys and girls look upon these things. We cannot afford thus to play with temptation. David was a strong man, but he was overcome by this temptation. Many others have been thus overcome.

The dress of many women of our day will cause the damnation of many precious souls. Then when “Christian” (?) women imitate this ungodly dress, it is really too bad. God expects and commands Christian women to dress in modest apparel. “In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shame-facedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works” (1 Tim. 2:9-10).

Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price (1 Pet. 3:3-4).

David's lustful look led him into adultery with this beautiful woman. He tried to cover up his sin. Sin cannot be covered. There is just one thing to do with sin, and that is to repent of it and get forgiveness by obedience to God. David sent for Uriah, the husband of this woman, He was engaged in war. David was perfectly willing now that Uriah might have a furlough and go home to his wife. This was his way of trying to cover up his own wickedness.

But Uriah did not go home.

And Uriah said unto David, The ark, and Israel, and Judah, abide in tents; and my lord Joab, and the servants of my lord, are encamped in the open fields; shall I then go into mine house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? as thou livest, and as thy soul liveth, I will not do this thing (2 Sam. 11:11).

Thus David is thwarted in his own devilish plans. Next David hits upon the plan of getting Uriah drunk. But still Uriah did not go home. God is not going to allow David to get away with this sin. We cannot get away with ours. “Be sure your sin will find you out.” It found David out, and it will find us out. Jesus said: “For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known.” (Matt. 10:26)

The next morning David wrote a letter to his great army captain, Joab. This letter was really Uriah's death warrant. And David had the heart to send this letter by the hand of Uriah. David instructed Joab to set Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle and then retire from him. “And Uriah the Hittite died also.” Yes, David is rid of Uriah, but his troubles are just really beginning. His sins are multiplying. First, it is a lustful look. This led to the bodily act of adultery. Now he has murdered an innocent man. Vice is indeed a monster. The devil is a hard master.

Joab was concerned over the death of Uriah. Uriah's wife mourned for her husband. No doubt her guilty conscience added to the mourning. Well, she had the child.

God sent His prophet to David:

And the Lord sent Nathan unto David. And he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds: but the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it

grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him (2 Sam. 12:1-4).

It is no wonder that David's anger was greatly kindled against that wicked and scheming man. It did not take him a fraction of a minute to make up his mind what should be done to such a man. "And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die. And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man." Yes, his sin has caught up with him.

Listen to this:

Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul; and I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things. Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife. Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun. For thou didst it secretly; but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun. (2 Sam. 12:7-12).

Oh, the sins that are committed secretly! It was not hard for David to see his miserable plight after the prophet had delivered this scathing denunciation. We need more prophets in our day like Nathan. We need men who are not afraid to cry and spare not. Sin is sin, and it is just as bad when those who are in high places are guilty. God loves us too well to allow our sins to go unrebuked. This plain preaching caused David to repent in sackcloth and ashes. Immediately he cried out, saying: "I have sinned against the Lord." Sinners must be made to see their doom. They will not see this unless the preachers point it out in no uncertain terms. They may not repent, but at least the preacher has delivered his soul. Then we can say with Paul: "Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:26-27). And, preacher, do not forget there is a difference between declaring the counsel of God and declaring **all** the counsel of God.

When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine! hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity, but thou hast delivered thy soul (Ezek. 3:18-19).

It would be well for the reader to turn now and read Psalm 51 again. David never got over his sin.

For I acknowledge my, transgressions: and my sin is ever before me...Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow...Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee. Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation...The sacri-

fices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

Sinner friend, read that last sentence again and again. Repent of your sins. Confess the name of Christ. Be buried with him in baptism for the remission of your sins. Erring brother, repent genuinely of your sins and pray God for forgiveness (Acts 8:22-23).

“Remember in Thy Lifetime”

J.A. McNutt

God has blessed man with the power to remember the days that are past: the joys of youth, the pleasures of early life, the precious memories of home and the companionship of friends. Yes memory can be a great blessing, and one poem has raised the question:

Where is the heart that doth not keep,
Within its inmost core,
Some fond remembrance hidden deep,
Of days that are no more?

But let it also be remembered that memory may be a cause of sorrow and regret, as well as a blessing in the lives of men. Memories can be happy and pleasant or filled with remorse and regret. The story of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke chapter sixteen may be a parable, as most commentators regard it, or the account of two real individuals who died, but the truth in either case remains unchanged. After death Lazarus enjoyed comfort and rest in Abraham's bosom, while the rich man entered a state of torment and suffering.

Their Situations Were Reversed

After death, there was a complete reversal of their situations in life. In hell, or hades, the rich man appealed to Abraham for mercy saying, “Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame” (Luke 16:24). Then came the answer, “Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou are tormented” (Luke 16:25). And then the rich man was reminded that his destiny was sealed, and a great gulf separated the two men so that no passage from one estate to the other was possible. The memory of the rich man served as a curse, filled with remorse and regret. Once Lazarus lay at his gate hungry, afflicted and egging for help, but he died unnoticed; now the rich man begs for mercy and is denied. Some one has said that in the democracy of death all men are equal, the rich are divested of their wealth, and those like Lazarus lay aside their rags. There was a time when the rich man could have relieved the beggar at his gate but that day was past, and the fate of the two men was settled. Seeing that all hope for himself was gone, the rich man pleaded for a miracle to convince his five brethren lest they too should be lost. But he was told that they had the words of Moses and the prophets, and if they rejected this testimony, they would not be persuaded by a miracle (Luke 16:29-31).

For the First Time he Felt the Need for God

After the rich man was lost and in torment, for the first time in his life he felt a genuine need for God. Like so many in the world today, he was so busy he had never found time for God. He was not an evil person, perhaps he simply had become so involved in making money that he had not given any consideration to spiritual matters or taken notice of the poor beggar at his gate. He had sought to gain the world at the loss of his own soul (Mat. 16:26).

At Last he Saw the Need for Mercy

For the first time in his life he saw an urgent need for mercy and cried for help (Luke 16:24). In the business world, he probably had neither experienced much mercy nor shown any mercy to his competitors' ill business deals. It was every man for himself, no compassion shown, and only the strong would survive. To ask or to seek help would

have been an admission of weakness. But now in torment he pleaded for mercy.

He Finally Saw the Folly of Materialism

For the first time in his life, he learned the lack of true value in material things. All his wealth and all his goods which he had accumulated were worthless. His possessions could not purchase any relief from guilt and pain. God says “Thou Fool” of all those who lay up treasures for themselves and are not rich toward God (Luke 12:20). Someone has said that a million dollars will be worth no more than a bale of hay on Judgment Day.

He Became Interested in Saving Souls

For the first time in his life, the rich man became concerned about saving the souls of his five brethren, lest they should share his fate. He requested a special miracle whereby Lazarus would return from the dead to warn his brethren to change their lives and avoid the agony that he was suffering. He was told that such a miracle would not convince those who refuse to heed the words of Moses and the prophets (Luke 16:31). Those who exalt miracles above the Word of God need to consider and read carefully (Rom. 10:6-11). It is not necessary that Christ return from heaven or rise again from the dead, we have the Word of God today which produces faith and saves souls. Jesus has promised salvation to those who believe and are baptized (Mark 16:15-16). Believing, penitent souls can be baptized and receive remission of sins and be added by the Lord to His church (Acts 2:36-47).

Do not wait for a miracle! Believe and obey our Lord today!

“The Fool Hath Said”

Luther Blackmon

Strange as it may seem, some people find it difficult to believe in an Eternal Uncreated Creator; An Uncaused Cause; An Unmoved Mover; that Being which the Bible describes as God. But if you think that believing there is a God is difficult, try believing that there is no God. Get outside some starlight night and look up.

While you are looking remember that you are standing on a planet that makes an annual journey of five hundred and fifty-eight million miles around the sun traveling at the speed of sixty-three thousand miles an hour. That this little planet is one of nine that go to make up our solar system. We are so close to the sun that it only takes three hundred and sixty-five days to go around, while Neptune is so far away that it requires one hundred and sixty-four and one half years to make the trip. When you have comprehended(?) the magnitude of this solar system and the perfect timing with which it operates, then remember that this solar system is one of three hundred and fifty million such solar systems. Try to imagine the immensity of space required for such a galaxy of worlds. If you think it is hard to imagine illimitable space, try to imagine space with limits. What would you find at the end of space?

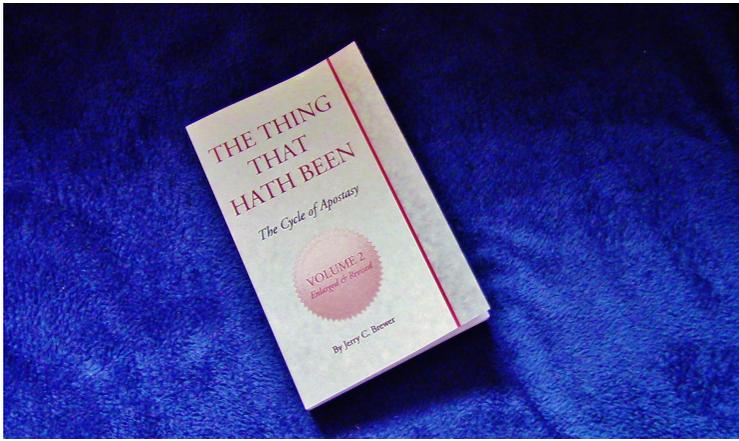
Remember that the closest fixed star to this earth Alpha Centauri is so far away that the light from it, traveling at the rate of 186,000 miles per second takes nearly five years to reach us. Remember further that these innumerable planets, stars, suns and satellites move with such precision that the astronomers can predict a hundred years in advance when the sun or moon will be in eclipse. No human instrument is so perfectly made. If you can conclude, with these facts before you, that no intelligence was required to produce and arrange all this; or that no power was needed to wind up this gigantic clock and keep it running; that it is all the result of blind chance, then don't kid yourself that you are thinking, or that you have made anything like an honest investigation of the matter.

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

Send your address to jbbbbbrewer@gmail.com

“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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Questions Plainly Answered

F.L. Paisley

One day last week I received by mail some questions from a lady who listens daily to this program, but wishes her name withheld. We shall comply with her wish and reply to her questions. I am glad to answer questions of such interest and importance as these. The sponsors of this broadcast have no objection to being criticized by name and their position critically examined, so long as we are correctly represented both by name and teaching. But some other people do not feel the same way about it.

The questions designate by name four groups of religious people of our day and of our city. Since I regard these people as excellent folk, I can answer the questions in a general way and use their names, yet not make personal attack upon any of them. In our halls of congress great debates are conducted and our lawmakers call by name and rebuke each other sharply. They even attack the office of president by name. This is as it should be. But a false standard of ethics in religion will not grant the same degree of frankness and investigation of the greatest issues that man ever face. We are very inconsistent here.

Before I consider the questions involving the four churches about which the lady asks, I shall notice her first question which is an implied criticism of this speaker and his brethren. But it is the kind of criticism we like. It brings a very important truth to view. We solicit questions which most sharply bring out objections to what we teach, or what people think we teach. Her first question is this

Do you really think that you are the only people to be saved? In answering let me say first that it really matters little what I think about any such question. The chief point is; what does the Bible teach on such a delicate point? But her question comes from a failure to grasp the possibility of a church today being strictly the New Testament kind in faith, name, teaching and practice. The question is based on the assumption that any church of necessity is just one more denomination. This is a mistake. We know of no denomination better than any other.

If the lady will allow me to change her question slightly, we shall leave myself and my brethren out of the question of being saved at all, and state the question this way: Do you really think that the Lord's people, his church, whoever compose it, are the only ones to be saved? I want to state frankly that this is the only form the question can take to represent the position we maintain. I am sure we can agree in answering this question. The answer is. Yes, such people are the only ones to be saved. There are only two groups of people properly classified. They are the Lord's and Satan's. It is not our prerogative to state arbitrarily just who is in each group. But we do know what the Lord has said as to qualifications to be in each group. We agree that those who remain Satan's will not be saved. How many times have I said in the fifty-four weeks I have been speaking on this broadcast, that regardless of who is and who is not a part of the Lord's church, that church alone is right and it alone can go to heaven? Will someone name the person in the New Testament after Jesus died who was saved apart from the church of our Lord? Send me the name, or the place in the New Testament where I can read of him or her. Can you imagine the Lord suffering, dying and giving his blood to save the church (Acts 20:28), then saying, "Gentlemen, I have died to build and save a thing that may prove to be a pretty good arrangement, but you can go to heaven as well without it as in it?" Would you pay any costly price for anything as useless as men say the church is? What men? All men who say that salvation is found outside its realm. No, lady, we do not think that we are the only ones to be saved, as if we were the standard, but we know that only the church purchased by the blood of Christ has a single word of promise or assurance of salvation. If we are fortunate enough to be that church in fact, by reason of complying with the divine standard of faith and teaching, who objects? One chief purpose of this program is to plead with all who will hear that they accept the same opportunities and privileges we have and be Christians only. You know our slogan is The New Testament only makes Christians only. If we be nothing except as and what the Lord requires of all alike, and if others do the same, then we shall be united in the Lord's church, and not some denomination. Others will not have

to come to us or our way, nor we to them and their way. We each and all shall have gone to the Lord and his way. This makes friends and brethren of strangers and enemies. It makes all one in fact, religiously. This alone is the plea of churches of Christ. And this plea is being made by none others than churches of Christ. None others have any use for it. For this fact we are not responsible. The responsibility rests upon all who will not enter and abide by the only possible way of unity in the Lord.

Next, the lady wants to know the facts concerning the origin of the Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian and Christian churches. Usually when such a question is raised or such churches are discussed, men go to the better histories of church and religious movements. It is possible that we could find about these churches some interesting things in that source of information. But the chances are that the lady asking the question does not have access to the histories we might produce. If not, then she has no way of knowing that we state them correctly. It is not fair to her to use evidence she could not check, thus giving her no chance to see that we misrepresent the truth, if we did.

But I take it that she has a Bible. This great and grand old Book is the most ancient, accurate and scholarly history of church affairs we have ever seen or heard of. If I should refer to it she can check on me in her own Bible and know where and when I am right or wrong. So, if she and you will read the 29th chapter of Matthew, (not 28th) and the second chapter of Jude and the fortieth chapter of Acts and the twentieth chapter of Romans, she and you will find all that the Bible says about the four churches she asks about all about their name, origin, doctrine and practice. Now, if any one—just any one—knows any other chapter in all the Bible mentioning such churches, just send me the references and I shall read them over this radio and quit my broadcasting as unqualified to answer a simple question with any proof whatsoever.

But the querist wants to know how I would go about to prove that these four churches are not New Testament churches. Really, the task of such proof is not mine. It is not my duty, at least on the radio, to prove that such are not right--except as I am obligated to prove what is right by the Bible. It is their task to prove that they are churches of the New Testament pattern. This they will not undertake to do, when anyone is present to examine their supposed proof. We are perfectly willing to prove that the New Testament church is such and such in name, doctrine, faith and practice. When I do that, we have proof that we are that divinely established church, if and only if that be our faith and practice, too. This is certain. We are willing to prove what we are and what the New Testament says all should be. We are not entering into the task, information and interesting as it might be, to prove what other folks are not. (Of course, this "apology" was to pave the way on the radio for some things to follow-FLP) It is not your task to prove that the moon is not made of Limburger cheese. If I say it is, it is my task to give the proof I claim to have. But many folks are not enough interested in being what the Bible requires to claim to have Bible authority for existence.

But since the lady is perfectly honest and sincere in that nice question, we shall not leave it just yet. Let us suppose that which we have no proof of at present. We shall suppose that they all four are New Testament churches. If they are, then it follows as certainly as night follows day that they are all alike in every basic and fundamental belief, name, doctrine and practice. If they are all New Testament churches, then either one of them is. This means that the Methodist church is. Then it follows that they are all in fact Methodist churches, for all being alike they must all be what one is. Not only so, but if all are churches of New Testament pattern, then the Baptist church is just that. And since all being the same thing are just alike, it follows that all the four churches she names are Baptist churches. And the same would go, of course, for the other two, also. Now, if you can refute my reasoning and prove that they are not all Methodist churches, you save me the assignment that they are not all New Testament churches. But I raise no issue at all with either of these fine folk. They would be the first to deny that they are in fact, in real church doctrine essentials, the other group. All Baptists deny that they are Methodists, and all Methodists that they are Presbyterian. They all three deny that they are Christian Churches in that denominational use of the term, as the Christian Church uses it to describe itself. And these denials in no wise

reflect upon the character of the others unfavorably. Each group is as fine people as the others. It just happens to be true that they are neither the other and neither one is mentioned in the right place in the Bible to give the proof the lady seeks. I should not be held accountable for the Bible's failure to mention them elsewhere than the chapters I have given. Unless you find and read those chapters you can't read of those churches in the Bible. To make sure, I give them again. Matt. 29; Acts 40; Romans 20 and Jude 2.

The querist correctly says that they all use the same Bible I do. Yes, and they and we alike misuse that Bible when we or they try to make it authorize churches not once mentioned between its lids or in any book written by angel, man or demon during the first sixteen hundred years after Jesus died. For the failure of all history, inspired or secular, previous to the sixteenth century, to mention such churches is not my blunder. It is a fact of failure that neither I nor you nor they can refute.

But the Bible does describe the church which wears the title of the Lord, and all other groups of people know that that church contains the only possible ground of unity, not because we are members of it, or because others are not, who are not. But because God made a standard of truth long ago without asking us what it should be. I and we and you and they, all alike must come to and abide in that standard in all religious faith and practice. We are just bold enough to say without fear that any group of people, regardless of color or tongue, that wears no other names than those given by the Lord to his church, and believes and teaches and practices only what they did, as items of religious faith, such group is a New Testament church whether I or you agree with them or not. All others are of human origin, for such widely differing things cannot be alike in enough essentials to be even loosely regarded as the same kind.

The lady's last question is, Is it true that the Catholic Church is the mother church? I answer, Yes, the mother of all churches like her. She is the grandmother of all who pattern after her in doctrine or practice. They may be Protestant in name or claim, but the "mother" is the author of all the modern practices and doctrines not of New Testament origin. She is the mother or grandmother of all churches starting this side the day of Pentecost. The Lord's church existed first, however, and is in no way related to the church in question.

Coincidence or Creation?

Foy E. Wallace, Jr.

The rotation of the earth on its axis, for instance, is 1,000 mph at the equator. If it were 100 mph instead, the days and nights would be ten times as long, the result of which would be the burning up of all vegetation each long day and the freezing of each surviving sprout each long night.

The sun, the source of light, has surface temperatures of 12,000° Fahrenheit; the earth is far enough away for the right warmth, not too much, not too little. If the sun gave less radiation, the result would freeze us all; and if more, it would roast us all.

The slant of the earth is at an angle of 23° , which gives seasons, and if not so tilted, the movement of the vapors of the sea would turn continents into ice. If the moon were set at less distance from the earth, tides would submerge all continents twice daily, and the mountains would erode away. If the crust of the earth were ten feet thicker, there would be no oxygen and all life would die.

If the atmosphere were thinner to the point of precision, meteors which hurl from their orbits and dart toward the earth and which now burn and consume in the atmosphere, would shoot to the ground and set fires over the whole earth, all of which is proof that life was created, is governed by mathematical laws and is not an accident.