

The Gospel Preceptor

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

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A “Personal Relationship” with Jesus

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Introduction

There is a sense in which we do have a personal relationship with Jesus. We are indebted to Him for our salvation, which is definitely on an individual basis. However, the expression, as used by so many people today, is not a Scriptural concept at all. They usually mean that we should be “pals” or “buddies” with Jesus, and that we should talk with Him as we would to an equal.

Incidents in John

The entire Gospel according to John is an excellent study of the relationship we should have with Jesus the Christ. However, certain passages are more direct and specific than others.

John the Baptist was a fleshly cousin of Jesus and was sent by God to prepare the way for His Son. Yet he did not presume to claim a “personal relationship” with his Lord (John 1:29–36; 3:27–30). In chapter 8, Jesus says only those who continue in His Word are His disciples; only the Truth could make them free (vv. 31–32). Does this sound like a “personal relationship” with Jesus? Our relationship to Christ is that of sheep to shepherd (10:1–15). It is not a “personal relationship.”

Jesus did have a close **earthly** personal relationship—a friendship—with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus (John 11:1–44), but even so, it was not a relationship of equals. It cannot be used to say that we today should have such a close “personal relationship” with Jesus. Martha called Him *Lord* (vv. 21, 39) and stated her belief that He was/is the Christ, the Son of God (v. 27). When she went to tell Mary Jesus had come, after the death of Lazarus, she said, “The Master is here” (v. 28). Mary also called Him *Lord* (v. 32).

Jesus’ friendship with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus calls to mind the close friendship Abraham enjoyed with Jehovah (Gen. 12–25; Heb. 11:8–19). Second Chronicles 20:7 calls Abraham “the friend of God,” as does James 2:23. And yet Abraham did not presume to be “buddy-buddy” with God but referred to himself as “dust and ashes” when compared with God (Gen. 18:27). He felt very unworthy to be asking God for favors.

Jesus said, “If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be; if any man serve me, him will my father honour” (John 12:26). This doesn’t sound like a “personal relationship.” After He had washed the apostles’ feet, He said, “Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am.... The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him” (13:13, 16). No “personal relationship” here, either. Jesus was closer to John than to any of the other apostles (vv. 23–26), and yet John still addressed Him as “Lord.” The apostles were **disciples**—followers—of Jesus. He was their Master.

Jesus said in John 14 that no man could come to the Father except through Him (v. 6). He told the apostles they should have known Him **and** His Father (v. 7), but apparently, they did not, from what Philip said in verse 8. Jesus then proceeded to say (summarizing and paraphrasing), “Do you mean to tell me you **still** don’t know me, after all

the time I have spent with you?” (vv. 9–12). He then promised that, whatever they asked **of the Father in Jesus’ name**, they would receive (v. 14). (It must be understood that this promise was to the apostles. Our prayers are answered, yes, but not in the same way as were those of the apostles.) Verses 16 through 31 contain Jesus’ promise to send the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, to them after He (Jesus) went back to the Father. The Comforter would teach them all things that they needed to know (v. 26) and bring to their remembrance everything Jesus had taught them while He was with them on earth. From the time of His ascension on, Jesus’ relationship with the apostles was that of a Mediator, through Whom they could go to the Father. They were given their inspiration by the Holy Spirit.

If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love.... Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.... Whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.... But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me (John 15:10, 14, 16, 26).

Jesus was going back to the Father and, rather than leave them comfortless, He was sending the Holy Spirit to them. It was best for them that Jesus go away (even though they would see Him no more, 16:10), otherwise, the Comforter would not come (16:7).

Again, their relationship with Jesus would now be as a Mediator and an Intercessor through Whom they could go to the Father. Over and over we see that, while the apostles had a close relationship with Jesus for the three and a half years of His ministry on earth, that changed when He went back to Heaven. “Whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he will give it you” (16:23b) They were not to ask **Jesus**; they were to ask the **Father** in Jesus’ name. Mary Magdalene was weeping at the tomb of Jesus, thinking someone had taken His body away (20:11–18). When He had revealed Himself to her, Jesus told her not to touch Him, because He had not yet ascended back to the Father. The relationship had changed.

Incidents in Matthew

Jesus said that not everyone who calls Him *Lord* will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but those who do the will of His Father (Mat. 7:21–27). Matthew concludes this passage by saying, “For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes” (v. 29). Jesus said,

All things are delivered to me of my Father; and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him (11:27).

The Father and the Son have a “personal relationship” with each other; we do not have that kind of relationship with either. Once, when He was teaching, His mother and His brothers came, wanting to see Him. But He said, “For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in Heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother” (Mat. 12:46–50). Apparently, Jesus’ earthly family thought they had a close personal relationship with Him. The relationship that matters to Him is with those who **obey** Him.

In Matthew 14 we read the account of the apostles in a boat on the stormy Sea of Galilee. Jesus came to them, walking on the water, and when they saw Him, they were afraid. Peter wanted to walk to Jesus on the water. But when He took his eyes off Jesus and began to look at the waves, he was afraid and began to sink. Jesus scolded him for doubting. When they got to shore, the apostles came and worshiped Jesus, saying, “Of a truth thou art the Son of God” (Mat. 14:24–33). No close “personal relationship” here. The apostles knew themselves to be vastly inferior to the Christ.

In Caesarea, Jesus asked the apostles who men said that He was. Then He said, “But whom say ye that I am?” Peter answered, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (16:13–17). No “personal relationship” here. Jesus went on to say that we would have to deny ourselves if we want to follow Him (v. 24). When He comes again, He will reward every man according to his works (v. 27)—clearly, we are in a subordinate relationship with Jesus.

In Matthew 17 we have the account of Christ's transfiguration in which He was apparently given His Heavenly glory again for a short time, and Moses and Elijah came to talk with Him. He had taken Peter, James, and John with Him. Peter, not realizing what he was saying (Luke 9:33), wanted to honor Jesus **and** Moses **and** Elijah. But the voice thundered from Heaven, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye **him**" (vv. 1–6, emph. 4 LJM). Not Moses and the law, not Elijah and the prophets, but Christ only. Clearly there was no close "personal relationship" here, but an atmosphere of awe. They had seen the glory of Christ and heard the Father's voice. Matthew 18:11 says, "For the Son of man is come to save the lost." He is our **Savior**. We can have no "personal relationship" with such a One.

Zebedee's wife, the mother of James and John, came to Jesus, **worshiping Him**, asking Him to give her sons places of honor in His kingdom. Jesus' answer shows that the earthly relationships were not going to be the important ones (Mat. 10:20–23). Even two members of His "inner circle" would not be guaranteed closeness to Him after His kingdom came. Jesus used this occasion to teach the lesson that the greatest in the kingdom is the one who serves (v. 26–28).

In the parables related in Matthew 25, do even the **faithful** have a "personal relationship" with Jesus? Jesus, while He was on the earth, was even closer to Peter, James, and John than He was to the rest of His apostles. Did they have a "personal relationship" with Him, according to Matthew 26:36–46, when they were supposed to be waiting and watching with Him? Jesus, in talking to the apostles just before He went back to Heaven, said,

All power is given me in Heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world (28:18–20).

Jesus would be with the apostles, yes; but He was clearly the One in authority—not a "personal relationship" of equals.

Incidents in Mark

In the first chapter of the Gospel according to Mark, Jesus called His apostles: "Come ye after me, and I will make you fishers of men," He said to the four fishermen (vv. 17–20). This was a follower/leader relationship, not a "personal relationship." Jesus was even able to command the unclean spirits and make them come out of people (v. 27), which showed His Deity.

The second chapter of Mark tells about the man sick of the palsy (he was paralyzed) whose four friends let him down, on his bed, through the roof because that was the only way they could get to Jesus. To everyone's surprise, instead of healing him right away, Jesus said, "Thy sins be forgiven thee" (v. 5). As usual, some of the scribes were present, and they began to "reason" in their hearts, "Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God only?" (v. 7). Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said,

Whether is easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee, or to say, Arise, take up thy bed, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he said to the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, take up thy bed, and walk (vv. 9–11).

Could they—or can we—have a "personal relationship" with One who has the power to forgive sins and to cure diseases?

In Mark 4, we have a different account of a storm on the Sea of Galilee. This time, Jesus was in a boat with the apostles, only He was asleep on a pillow. When they, in terror, woke Him, He rebuked the storm by saying simply, "Peace, be still." The fearful apostles, talking among themselves after Jesus had rebuked them for their lack of faith, said, "What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" They didn't seem to feel a close "personal relationship," but a reverent realization that they were in the presence of Deity.

The fifth chapter of Mark tells of a woman who had an issue of blood for twelve years, and had spent all that she had on physicians, but still had her disease. She thought to herself that, if she could just touch His clothes, she would be healed; and surely enough, she was. But what she had not counted on was that Jesus felt power (virtue) go out of Him. She was afraid, but she came forward and fell down before Him, telling Him the truth (vv. 25–34). She realized that He knew what she had done. Question: Did that woman have a close “personal relationship” with Jesus?

When, in Mark 8, Jesus began to teach them that He must suffer many things and be killed, Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him (v. 32). Now, it may be that Peter thought he had a close “personal relationship” with Jesus, but Jesus relieved him of that notion: “Get thee behind me, Satan; for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men” (v. 33).

Incidents in Luke

In Luke 5:4–5, Jesus, sitting in Simon Peter’s boat, told Simon to launch out into the deep and let down his net. Peter replied, “Master, we have toiled all night and have taken nothing. Nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.” Here, again, we have the Master/Servant relationship, not a “personal relationship.” 6 Jesus said to His disciples, “And why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46). If we had a close “personal relationship” with someone, would we call him *Lord*?

Jesus said in Luke 17:7–10, speaking to His apostles,

Which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do.

What kind of relationship is that?

Conclusion

In none of these accounts (and we have only skimmed the surface of four of the books of the New Testament) do we find any hint of a “personal relationship” with Jesus Christ. We are His servants, His followers, His sheep—and He is our Master, our Leader, our Shepherd, and our Mediator between us and God.

Did the Apostolic Churches Worship in Private Homes Only?

Nana Yaw Aidoo

One mistake a great many of us make when it comes to taking a position on anything, especially on Biblical teaching, is that we determine right or wrong and thus align with or agree with a certain position based on who said what and not on what was actually said. I distinctly remember that when the government suspended public gatherings in Ghana due to the COVID-19 outbreak, some preachers and elderships came out advising all the churches to meet in small groups in homes. Their argument was that, by so doing, we would be doing “what the New Testament church did.” Some of the brethren even contended that the churches in apostolic times met **only** in private homes to worship.

It is not my aim in this article to discuss what I think about churches canceling their worship services due to the virus. I only want to challenge the assertion that the churches in apostolic times met only in private homes to worship and I urge all who are lovers of truth to verify whether this is so (Acts 17:11). We ought to love truth enough (2 Cor. 13:8), to speak as the oracles of God on all issues. Around the time when the issue was hot and pressing, some were contending that since this is the “Biblical pattern,” we ought to dispense with our buildings and give the money to the poor

in the church. (Yes! I saw that on Facebook). I also know that some have been teaching that since the churches met **only** in private homes, then all the house churches in a particular city, formed the church in that city and far from there being a plurality of elders in a particular local church (like we've always taught), there were actually metropolitan elders over all house churches in a city. I believe with all my certainty that the idea of metropolitan elders over many house churches is one of the worst forms of heresy. However, I'll leave that for another day. In this brief note, I want to examine the idea that the apostolic churches met **only** in private homes to worship.

Indeed, some congregations met in private homes and to deny this fact is to deny plain passages of Scripture (see Romans 16:5). However, I really wonder where the idea that the churches in apostolic times met **only** in private homes came from. I spent some "lock down time" doing a little reading on this issue and honestly, I still do not see what many seem to see when they read the New Testament. I believe that if I can prove that some churches met in places other than in private homes, I would have proven that the idea that the apostolic churches met **only** in private homes to worship God is pure conjecture.

Some do not hesitate to point to Acts 2:46 which reads, "...continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart," as "proof" that the apostolic churches met **only** in private homes. Folks, I deny that Acts 2:46 describes a worship assembly for the simple reason that we do not eat meat as an act of worship, when we assemble to worship. Is this not true? Besides, if Acts 2:46 speaks of a worship assembly, then one thing is certain; the apostolic church assembled to worship in Herod's temple too: "...continuing daily with one accord **in the temple**..." Like so many good brethren, I believe that Acts 2:42 describes the Jerusalem church's worship. Is it not significant that the place of worship is not mentioned in the text?

Moreover, we are told that 3,000 people were added to the apostles on that fateful Pentecost day, when the church of Christ began (Acts 2:41). In a short while, this congregation grew so much that the men alone were 5,000 in number (Acts 4:4). In fact, the number multiplied to the extent that the inspired historian called them a "multitude" (Acts 6:2). We wonder whose private house had a room big enough to host such a great "multitude of disciples." We call attention to the facts that one day Peter and John went up to the temple to pray (Acts 3:1) and also that all the disciples who "... were possessors of lands or **houses sold them**, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles' feet..." (Acts 4:34-35). Now brethren, I am not saying at this point that this proves that the Jerusalem church didn't meet in a private home to worship. I'm just thinking out aloud.

Furthermore, Luke in Acts 19 also wrote that when the apostle Paul went to Ephesus,

...he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God. But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus. And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks (Acts 19:8-10).

From where did the apostle separate or withdraw the disciples when he began to receive opposition? Was it not from the synagogue? Why not from the private homes? Notice if you would that Paul himself when he persecuted the church, sought them in synagogues (Acts 9:2). Does this not impress anything on your mind? And more, when he withdrew the disciples from the synagogue, where did he go to? To a private home? No! He rented a school building, and there continued for two solid years. Is it outside the realm of possibility to say that the disciples in Ephesus met in that school building in those early years?

In addition, James in writing against partiality in the assembly of saints wrote:

My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come unto your assembly a man with a

gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts? (Jas. 2:1-4).

Please notice the word that is translated *assembly*. Friends, it is literally synagogue (*sunagoge* in the Greek), and is translated *synagogue* rather than *assembly* in the *American Standard Version 1901*, *Bible in Basic English*, *Darby's Translation*, and in the *Young's Literal Translation*. My point is that, James wrote to brethren who assembled in synagogues. Therefore, the idea that the apostolic churches met **only** in private homes is untenable.

So many times in the book of Acts, the place of assembly is not specified at all. Please study carefully, texts like Acts 4:23-31 where Luke simply wrote, "...the place...where they were assembled together..." In Acts 6:1-2, the place of assembly is not specified. In Acts 9:26-28, the disciples are in Jerusalem but nothing is said about them assembling in a private home. Acts 11:26 and Acts 13:1-3 say the church was at Antioch in Syria but say nothing about the brethren assembling in a private home. Acts 14:21-23 says there were churches in Lystra, Iconium and Antioch in Pisidia but says nothing about them assembling in private homes. And many more. With the place of assembly not specified in these instances, how then do we know that they met in private homes?

When denominationalists say there were "three wise men," we contend that they are doing guess work because the Bible doesn't specify how many wise men visited Christ as an infant. Rightly so. Likewise, we ought to be careful with speculations about where the early disciples met, and ensure that we "speak as the oracles of God" on this issue.

Once again, that is not to say some churches did not meet in houses. Clearly, some did. However, to teach that the apostolic churches met **only** in private homes is to teach that which cannot be proven without reasonable doubt by the one who is willing to speak where the Bible has spoken and be silent where it is silent. Some might point to uninspired history to "prove their case." There is some merit in doing that. But when uninspired history speaks where God or the Bible has not spoken, we ought to reject it like Paul rejected those "scholars" in Athens.

I do not believe this issue is a fellowship issue. My humble plea and prayer however is that, we love truth enough, to verify what our favorite preachers tell us and also to speak as the oracles of God on all issues.

Christianity—a Militant Religion

Dub McClish

Introduction

Various circumstances have combined in recent years to put the term militant in bad company in the minds of many. Radical and lawless left-wing political groups that provoke and engage in behavior causing personal injury and destruction of private property are rightly labeled "militant." Their violent antics have caused many sane folk to shrink from anything that resembles such temperament. Political liberals in our nation's capital and in the media have for several years been falsely influencing our citizenry to conceive of a strong national defense force as some sort of ill-begotten imperialistic "militancy." The re-emergence of Islam as a militant and terrorist force against Western nations of late has caused many to shrink from any positive concept of Biblical militancy, even in spiritual matters.

The simple meaning of *militant*, however, is to be "vigorously active, aggressive, or combative" (*Random House College Dictionary*). *Militant* and *military* are both "neutral" words, inherently neither good nor evil. The existence of "good warfare" (1 Tim. 1:18) implies the existence of its opposite. Therefore, the respective virtue or vice connoted by these terms depends completely upon that to which they are applied.

The Scriptures imply God-ordained enforcement agents of some sort that will punish

those who are evil and protect law-abiding citizens (Rom. 13:1–5; 1 Pet. 2:13–14). Such agents include both police forces (to maintain domestic order) and military forces (to defend nations against hostile forces). Both police and military powers have for centuries been prostituted by wicked and militant tyrants in order to broaden and maintain their own political power. All such efforts illustrate evil militancy. Likewise, the radical elements mentioned earlier are unquestionably militant, but in destructive causes.

While God’s servant shrinks from the horrors of misplaced militancy and misused military, let us not be too quick to discard these terms in their legitimate connotations. (It is never proper to use the abuse of a word or a principle as a reason to discard or abandon the word or principle itself.) Only those who are totally ignorant of the content of the New Testament could possibly be unaware of the frequency with which the inspired writers employ military metaphors. These are designed, apparently, not only to teach its readers valuable lessons about the nature of the kingdom and its work, but also to motivate us to be militant in the service of Christ with courage and valor.

We Are Soldiers and We Are at War

As Epaphroditus (Phi. 2:25), Timothy (2 Tim. 2:3), Archippus (Phi. 2), and Paul were soldiers of Christ, so are we. The Christian is not promised a life free of conflict filled with ease and comfort. Contrariwise, the Bible says we are at war: For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh (for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but mighty before God to the casting down of strongholds) (2 Cor. 10:3–4). Although the Lord’s kingdom does not “war according to the flesh” and we do not use physical weapons against the enemies of Christ, Paul declares that the “normal” environment in which the church operates is a war zone.

Real Soldiers Suffer for the Cause

No soldier can know at the time of enlistment what experiences or perils he will face. He may be sent on a mission under sealed orders, learning only when he reaches his destination that his task is life-threatening. However, loyalty to his enlistment oath—to obey his commander-in-chief and to defend his country—will motivate him to execute his orders at whatever cost.

Likewise, no soldier of Christ can foresee what all he may be called upon to bear for his Lord, but bear it he must. That decision should have been made at the time he confessed Christ as the Son of God and as his Lord (Rom. 10:9–10) and then “enlisted” by being baptized into Christ (6:3–4). Jesus describes persecutions and other sacrifices made for Him as a “cross” that each of us must bear if we would faithfully follow Him: “Whosoever doth not bear his own cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:27; cf. 9:23). A “good soldier of Christ Jesus” will suffer hardship rather than retreat under enemy fire or compromise with evil and error (2 Tim. 2:3).

Soldiers in the armies of men must devote their full attention to their service. No soldier who is truly serving his commander “...entangleth himself in the affairs of this life; that he may please him who enrolled him as a soldier” (v. 4). Soldiers on duty or in battle must not allow non-military pursuits to distract them from pleasing their commanders. Jesus’ soldiers must remember that they are “on duty” all of the time. The Lord’s army is weak and struggling in many areas of the battlefield because the service of the troops is occasional and irregular. They have allowed the “care of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches” (Mat. 13:22) to entangle and distract them so that they no longer seek more than anything else to please Him Who enrolled them and to place the interests of His kingdom first (6:33).

We Know Who the Enemy Is

The Bible specifies the commander-in-chief of the enemy forces on the great battlefield of life. Satan, the devil, the arch-adversary, leads this awful onslaught against Truth and righteousness. He would destroy every soul eternally if he had his way. He stalks his prey, requiring our constant vigilance: “Be sober, be watchful: your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour, whom withstand steadfast in your faith...” (1 Pet. 5:9). He disguises himself and thereby deceives the undiscerning masses: “For even Satan fashioneth himself into an angel of light” (2 Cor.

11:14). The devil is crafty and clever; we must ever be aware of and stand against his “wiles” (Eph. 6:11).

Satan employs men in his despicable assaults (Paul identified Elymas as “a son of the devil” [Acts 13:8–10]). The devil uses “fleshly lusts, which war against the soul” (1 Pet. 2:11). However, our real warfare is “...not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12).

The Lord Provides Our Equipment

An army can be no better than its equipment, both for defending itself and for attacking the enemy. Jesus Christ, our Commander-in-Chief (Mat. 28:18; Col. 1:18; 1 Tim. 6:14–16), has equipped His army well. He provides armor for our protection. This armor is identified generally with “light” and with “righteousness” (Rom 13:12; 2 Cor. 6:7). The spiritual soldier who will be able to “withstand in the evil day” is he who has put on “the whole armor of God” (Eph. 6:13), as Paul itemizes:

Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; withal taking up the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation... (Eph. 6:14–17a).

But let us, since we are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation (1 The. 5:8).

The commander-in-chief of an army does not personally buckle the armor on each of his soldiers. Each soldier is provided with equipment for battle, and it is his responsibility alone to utilize it. So it is in God’s spiritual army. Although He has the ability to do so, God does not directly, immediately, and/or personally put armor on His soldiers, though some among us would have it so. Rather, Paul rather tells us that God has **provided** the panoply and it is completely **our responsibility** to utilize it.

All of these pieces of armor are related to and supplied by the inspired Word, which furnishes us completely for every good work, including every tough battle (2 Tim. 3:16–17). The “Word of his [God’s] grace” is fully able to edify us and take us to our eternal inheritance (Acts 20:32). It behooves us then to follow the example of the noble Bereans who “searched the scriptures daily” (17:11). We must honor the command of Peter to add **knowledge** to our faith and virtue (2 Pet. 1:5) and to “grow in the grace and knowledge” of the Lord (3:18).

Paul commands that we “**put on** the whole armor of God” and “**take up** the whole armor of God” (Eph. 6:11, 13; cf. 1 The. 5:8; 1 Pet. 4:1; emph. DM). He repeats as he lists them that **we ourselves** are to strap on each piece of armor (Eph. 6:14–17). The only means of putting on this armor is through diligent study and application of the Word of God. Many a soldier has fallen in the daily trench warfare of temptation because ignorance of God’s Word left him defenseless against the “fiery darts of the evil one.” How badly we all need to remember the perfect defense against temptation and the perfect preventive for sin: “Thy word have I laid up in my heart, That I might not sin against thee” (Psa. 119:11).

Could the apostle’s instructions in Ephesians 6:11–17 be his own explanation of the way God will strengthen us “with power through his Spirit in the inward man” (3:16)? Note that he is discussing the means of our attaining spiritual strength in both contexts. In 3:16 he tells us God will give us strength. In 6:11–17 he tells us the **means** by which He gives it—not directly, but indirectly—**through our own utilization of His perfect instructions**.

Although Paul once mentioned our “weapons” (2 Cor. 10:4), when it came time to get specific, he subsumed all of our weapons of spiritual warfare in one great weapon: “And take...the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:” Eph. 6:17. (Noteworthy is the fact that each of the pieces of armor that we are to put on relates directly to the Word of God as its source. Thus, both for defense and for offense, our security rests in the written Word.)

Just as the Holy Spirit does not supernaturally and immediately furnish us with spiritual armor, neither does He give us knowledge apart from our study of His complete and all sufficient Word. This is our mighty offensive weapon. With it our Commander-in-Chief 5 withstood Satan and put him to flight in the wilderness temptations (Mat. 4:1–11). “The scripture cannot be broken” (10:35). It cleanses (15:3), sanctifies (17:17), and purifies (1 Pet. 1:22). It is the source of saving faith (John 20:30–31; Rom. 10:17). It is God’s saving power (Rom. 1:16) by which men are spiritually begotten (Jam. 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23).

The Lord Jesus did not send His army into the world equipped with literal swords and shields, but with the sword of the Spirit (Mat. 28:19–20; Mark 16:15–16). Rather than being a dead message from an “unenlightened” distant era, the Spirit’s sword is alive and energetic, and its sharpness surpasses that of the keenest blade men can forge (Heb. 4:12).

Though Spiritual, the War Is Nonetheless Real

We are not participants in mere mock or “practice” battles. The fight is real. With Timothy, we are to “war the good warfare” (1 Tim. 1:18). We are urged to “fight the good fight of the faith,” and we must do so in order to “lay hold on eternal life” (6:12). We are to “resist the devil” so that he will flee from us (Jam. 4:7). If we fail to resist him, we will become part of his war “spoils” (lit., military booty) (Col. 2:8).

Conclusion

Paul, ever one to practice what he preached, could say at the close of his life:

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day; and not to me only, but also to all them that have loved his appearing (2 Tim. 4:7-8).

May we all so serve and fight as faithful soldiers of Christ that we can sincerely say these words when the time comes to lay down our armor.

Society is not Sick; Individuals are Evil

Jerry C. Brewer

Institutions are what they are because of what the individuals who compose them are. The family, the nation and the church project collective personae that only mirror those of their individual members. As the smallest unit of organized society, the individual’s moral condition bears a fundamental relationship to the moral health of the whole society. Consequently and cyclically, the causes of moral ills that permeate and afflict society are traceable to individual conduct.

Social upheavals in America and a climate of confrontation and violence in the 1960s created what many termed “a sick society.” Response to that “sickness” consisted mainly of the symptomatic treatment of social legislation by Congress such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964. That led to Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society programs and related attempts to eradicate poverty within certain classes of citizens, with the assumption that its eradication would cure society’s ills. Six decades later, millions still live in self imposed squalor while those very programs, ostensibly designed to eliminate poverty, have become incentives for a dependent underclass to remain in those conditions.

More than twenty-five years later, Johnson’s War on Poverty has been an unqualified failure. Despite spending trillions of dollars, it has had the unintended consequence of making welfare more attractive than work to many families... (*Contract With America*, Ed Gillespie and Bob Schellhas, eds., Times Books, Random House, NY, 1994, p. 67).

The causes of society’s problems do not spring from the body politic. Without exception, they find their origin in the sinful conduct of the individual. The problems of hatred, illegitimate children, child abuse, drugs, alcohol, sodomy, incest, pornographic “entertainment,” gambling, violent criminal behavior and a host of other evils that plague society do not constitute the illness. They are merely symptoms of a moral virus

which attacks society's cellular component—the individual. When the individual is evil, the family, the church and the state all suffer and immorality in those institutions exists only to the extent that it is tolerated in the individual. The physical body becomes feverish and ill when a virus invades the cell. Remove the cause of illness from the cell and the body returns to a healthy state. So it is with society. Remove immorality from the individual and replace it with godliness and society will return to moral health.

That society ails cannot be denied. When children bear children out of wedlock, sodomy is approved and celebrated at the highest governmental levels, elementary school children carry guns to class, the killing of unborn children is sanctioned by the highest court in the land, fathers abandon their families, a welfare check is preferable to an honest day's work, murderers receive **life** for sentencing their own victims to death and evil is called a "psychological disorder," then society is indeed sick. When religion is prohibited in public institutions, the wages of honest working people are confiscated by a paternalistic government to support those who refuse to work, pornography is fed to children via the internet and television, a publicly avowed fornicator holds the office of president and blames others for his political woes and perverted minds in the television and film industries set the nation's moral tone, then our society is sick. How did we come to this?

The answer is found in Romans 1:18-32 which describes the unrighteousness of man that springs from his own ungodliness. Tracing the descent of men—and nations—into the abyss of moral depravity, Paul says it begins with, and is sustained by, ungodliness, a word which is explained by R. L. Whiteside.

The meaning of this word (ungodliness, JB) has been obscured by trying to make it mean godlikeness. It has no such meaning in the Bible; the Greek word from which it is translated has no such meaning. Godliness is piety, reverence. A godly person is one who has respect for God and sacred things. Ungodliness is impiety, irreverence, a lack of respect for God and sacred things. Godliness is a right attitude toward God; ungodliness is a wrong attitude toward God (*A New Commentary on Paul's Letter To The Saints at Rome*, Miss Inys Whiteside, Denton, Texas, 1945, pp. 23-24).

Ungodliness in the individual is the well-spring of all societal ills and the progenitor of all that is evil among man. The primal sin of man, ungodliness remains that from which all else springs. Made in the image of God, (Gen. 1:26), man was united with his Maker until he was attracted to the serpent's lie and disobeyed. That first sin amounted to ungodliness—a rejection of godly leadership and its replacement with man's desires. Bound up within that account is the first recorded practice of humanism. Man rejected God's perfection for his own wisdom and with that as his chart and compass, began his descent into the abyss of heathenism.

Society, according to Webster, is "...a community, nation or broad grouping of people having common traditions, institutions and collective activities and interests." American society is a nation built upon traditions, institutions, activities and interests that derive from Biblical morality embedded deeply in our collective past. American civilization emerged from those beliefs and our abandonment of them has led to the ills of latter twentieth century America.

For more than two centuries America has existed upon the foundation truths of a belief in God, Divine revelation, the priesthood of the believer and that, by virtue of birth, we are endowed by God with the inalienable rights of free men. Our civilization arose on the fundamental belief that the rights we enjoy are tempered by responsibilities to family, community and nation and it is this sense of **ought**, derived from our religious past, that produces what is orderly, right and harmonious in America. Antithetical to our roots, libertinism, hedonism, anarchism and humanism which exalt self above all others—including God—are the causes of today's immoral society.

In the American nation's beginning, the home and the church provided the impetus for the its rise and strength. While the nature and purposes of the home, the church, and the state are different, the former two provide the moral climate that prevails in the latter, as Allan Bloom pointed out.

Attending church or synagogue, praying at the table, were a way of life, inseparable from the moral education that was supposed to be the family's special responsibility in this democracy. Actually, the moral teaching was the religious teaching. There was no abstract doctrine. The things one was supposed to do, the sense that the world supported them and punished disobedience, were all incarnated in the Biblical stories. The loss of the gripping inner life vouchsafed those who were nurtured by the Bible must be primarily attributed not to our schools or political life, but to the family, which, with all its rights to privacy, has proved unable to maintain any content of its own. The dreariness of the family's spiritual landscape passes belief...The delicate fabric of the civilization into which successive generations are woven has unraveled, and children are raised, not educated (*The Closing of The American Mind*, 1987, Simon & Schuster, NY, pp. 56-57).

A sense of right moral conduct, inherent in the Bible and believed and taught in the homes and churches of the earliest settlers in the English colonies of North America was the guiding philosophy of the nation's founders. That sense of moral right, upon which the endurance and stability of any nation depends, has been lost in America because of the failure of the home.

Moral righteousness transcends human law and reasoning. It comes neither from legislative bodies nor ecumenical societies, but from the perfection of divine revelation. Becoming inured to the evils of fornication, adultery, homicide, genocide, infanticide and suicide, we have become an amoral nation. A steady diet of murder, rape, robbery, child abuse and abandonment, on the evening news has numbed our moral sensibilities until we consider those things normal rather than aberrant behavior. Bombarded with appeals for the rights of sodomites, we are no longer outraged at those things upon which the moral wrath of society would have once descended. That's the very point made by Bloom when he drew a comparison between a morally desensitized America and the Weimar Republic which spawned Adolph Hitler's atrocities.

...anything was possible for people who sang of the joy of the knife in cabarets. Decent people became used to hearing things about which they would have in the past been horrified to think, and which would not have been allowed public expression. (ibid, p. 154-55).

Seven centuries before Christ, the prophet Isaiah wrote,

Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe unto *them that are* wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight! Woe unto *them that are* mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink: Which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him! Therefore as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust: because they have cast away the law of the LORD of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel (Isa. 5:20-24).

Prodded by religious skepticism and the non-biblical religion of humanistic ideology, we have loosed ourselves from the moorings of absolute right and set ourselves adrift upon the uncertain sea of human reason. Abandoning their responsibilities as society's basic institutions, the home, the church and the state have formed an unholy alliance and created a generation which perpetuates a morally chaotic society.

The only solution to the problem is a frontal attack on the cause of the illness. The home must assume its place as the primary nurturer and the foundation block upon which society stands. The church must refocus on spiritual matters and the state must abandon its paternalism. Standing upon the foundation of its homes, the state has almost destroyed its own foundation by lifting familial and benevolent religious obligations from the individual and appropriating those to itself under the guise of "social legislation." The state cannot replace the family. The family cannot replace the church, and the church cannot replace the state or the family and the family cannot replace the

state. Each must function within its own sphere of influence and obligation in order for society to be made whole again.

How to Approach Bible Study

Lee Moses

As children of the heavenly Father, we desire to become well acquainted with our Father's word. We realize the obligation we have to become knowledgeable in His word (2 Tim. 2:15; 2 Pet. 3:18) and the privilege that is ours to know His will (Eph. 3:3-5; 1 Pet. 1:10-12). Questions may be raised concerning how is best to do this, including:

Is simply reading the Bible sufficient? Do I need anything other than a Bible to study the Bible? Do I need to have a particular mental approach when studying the Bible? Although this article is by no means exhaustive on the subject, we will endeavor to answer these three questions. Is simply reading the Bible sufficient? If by this is meant a casual reading, or skimming, the answer is no; although regular Bible reading is important. Reading is where one begins his Bible study, not where he ends it. God is a "rewarder of them that **diligently seek him**" (Heb. 11:6, emph. LM). If one wanted to be a doctor, he would not skim through one or two medical books. Reading the Bible is good, but rightly dividing God's word requires more than a casual reading. One must spend time thinking about what he has read in God's word. Many passages speak about "meditating" upon God's word (Josh. 1:8; Psm. 1:1-3; 119:148; 1 Tim. 4:13-16; et al.). At times, we must dig to find the meanings of various Bible passages that may not be clear upon first reading. Also, an effort should be made to commit portions of Scripture to memory (Psm. 119:11; Heb. 2:1; 1 John 2:1; Matt. 4). If our Lord was able to use Scripture embedded in His mind as a defense against temptation, we can certainly be aided in this respect as well.

Do I need anything other than a Bible to study the Bible? No, one does not need anything other than a reliable English translation of the Bible (e.g. King James Version, American Standard Version, New King James Version) to understand everything one needs for his soul's salvation. However, there are many tools available that can help the Christian to avoid confusion, and to make better use of his study time. A good English dictionary, New Testament word dictionary (e.g. Vine's), concordance, and Bible dictionary or encyclopedia are indispensable tools in Bible study. There are many commentaries available which provide research which will assist in understanding the Bible. One should always use a discriminate mind when using commentaries—brethren such as J.W. McGarvey, Guy N. Woods, and H. Leo Boles have written commentaries that are quite reliable, without the denominational bias found in many of the prevalent commentary sets. But even when consulting sound commentators such as these, one must always let the Bible be the final word on itself.

Do I need to have a particular mental approach? "Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments" (Ezra 7:10). Once anyone realizes that the Bible is the word of God, he will approach its study with deserved respect. The attitude must be: (1) Seek—I will seek what God has to say. I truly want to know what His will is, and I do not care what any man says differently. I will not go to the Scriptures to try to justify my conduct or to prove my personal views. (2) Do—I will do whatever the Lord asks of me. Knowledge without application is useless. (3) Teach—Ezra had prepared himself to teach God's word, and so must we. The apostles were given the Great Commission to teach (Matt. 28:19-20); and since we are to observe those things commanded them, we have that command as well. But we must prepare ourselves through regular, reverent Bible study if we are to be able to teach, or serve God in any other capacity.

We are very privileged to have readier access to the Bible today than any time in previous history. If we approach our Bible study diligently, wisely, and respectfully, we can know our house is built upon the Rock (Matt. 7:24-25).

The Churches of Christ: “Doing Church” Biblically Since A.D. 33

Jess Whitlock

This afternoon I took my wife to the HEB in Gatesville, Texas. I sat in the car and waited for her. I noticed the huge public billboard sign, which read: “The Gateway Baptist Church, ‘Doing Church Biblically Since 1950.’ ” Dr. Royse T. Cockrell is their local preacher.

The thought struck me that the “churches of Christ” (Rom. 16:16) have been “doing church Biblically” since A.D. 33. The Lord’s church was established in the city of Jerusalem the first Pentecost after Jesus’ resurrection (Acts 2). The churches of Christ are patterned after the New Testament church in worship and in doctrine (2:42-ff). Can the same be said concerning the Gateway Baptist Church?

The “churches of Christ” take that appellation from the Bible (Rom. 16:16). The Gateway Baptists cannot find their name on one page of the New Testament. If so, where?? John the Baptist was not a member of the Baptist church. “Baptist” describes what he did; i.e., immersed or baptized. Baptist identifying a man-made denomination did not come into use until 1644.

The “churches of Christ” assert that baptism is essential to salvation. The Baptist denominations teach that baptism is not essential to one’s salvation. The Bible teaches that salvation only comes after baptism (Acts 2:38; 22:16; Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:26-27; 1 Pet. 3:21; etc.).

The “churches of Christ” sing songs of praise to God without the addition of mechanical instruments of music (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; etc.). The Baptist denominations add to the Word of God by introducing mechanical music to their worship services. Where is the authority for such in the New Testament?

The “churches of Christ” realize that the Scriptures teach a Christian can so sin as to fall from God’s grace (Gal. 5:4; 1 Tim. 1:19- 20; 2 Pet. 2:19-21; etc.). The Baptist denominations assert the impossibility of apostasy. Where is such a doctrine taught in the Bible? Do we have an example of such? Are there examples of apostasy in the New Testament? Let us count the ways: Judas, Simon the Sorcerer, the Galatians, Hymenaeus, Alexander, Demas, et al.

The “churches of Christ” relate God’s plan of salvation in answer to the question: “What must I do to be saved?” One must hear the Gospel (Rom. 10:17; Acts 8:5-ff). One must have faith in Jesus Christ (John 8:24; Heb. 11:1, 6). One must be willing to repent of sin (Luke 13:3-5; Acts 17:30). One must confess faith in Christ as Lord (Mat. 10:32-33; Rom. 10:9-10). One must be baptized (immersed) into the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Mat. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38). One must be found faithful until death (Rev. 2:10). By way of contrast the Gateway Baptist church teaches that one must confess Jesus as Lord, (accepting Him as one’s personal Savior). Now, you must be baptized to “join” the Baptist church, but you need not be baptized in order to be saved according to Baptist doctrine! This teaching makes it more difficult to become a Baptist, than to be saved!

“Approximately 40 years ago in our fair city, the West Hill Church of Christ sponsored brother Foy Wallace as the speaker **in a most successful month-long Gospel meeting**. We are honored to have him return to the area for four nights of lectures. Everyone is cordially invited to come hear this renowned scholar, preacher, and defender of the word of God.” (A “month-long” Gospel meeting. In 1945, people were thirsting and hungering to the Word of God. From the Bellview church of Christ *Beacon*, July 10, 1975).

Editor's Travels and Preaching

We preached at Eastside in Lexington, Okla. on Sunday, Dec. 5 for the first time since my stroke, Dec. 15, 2020. I preached at Yukon, Okla. on Dec. 12, and Dec. 26, and on Dec. 19, I preached for the church in Chillicothe, Texas.

“What Saith The Scriptures?”

Harrell Davidson

We are always happy to receive questions on subjects that the reader may be interested in.

Our question this month is “Can we pray to Jesus Christ as per John 14:14, Acts 1:24, Acts 7:59-60, 2 Cor 12:8?”

This question has been a plague for many years to many people and remains so in the 21st century. Let us note what our Savior Himself said.

In Matthew 6:5 “And when thou prayest....”. Verse 6 “But thou, when thou prayest...” Verse 8, “Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.” And verse 9, “After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.” Please notice “and when thou prayest; “after this manner” and then “our Father which art in heaven”. This should settle the matter if we wrote—said no more.

Those words were said by Christ to a multitude and His disciples in what we refer to as the Sermon on the Mount (cf. Matt. 5:1). Some have taken the position that chapter 6 contains the Lord’s prayer, but that is not the case at all. It is a prayer that He taught to mankind “multitudes” and “His disciples” the Lord’s prayer will be found in John 17 when He prayed to His Father in Heaven. It contains how men ought to pray.

Jesus chose the 12 apostles to follow and learn from Him. Their qualifications may be found in Acts 1:21, 22. They journeyed with the Master for about three and one-half years learning how to do all they needed to do and know in order to fulfill the role they would be assigned by Jesus. He taught in various ways and used means, miracles, to reveal God to them for it takes a revelation to know God. When the Lord’s earthly ministry is ending is where He said, “And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it” (John 14:13,14).

Are we to assume that the apostles would not pray to God as they had been instructed in the example prayer (Matt 6) that they were commanded to use in prayer to God? Also notice that our Lord said they should ask God in the name of Jesus which they had not done before. Why one might ask? They were living day and night with the Christ and all they needed was given to them for the preaching and teaching of the Word, but that would end at the cross. Remember it was commanded of them to pray to God. He said you pray this way in Matthew 6 when and as you pray.

What many misunderstand is that Deity, God the Father, Christ the Son and the Holy Spirit are all called God in the Scriptures. I am preparing an article for this paper on this subject for future use. But notice here that throughout the Hebrew Scriptures two chief names are used for the one true divine Being—*Elohim*, commonly translated God in the King James Version and *Jehovah*, translated Lord in the American Standard of 1901.

Thus, we learn that God is also called “Lord” in instances throughout the Scriptures. When we turn to Acts 1 and the selection of an apostle to replace Judas who by transgression fell, we read that they prayed this way:

“And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen” (verse 24). Notice that Peter along with all the other apostles were on that occasion praying said prayer. Now, hear from Peter’s speech in Acts 15 where the apostles and elders came together to consider a matter told them this: “And God, which knoweth the hearts...” (verse 8).

Many times, in the Bible, we have similar statements made such as 1 Chron. 28:9:

And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek

him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.

From the Old Testament to the New Testament this should be known that God is the great heart searcher of mankind.

Acts 7:59-60, "And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep". These verses validate the points already made. The word "God" was supplied by the translators as this points to previous commands to pray to God through Christ or to invoke the blessings of the Christ. These passages do not justify praying to Jesus, however. There are no passages that invalidate the Lord's command to pray to God near the beginning of the Gospel records already cited.

The next reference listed in the question we are pondering is 2 Cor 12:8. Paul, an apostle, had been given a thorn in the flesh by a messenger of Satan for which he asked the Lord thrice (three times) to remove. Look at the answer he received in the next verse; "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." God's grace provided so that the "power of Christ" would rest on Paul.

A rule of thumb should always be do all in the Name of the Lord (cf. Col. 3:17) or Eph. 5: 20, "Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Remember that Jesus said, "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name."

I cannot imagine anyone leading a prayer by saying "Dear Jesus".

Thanks for your question.

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

\$1,000.00 Reward Offered

We will pay \$1,000.00 to anyone who can produce a New Testament passage telling one to "Pray The Sinner's Prayer" in answer to the question, "What must I do to be saved?"

Calvin's Quandary

Daniel Denham

The French theologian John Calvin (A.D. 1509-1564) built the system known as Calvinism on two basic inter-related assumptions. First, he assumed that God maintained complete, active, and sovereign control over even the most trivial of minutia in His government of the Universe. Everything that happens God directly causes to happen. He held to view of God that portrayed Him as a rigid and rigorous micro-managing Deity. Calvin also had a severe turn of mind himself (His classmates dubbed him "The Accusative Case") and ascribed such an attitude to God. This severe view of the divine nature saw a Deity who was just waiting for man to get out of line so that He could punish him! Second, Calvin believed, like his mentor Augustine of Hippo (A.D. 354-430), that man was morally, totally depraved from conception (hence hereditary total depravity). The doctrine of original sin was a cornerstone in his view of man, which Calvin came to hold due to his erroneous assumption mentioned earlier relative to the nature of God. If man was totally depraved, then he could do nothing at all to save himself, and, by extension, once saved he could not do anything at all to be lost, but would surely persevere in his faith regardless. From these basic assumptions arose the key tenets of the T-U-L-I-P by way of the synod of Dort (A.D. 1618-1619), which formally codified the teachings of Calvin in opposition to Arminianism.

The basic problem of Calvinism and the subsequent quandary in which Calvin and his

successors found themselves lies in these two assumptions. If man can do nothing at all to save himself because he is totally depraved (assumption #2), then he has no genuine free will. Without genuine free will he is nothing more than an automaton—doing only what he is made to do. If God is the One who makes him do it, then God must be the author of every action in which men engage and this includes sin! Thus, Calvinism implies that God is the active author of sin. He made the Devil and his angels to sin, and He made man to sin. Every evil deed ultimately God willed to occur! If everything happens because God makes it happen (assumption #1), then even sin is actively caused by God who then punishes the sinner who complied with His fiat to sin! Thus, Calvinism in turn implies that God is not really a just God. He is reduced to a metaphysical monster responsible for every evil act and thought that men and angels may commit. Every murder, including Hitler's murder of six million Jews, and every sexual deviancy, including incest and pedophilia, God is culpable for as to its causation.

Calvin himself wrestled with the question of free will, but ultimately came down on the side of Augustine's view of depravity that precluded any ability to choose to counter. The result is a tragic doctrine that impugns the character of God and enslaves Calvinism's adherents to a system that corrupts man's understanding of himself and cripples the cultural ethos. Edward Palmer, a noted Calvinist, stated that God "has foreordained everything" to such an extent that it includes "the moving of a finger, the beating of an heart, the laughter of a girl, the mistake of a typist—even sin." The implications of such a doctrine are immense and devastating. The Christian system bears no semblance to Calvinism!

Calvinism also cannot provide any effective and compelling answer to atheism's argument from evil. God, according to Calvinism, is the author of evil: so any attempt at an answer from its premises is doomed to failure from the start. Calvinists are forced to talk inanely about "the mystery of suffering," etc. They say that rather than focusing on the pain and evil in the world, men should focus on the good things that God has ordained, which sounds nice on the surface, unless one is faced with the anguish of watching a loved one being tortured to death by a sadistic murderer or a child crushed by car driven by a drunkard. Calvinism implies the murderer murders because God makes him do it, and the drunkard and his driving are as much God's handiwork as the lilies of the field and the sparrows of the air! Atheism rejoices at the prospect of confronting the failures of Calvinism.

Calvinism's implication that God is unjust is seen especially in the frequently ignored doctrine of double predestination, also called preterition. Not only are the elect ones individually, unconditionally, and unchangeably predestinated to be saved as per Calvinism, but the non-elect are equally individually, unconditionally, and unchangeably predestinated to be lost! God, according to classic Calvinist teaching, predestinated the non-elect to sin, and to remain in sin, and thus to be forever lost in Hell fire. He would make them sin, and then would punish them for it. This He determined to do before the world even existed. He would elect them to be lost in order to damn them. Calvinists, not surprisingly, do not like to talk about this aspect of their view of predestination, which is founded upon the two false assumptions John Calvin made several centuries ago!

Calvinism is a false and pernicious system. Yet some of our brethren have become enamored with its view of salvation by grace alone through faith alone. Let us oppose it with every fiber of our being. It is a monstrous lie against the very nature of God. The wooden theology of Calvinism feeds the steam of atheism in our nation today!

Tests of One's Faith

Genesis 22:1; James 1:13

Kent Bailey

In the study of the word of God one will carefully note various requirements placed upon humanity that will test our faith. James makes this concept clear as he indicates by divine inspiration that an acceptable faith produces works (Jas. 2:14-26). An addi-

tional reference of the scriptures concerning this same matter is stated in Hebrews chapter 11.

In comparison of the texts found in Genesis 22:1 and James 1:13 it should be obvious to all individuals that the term **tempt** is used in two different ways within the word of God. The account as stated in Genesis uses the term indicating that of **trial** whereas James 1:13 inspiration uses such language to indicate **an inducement to do evil**. The text plainly states that God cannot be tempted with evil and therefore that he does not tempt any individual, or induce one to accomplish that which is evil in their own personal lives. While God will never engage in any activity that would lead any into sinful conduct he does permit our faith to be tested, tried, and/or proven. Such was indicated regarding Abraham in Genesis 22:1. Such implies several important aspects.

One's personal faith is essential in attaining fellowship with God. When we discuss the element of faith we speak with reference to that of trust, reliance, and/or confidence (Hebrews 11:1-6). In noting the passage, a Biblical faith is established in the lives of individuals upon the basis of adequate evidence. True faith is not a "blind leap into the dark" based upon subjective existential thinking. Such comes as the result of true knowledge whether such knowledge is based upon empirical or contemplative evidence. If one will ever attain fellowship with God, that of faith, along with obedience, must be developed in one's life.

This type of faith is also inclusive regarding the Deity of Christ (John 1:1-14) as well as the gospel of Christ (Mark 16:15-16). Paul, the Apostle demonstrated a connecting link between evidence, understanding, knowledge, and obedience (Acts 28:24-28). These essential principles are not only essential in one's becoming a Christian, such are also essential for Christians in remaining faithful.

When one properly understands the importance of such principles one will readily see that such elements are equally related to Christians and non-Christians alike. God does not have a standard that applies to those seeking to be saved from past alien sins in becoming Christians and then has no set standard in continuing in the faith by living faithful as a Christian. The doctrine of "faith only" is just as wrong for the Christian as it is the non-Christian.

Obedience to God is the true test of one's faith. Such is a remarkable fact that in all Biblical dispensations, God has had certain tests of faith, various means by which determined the loyalty of individuals to Him and to His word. Such is evidenced in Hebrews 11 concerning the record of those who were faithful. We take note of such in the lives of,

- Noah—11:7.
- Abraham—11:7-10; 11:17-19.
- Isaac—11:20-21.
- Joseph—11:22.
- Moses—11:23-29.

Some divine requirements that are adequate tests are moral in nature. These have ethical and practical aspects. Such even have an application that regulates civilized behavior in all societies. Without a correct application of divine principles that are ethical and/or moral in nature civilized society cannot exist.

These divine requirements are right upon the basis of their existence. As a matter of fact, they are given for our good and are absolute essential. These laws predated Mosaic law and were bound upon humanity during Patriarchy when no written revelation had been given. These principles are eternal in nature and are apply to all accountable individuals today as components of the New Testament law of Christ. If such were not the case it would be impossible to possess anything due to thieves stealing from others. Lack of safety would be worse than what it already is due to the sin of murder. Romans 13:1-7 places a divine obligation for civil government to protect society from these evil doers even to the point of taking human life as a scriptural means of punishment. The Old Testament Mosaic law was give to demonstrate the sinfulness of sin (Rom. 7:7-13).

The ultimate test of one's faith is positive divine law. Positive divine law exists

as divine requirements only upon the basis that God requires such, not because there is moral or ethical value found in such. There is no logical connection in taking the blood of an animal and placing an amount over a door post to save the first born in families from death (Exo. 12:13). There is no logical connection between Naaman's dipping seven times in the river Jordan to be cleansed from his leprosy (2 Ki. 5:10-14). In the New Testament age there is no logical connection of the requirement of the Eternal Word, the second member of the God-head becoming incarnate, coming to this world and tasting death for all of humanity in the shedding of His blood (Heb. 2:9). There is no logical connection of water baptism unto the remission of past alien sins (Acts 2:38). For the Christian there is no logical connection to the acts of New Testament worship (Acts 2:42; Col. 3:16), or even the worship assembly. This is where the denominational world stumbles because of two reasons: (1) They reject the concept of obedience, and (2) The necessary tests of one's faith.

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Can a Sensible Man Believe the Bible?

N.B. Hardeman

Enemies of God's Word would be glad to see this question made prominent in all newspapers, magazines and periodicals, because of what they think it implies. Why not put it: "Can an honest, sensible man reject the Bible?" Such is my query now, and I submit this article with the hope of strengthening the faith of those who read it. For twenty centuries the enemies of the Bible have filed every objection possible—nothing new has been presented for generations—and, yet, the Bible proves itself adamant to all attacks. Many a hammer has been beaten to frazzles on the anvil of God's truth.

An objection has been raised to the effect that during the time Jesus is supposed to have lived practically nothing is said about Him in the secular press or by the historian. The fact that but little is said is perfectly natural and altogether human.

Nothing new in the way of objections to the Bible has been presented for generations. At that time the world was engaged in military affairs, and only heroes and heroines on the field of battle received publicity. Worldly glory and deeds of valor occupy the pages of publications. The weapons used by Christ and His disciples were not carnal. He had no great armies clad in brilliant uniforms to unfurl His banner. There was no great political power of men of wealth to shout His praise. He lived in a despised town and belonged to the common people. Why waste ink and space in telling about the carpenter's son?

But, there were a few references made by some of His enemies, and, while not intended, these but confirm what the Bible says.

The story of Christ as told by His apostles was corroborated by unbelieving historians. Among the Jews, Josephus is the outstanding historian. He was born four years after Jesus was put to death. He was seven years old when James was beheaded, and he lived until the end of the first century. At the age of nineteen years, he took his stand with the Pharisees, the leading denomination of his day. As a historian he could have said but little about Jesus and His teaching without uprooting his own sect. He tells of the war between Herod the Tetrarch and his father-in-law Aretas, and of the intrigue between Herod and Herodias. Herod was defeated in the war, and says: "But

some of the Jews were of the opinion that God had suffered Herod's whole army to be destroyed as a just punishment on him for the death of John, called the Baptist." He also says, "Herod had killed John who was a just man and had called upon the Jews to be baptized and practice virtue.

The details of the above mentioned war are not given in the Bible, but Matthew, Mark and Luke tell of John the Baptist's rebuking Herod for taking his brother's wife. Thus, between the historian of opposite faith and writers of the New Testament there is perfect harmony.

Caius Cornelius Tacitus was a heathen writer of the first century. He rose in the realm of Rome to become consul in the year 97. His reliability and superior style are recognized by the fact that some of his texts are used in many of our colleges to this day. He hated the Christians of his time because they would not worship his idol gods. But, in writing the story of affairs, the following is a summary of what he says regarding Christ and His disciples:

1. Christ was the founder of a sect of Christians.
2. Christ was put to death as a criminal.
3. He was executed by Pontius Pilate.
4. Tiberius was Emperor of Rome—hence,
5. Jesus was born in the reign of Augustus.
6. This "pernicious superstition" was checked for a time by the death its founder.
7. This "pernicious superstition" broke out again and spread not only over Judea but reached the city of Rome.
8. Christians were persecuted in Rome as early as 64.
9. Vast numbers were discovered and condemned because they were accused of burning the city and because of their hatred for mankind.
10. They were hated as the off-scouring of the earth and the filth of things.

They were destroyed to gratify the cruelty of one man.

Pliny, the younger, was another great Roman writer and was made Proconsul of Bithynia from 106 to 108. Upon entering this district to assume office he found a great persecution being waged by the Government. He continued it for a while and finally wrote a letter to the Emperor Trajan at Rome to know what to do about the matter.

From the letter he wrote the following facts were stated:

1. Many Christians of every age and rank and of both sexes were then in Bithynia.
2. Their teaching and influence were such that heathen temples were most deserted and the victims for sacrifices could hardly find a purchaser.
3. None who were really Christians could, by any means, be compelled to make supplication to the image of Caesar, or the statue of the gods.
4. After the most searching inquiry, including torture to force confessions, he had found no vice among them.
5. They suffered for the name of being Christians without any charge of crime.
6. They were accustomed, on stated days, to hold two meetings; one, for singing "in concert" hymns to Christ, and for making vows to live righteously; and the other, for eating a "harmless meal."
7. Those who were Roman citizens were sent to Rome for trial.

This testimony comes from writers who lived in the first century of the Christian Era. They were all enemies of our Lord, but they wrote as historians an accurate account of things then going on. Scholars and infidels have never questioned the authenticity of their statements about secular affairs. I must insist that but for prejudice and downright hatred of Christianity they would be forced to accept the Bible, seeing its statements are so perfectly corroborated by those who lived with the apostles and early disciples and knew whereof they spoke. Were the whole New Testament blotted out, the

world could get a pretty fine idea of its teachings and influence upon the hearts and lives of men from these and other historians who, though enemies of the cross of Christ, in giving the story of their day, confirm the words of inspiration given. But for prejudice and downright hatred, the Bible would be accepted. The period covered by New Testament history was characterized by frequent and complicated changes in the political affairs of Judea and of the countries around it. None of these is accurately described in the New Testament, and, yet, it contains many allusions to each in an incidental way. Josephus gives a detailed account of all. This fact affords a most excellent opportunity to test the accuracy of sacred writers. Agreements can be accounted for on no ground except perfect information on both sides. The New Testament reader who has no other source of information is left in great confusion. In the history of Matthew and Luke we read of "Herod the King." In Matthew 2, we find that Herod the King dies, yet, in chapter 14, Herod the King beheads James. In these statements not a word of explanation appears. In Matthew 2, Archelaus is king of Judea, and in Matthew 27, Pilate is governor of the same region. In Acts 12, Herod is king of Judea, and in Acts 23, Felix is its governor. No explanation is made, and, yet, by consulting Josephus, all is in harmony with the facts of history. The Herod under whom Jesus was born died and was succeeded by his son Herod as ruler of a part of his father's dominion with the title of both king and tetrarch. The Herod who beheaded James was a grandson of the first, and was made king by Claudius Caesar. Herod the tetrarch was deposed by the Romans and procurators were sent to rule in his stead.

After these, the government of Palestine was again changed, and Herod who beheaded James was made king over all the land. Upon his death three years later, governors were again appointed, of whom Felix was one. Thus, it appears that the Bible is absolutely accurate in all these matters pertaining to political changes so frequently made.

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The Way of Cain

Fred E. Dennis

"Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core" (Jude 11). The "way of Cain" is the way of the transgressor—and this is a hard way. "The way of transgressors is hard" (Prov. 13:15). The Bible is full of warnings for the transgressor, but it seems so few will heed the warnings. They insist on finding out for themselves.

Sin is the transgression of the law of God. Cain thought he would offer whatever he cared to as an offering unto the Lord. He was a tiller of the soil. What would be more natural than for him to bring of the fruit of the ground? The Lord had no respect for Cain's offering. He will have no respect for us and our worship unless we do it in compliance with his commandments. "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son" (2 John 9).

The "way of Cain" is the way of the substitutor. He substituted his way for the Lord's way. The religious world is full of just such substitution. The Lord says one thing, but men want something else. We learn from Heb. 11:4 that Abel offered his offering by faith. "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh." It is excellent to do exactly what God commands in exactly the way he commands it to be done. God counts that righteousness upon our part. Anything else than this is sin. Abel has been dead for thousands of years, but he yet speaketh. It is wonderful that a man can speak for truth and right thousands of years after he is dead.

Abel offered by faith. Cain did not so offer. We cannot do anything by faith unless that

thing has been ordered of the Lord. God teaches us to sing spiritual songs in worship. (1 Cor. 14:15; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). We can render this act of worship by faith. When we add instrumental music, we are substituting our own think-sos. We cannot use this instrumental music by faith. There is no word of God for it. The Lord has not commanded it. The Lord had not commanded Cain's offering. He would have none of it. Why should people of our day think that God will accept worship that he has not commanded? Jesus said: "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15:9).

The Lord commands penitent believers to be baptized for the remission of their sins. (Mark 16:15, 16; Acts 2:37-38; 22:16.) Men want to substitute the baptism of babies for believers' baptism. God will accept nothing of the kind. God says we are to be buried by baptism. (Rom. 6:3-5; Col. 2:12; Heb. 10:22). Men have substituted sprinkling and pouring for baptism. After they set aside the law of God, and then make a law of their own, they have the audacity to ask God to accept their human law. They will go so far as to say: "It is just as good as what the Bible commands." Millions of honest souls are being deceived by this substitution. Many will not learn until the judgment day that they have been wrong. They trusted in men and in human law instead of trusting in God and his law. Beware of substitution!

The Lord teaches his disciples to meet upon the first day of the week to observe the Lord's Supper. The first day of the week comes every seven days. Men have substituted **their** wisdom for God's wisdom. They will meet every month or so or every six months to do what the Lord said to do on the first day of the week. Of course the Lord knows nothing about a human church, and he made no laws to govern it. But he did make laws to govern his church. We had better abide in the doctrine of Christ in this and in all other things. "Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain."

The "way of Cain" is the way of the evil one. It is the way of the devil. It is an awful thing to be a servant of the devil. "Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you." (1 John 3:12-13). The wicked have ever hated the righteous. The Lord will not accept the wicked and his wickedness. Cain was of the devil. Many of our day have the same father! Some brethren seem to marvel because the world hates them. There is just one way to get the love of the world. That way is the way of Cain. Go along with the world, and the world will love its own. Draw the line between the church and the world wide and deep, and the world will hate you. Yes, and some of the worldly "Christians" will almost hate you.

The "way of Cain" is the way of jealousy and envy. Cain was jealous of his brother. He was envious of him. This envy and jealousy caused him to kill his brother. Envy and jealousy will go to hurtful extremes to gain their end. "Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy?" (Prov. 27:4). Envy will do anything and everything to accomplish its ends.

The "way of Cain" is the way of the murderer. He murdered his brother. We have many brethren in the church who are doing the same thing. Some may think this statement too strong, but it is not. "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him" (1 John 3:15). It is an awful thing to hate a brother. Brother, if you go to the judgment with hate in your heart toward a brother, you will land in hell. "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (1 John 4:20). We have many brethren who will profess loudly their love to God, but at the very same time hate some of the brethren. God says such folks are murderers and liars. This was Cain's trouble:

Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it (John 8:44).

The "way of Cain" is to deny that we are responsible for our brother. "And the Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: am I my brother's

keeper?” (Gen. 4:9). Many of our day have the mistaken idea that they can do as they please regardless. In a very important sense we are our brother's keeper. Some have filthy habits that cause others to offend. We had better lay such habits aside. Our examples are powerful things. Many dear souls will be lost because those professing Christianity set a bad example before them. Many others will be saved because some humble Christian realized his great responsibility in teaching and in living. May the dear God in heaven deliver us from the “way of Cain.”

Baptism and Repentance

Foy E. Wallace

The battleground of the design of baptism has been Acts 2:38. Yet if Acts 2:38 were not in the New Testament the divine design of baptism is amply set forth in many other passages. On the other hand, if there were no other verse in the Bible on the design or purpose of baptism Acts 2:38, free of perversion, clearly sets it forth. Indeed, we would be willing to stake the issue on the single passage. It is of distinct value, a value that should be emphasized, in any controversy over the place of baptism in the gospel plan. It is the most conspicuous passage in the New Testament on the subject of baptism and the text should be freed of the withering influence of sophistry.

In deference to readers who may not be able to quote the passage, it reads: “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 Spirit.”

A View of the Text

The passage presents an inseparable connection between repentance, baptism and remission. The preposition “for,” being *eis*, means necessary to; in order to. It makes remission of sins depend on baptism in the same sense in which it depends on repentance. An application of the simple rules of grammar will make this fact clear. For instance, transposing the sentence it reads: “Every one of you repent and be baptized, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins.” Here two things—repentance and baptism—are related to a third, the remission of sins. The two things are connected with the one thing by the particle *eis*. The one particle *eis* cannot express two relations. Whatever relation repentance bears to the remission of sins, baptism bears that same relation. Is repentance essential to remission of sins? So is baptism.

An Answer to a Question

The words of Acts 2:38 were spoken in answer to a question. The question was: “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” The answer was: “Every one of you repent and be baptized.” Now, when were they forgiven? Not when Peter began preaching; not when they were convicted; and not when they cried, “what shall we do.” The question itself implies the necessity for an answer. And the answer itself implies its essentiality. But the answer to the question was: “Repent and be baptized.” That alone would make it essential, with no design expressed—it was the answer to their question.

The object of the question was what to do. For what—if not to be forgiven? Then did Peter tell them something to do because of it? A strange answer to a question, indeed! And a strange question, searching for something they already had, but did not know it! Yes, as an answer to their question, the command to repent and be baptized, if no design had been expressed, would still link repentance and baptism together as essential to the object of the question asked. The object of that question being forgiveness, the answer to it makes repentance and baptism together essential to forgiveness.

The Answer Analyzed

The copulative conjunction *and* couples two verbs. Repent is one verb; be baptized is the other verb. They are joined together by the Holy Spirit—and what the Holy Spirit joins together who will dare to separate?

The phrase “for the remission of sins” modifies both verbs, sustaining equal relation to both. Repent and be baptized for what? For precisely the same thing. Eliminate one verb, make it a sentence with a simple predicate instead of a compound one, and read

it: “Repent every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.” Or, eliminating the verb repent, and retaining the verb be baptized, read it again: “Be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.” There is no good sense in the passage if remission of sins is not the purpose of both repentance and baptism. In fact, in Acts 2:38, repentance by itself is not for anything; and baptism by itself is not for anything; but repentance and baptism are, **together, for** the remission of sins.

The Greek Preposition *eis*

It is often urged that the clause “be baptized for the remission of sins” is susceptible to different interpretations. But let it be remembered that it is not baptism for the remission of sins in Acts 2:38, but repentance **and** baptism for the remission of sins, and two interpretations cannot be made of that.

The preposition *eis* never meant “because of” nor “on account of” and was never so used in all of the New Testament. Baptists sometimes use such examples as, “He was arrested for (on account of) stealing;” and “He was paid for (because of) his labor.” In such instances the English word *for*, which comes from the Greek word *dia* and which means “on account of,” is used. The sentences, for that reason, are not parallel. Informed Baptist preachers know it, and if honest will not resort to the dodge—yea, the deceit,

Compare the uses of *eis* in some other, passages.

1. Acts 3:19: “Be converted that (*eis*). Your sins may be blotted out”—*that* is the preposition *eis*, and it means in order to the blotting out of sins.
2. Rom. 10:10: “Believeth unto (*eis*) righteousness”—in order to righteousness.
3. Acts 11:18: “Repentance unto (*eis*) life” in order to *life*.
4. 2 Cor. 7:10: “Repentance unto (*eis*) salvation”—in order to *salvation*.
5. Matt. 26:28: “This is my blood shed for (*eis*) the remission of sins.”

Does Matthew 26:28 mean that his blood was shed because of or in order to the remission of sins? Let some Baptist preacher tell you.

6. Acts 2:38: “Repent and be baptized...for (*eis*) the remission of sins.” The preposition *eis* in Acts 2:38 means *in order to*. The word *eis* **never** meant “on account of” and was never so used anywhere in all of the New Testament. Baptism is, therefore, in order to remission of sins.

Believe-Repent-Baptized

The Bible order of gospel conditions is: Believe, repent, be baptized. But we believe *eis* salvation unto, or into, salvation. So Baptists are wont to say that since we believe *eis* (into) and one believes before he is baptized, one is, therefore, saved before he is baptized. But what is the Baptist order? Here it is: Repent, believe, baptized. And what about the word *eis*? Here it is: Repent **eis**; Believe **eis**; Baptized **eis**. So if “believe *eis*” puts salvation before baptism--then “repent *eis*,” in the Baptist order, would put salvation before faith because they tell us repentance comes before faith! The facts, shorn of sophistry, are simply that the word *eis*, which is the word *for* in Acts 2:38, means in order to, in view of, toward etc., and the context shows when it is the final act of entering into; therefore, the translators knew when to render the word unto and when to render it into. But one thing is very certain, it **never meant** because of, or on account of, being always prospective and never retrospective, and was **never** so rendered. *Thayer's Greek* lexicon defines the Word *eis* as follows: “A preposition governing the accusative, and denoting entrance into, or direction and limit; into, to, towards, for, among”—and that, together with the Bible use of it, ought to settle it.

Two Answers Compared

The third chapter of Acts records the second sermon of Peter in Jerusalem, With the same object in view he said to these Jews: “Repent and be converted (turn again) that your sins may be blotted out so there may come seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:19). This answer compares with Acts 2:38 as follows:

1. Acts 2:38: Repent-be baptized-remission of sins-gift of Holy Spirit.

2. Acts 3:19: Repent-be converted-sins blotted out-seasons of refreshing.

No man can study this comparison honestly without seeing that "be baptized" is just as much connected with "remission of sins" in Acts 2:38 as "be converted" is connected with "sins blotted out" in Acts 3:19. And it definitely proves that baptism is the converting, or the turning act. Repentance is not the turning act for Peter said, Repent and turn. But "turn," or "be converted," occupies exactly the same place in Acts 3:19 that "be baptized" occupies in Acts 2:38. Then baptism is the turning act. It is in order to the remission of sins. To oppose plain passages of scripture is but a waste of ingenuity.

Some Objections Considered

It is after the opponents of truth on baptism are routed by these plain scripture facts that they resort to the effort to nullify the word of God with certain supposed conditions and contingencies. But it can be shown that every contingency introduced to eliminate baptism will under similar circumstances eliminate faith in Christ.

It is argued that if baptism is essential to salvation it puts salvation in the hands of the administrator. But there is nothing that does not depend upon a contingency of some sort. True, one cannot be baptized without an administrator, or without water, or without a contingency of extrinsic help from another. But apply the same objection to the knowledge of Christ that men must possess to be saved. What about remote countries where such knowledge depends on the missionary? Is belief essential to salvation? Then since Paul said, "how shall they believe on him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" Does not the same contingency carry the same weight in the matter of belief, or, the knowledge of Christ, as in the case of baptism? If allowances are made for such, and yet the essentiality of faith is preserved, then why not apply the same principles to the command of baptism?

Another instance is in the oft-heard sigh that such a doctrine damns some person's father or mother, and, hence cannot be true. But every one since Adam and Eve has had a father and mother, so by contingencies every condition of the gospel can be eliminated and we will have universal salvation. A China man or a Jew hears this same preacher who makes this objection against baptism, preach that faith in Christ is essential to salvation. He will say: That doctrine damns my father and mother who did not believe in Christ. How will the preacher dispose of the contingency? Ask him. There is no account of any conversion without the third party. The great commission itself required the third party. Read the book of Acts.

It is said that we would condemn those who cannot be baptized. Apply the same argument to faith. Countless millions have died without the knowledge of Christ. He who tries to prove that baptism is not essential by one who cannot be baptized is a failure as a teacher. At best it would only exempt infants, idiots and those who cannot do it. To weak minds such contingencies are objections against a divine command, but thoughtful persons can see at a glance that what such reasoning will eliminate all conditions of salvation with the same stroke.

As to those cases often urged about certain ones dying without baptism, there are three points involved: (1) the physical impossibility (2) the moral impossibility (3) the willful neglect. All such are without the law, outside of its provisions and promises. Clemency belongs only to the Judge, and it is not within our power to grant it. The case has gone to the Judgment.

Finally, it is urged that to make baptism necessary to salvation contradicts numerous passages on faith. The objection rests on the assumption that these numerous passages on faith suspend salvation on faith only the thing not one of them says. It will drive the objector back to the doctrine of salvation by grace only, that the sinner is helpless, his salvation depending on no act of his own, in which case he would be no more to blame for his damnation than a dead man is for not rising from the dead. It would mean that naked Omnipotence saves or damns!

All such objections to God's commands originate in and proceed from hearts that lack faith. And it is just the sort of preaching that is being done by preachers who berate baptism that encourages people to disregard the word of God and die in disobedience.

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**.

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False Doctrines of Man

Yukon, Okla. church of Christ

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South Seminole church of Christ

What the Church is and Does

H. Leo Boles

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

What is the Church?

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

The New Testament declares that the church is **the body of Christ**. "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1:22-23). Here we have the Holy Spirit saying through Paul that the church is his body. Again, the Holy Spirit calls the church the body of Christ: "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church" (Col. 1:24 ASV). Hence, the church is the body of Christ and the body of Christ is the church.

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

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

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

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

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

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

How Many Churches?

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

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

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

How to Enter the Church

The New Testament answers this question as well. It teaches how to get into the church of God, but not how to get into any other church. Thus, if one joins a denomi-

nation, the New Testament does not teach him to do so. One who joins a denomination does so without any divine instruction, without any word of God.

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

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

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

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

The only way people enter Christ is by baptism:

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

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

Can One be Saved Out of the Church?

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

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

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

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

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**“The Thing That Hath Been...”: The Cycle of Apostasy
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Retrospective and Prospective

Foy E. Wallace, Jr.

The old year is dying. The new year is dawning. It is a time for reminiscence and resolution. The one relates to the past, the other to the future. Concerning the former there are some things to be remembered and there are some things to be forgotten. It would be folly to linger either on the summit or in the valley, except as the future may be blessed by reminiscence in the fruit of good resolutions it may yield.

Some one has painted a word picture of an old man, pale and frail, standing on bleak, icy hills, leaning in decrepitude upon the arm of his last surviving but dying child--the Departing December. His sandals are old and worn. His garments are tattered and torn. His locks are frosty and gray. And his form is wasted. His name is the Old Year. To us he is Old Man 2021. He belongs to a family whose genealogy presents the world with no two contemporaries. The birth of one is always preceded by the death of the other. And wailing requiems over the death of the old, dying on the air, turn into the songs of lullaby over the cradle of the new.

The old year is gone, but his footprints are left. Many a lovely babe fondled and caressed by a happy, hopeful mother last New Year is not here. Some beautiful girls and bounding boys whose smiles and shouts of laughter enlivened the home a year ago are not with us now. Various articles of personal ownership, now unclaimed--toys, books, clothing, or an empty room—are mute reminders of their presence with us and make us weep anew. An old armchair is empty in the corner—some of us are fatherless and motherless. One and all, they gathered up our affections and carried them away, in consequence of which we love the earth less and heaven more.

No year ever passes without some one dying whom we knew and loved. The name of every succeeding year is engraved upon the marble in our cemeteries. “2022” will be chiseled upon the tombstone that marks the head of some of our graves. Death is an officer that no money can bribe, that no power can resist, that no skill can evade. The pale horse and its rider cross the threshold and waft loved ones away whether in the bloom of youth or in the gray of years. “What is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.” Life is a vapor. So is the rainbow. So is the fog of the morning. How short and uncertain, then, our days! “We spend our days as a tale that is told!” What kind of a story are you weaving into the fabric of your life? Whether long or short, it may be worth reading. It is not the length of a life or of a story that makes it worth while. The greatest Life that was ever lived was only thirty-three and one half years, and the greatest stories were His parables. So we should not stay the stride of time, if we could but labor to make life a story worth reading, whether long or short.

EDITOR'S NOTE: This article was written in 1931. Only the dates are changed. Its Truth has never changed.

What the Bible Says About: Morality

Gene Hill

We are concerned with and limited to what the Bible says about Morality. Granted that this is a discussion that will touch on worldviews, and we, therefore, must discuss what others may think; however, it is what the Bible teaches that concerns us. For our basis of discussion, we are presupposing the existence of a Supreme Deity whom the Bible identifies as “the God Almighty” in Genesis 17:1 and as Jehovah in Exodus 6:3. Likewise we are presupposing an adequate translation of the Bible from the various sources used to make that translation.

Those that claim not to have any religion probably do not understand what it means to be religious. I found a quote, whose original source I neglected to record and have subsequently modified, that helps us to understand what religion is. “Your religion is any idea or set of ideas in which you believe so strongly that such belief affects your behavior.” Everyone has an ideology which they pursue religiously. *The American Heritage Dictionary* says, “Religion—an objective pursued with zeal or conscientious devotion.” With these statements and definitions, and upon reflection of the lives and accomplishments of well-known historical figures as Hitler, Lenin, Pol Pot, and Charles Manson, as well as others that could be named, we see each clearly had an idea or set of ideas that affected their behavior and which they pursued with devotion. Granted, it was a religious worldview of darkness, but a religious worldview none the less.

Our religion is an expression of our worldview, our way of interpreting the world around us in which each of us exist. There are two foundations from which one draws one’s world view. Either you believe that all that exists originated from a special act of creation or you believe that the nature of matter is eternal.

Note a quote from the late eminent astronomer, Dr. Robert Jastrow, which he made in an interview as quoted in Wikipedia:

His expressed views on creation were that although he was an “agnostic, and not a believer,” it seems to him that “the curtain drawn over the mystery of creation will never be raised by human efforts, at least in the foreseeable future” due to “the circumstances of the big bang—the fiery holocaust that destroyed the record of the past.”

In an interview with *Christianity Today*, Jastrow observes “Astronomers now find they have painted themselves into a corner because they have proven, by their own methods, that the world began abruptly in an act of creation to which you can trace the seeds of every star, every planet, every living thing in this cosmos and on the earth. And they have found that all this happened as a product of forces they cannot hope to discover. That there are what I or anyone would call supernatural forces at work is now, I think, a scientifically proven fact” (Jastrow).

Furthermore, the Law of Causality states: “Every effect must have a cause sufficient to produce the effect.” We therefore believe that it is entirely rational to affirm a special creation with a Cause that is outside of the effect and sufficient to bring about all that is. We believe that Uncaused First Cause to be God as He is revealed in the Bible. John Hicks said, “God is ‘the infinite, eternal, uncreated personal reality, who has created all that exists other than Himself, and who has revealed himself to his human creatures as holy and living’ ” (qtd. in Warren v).

Now what about a moral code? Does the Bible inform us of an idea which man is expected to incorporate into his life in such a way. What the Bible Says About: Morality that it informs his intellect and emotions directing his every activity? The answer is a resounding yes!

Consider the first three chapters of Genesis as a beginning. God created man and woman on the sixth day and communicated His will to them. We have some specific instructions from God as to what He expected of them in Genesis 1:28-29, 2:15-17, 24-25.

The relationship they had with God was at the very least one of familiarity, for we see God in the Garden seeking them and calling out to them, asking where they might be (3:8-9). We see in the ensuing conversation God gives very specific instructions and consequences to the couple as a result of their actions in the eating of the forbidden fruit.

However the most striking thing in the aftermath of this transgression of God's law is the fact that Adam and Eve are still standing, alive, and well. How can that be since they were told that they would surely die in the day that they ate thereof (2:17)?

They are still alive and well because God had a plan for the soul of Man. He had this plan from before the foundation of the world. "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love" (Eph. 1:4). "Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you" (1 Pet. 1:20). The purpose of the plan was for Man's purification and sanctification (Heb. 9:11-12, 15-23; 10:1-4, 9-10, 19-22) in order for us to have fellowship with Almighty God and have Him to walk among us, His people (Deu. 23:14; Lev. 26:12; 2 Cor. 6:16).

The reason for the preconceived plan is that God is able to look down the stream of time and know what would happen (Psa. 147:5). Man, created in God's image, has free moral agency. He, therefore, is able to make independent decisions and act. As we have seen in the Garden of Eden, man does not always make the correct choice. Therefore, God had a plan in place for the time when man would break the bond of fellowship.

In view of God's threat of death for partaking of the forbidden fruit, why did their destruction not immediately follow the act of touching and partaking? Sin is transgression of Law (1 John 3:4; 5:17). Sin causes separation from God (Isa. 59:1-2). Blood needs to be shed for sin to be remitted (Mat. 26:18; Heb. 9:11-12; 10:3, 22; Acts 22:16; Rom. 6:16-18). Since this is all the case, observe what Genesis 3:21 says, "Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them." God made coats of skins to clothe them and hide their nakedness. Where did the skins come from? Could it have been the animals used to sanctify the sinners from their sin, thus restoring fellowship with God?

There is unquestionably a divinely-instituted moral code man is to follow to maintain a proper relationship with God, man with himself, and then with his fellow man (Mat. 22:35-40). Jesus is quoting from Deuteronomy 6:4-5 and Leviticus 19:18 and states that all the law and prophets hang on these two commandments: love God with your entire being, and love your fellowman as yourself (Mat. 22:37-40). The Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:3-17 can be divided into two sections. The first four commandments (20:3-8) deal with the Israelites relationship with God. The next six commandments (20:12-17) define how the Israelites were to interact with their fellow Israelites and by extension even strangers.

Jesus' statement regarding the first commandment in Matthew 22:37-38 corresponds to Exodus 20:3-8 and Matthew 22:39 corresponds to Exodus 20:12-17. It is not the case that Christians, or any one today, for that matter, are to keep the Ten Commandments or any other portion of the Mosaic Law. It must be understood that the Divine principles expressed in the Decalogue are restated in the Law of Christ, and, as such, we are to observe those principles as the Law of Christ (Mat. 28:18-20; John 12:47-50; Acts 17:29-31; Rom. 3:23; 6:23).

God has established a universal moral code for which all mankind is held equally and individually accountable, which moral code is revealed in the Bible (2 Cor. 5:10). As Creator (Gen. 1:1-3), God has all the power necessary (Luke 1:37) to enforce His divine will (Isa. 43:13).

The Bible teaches God is holy in an ethical sense (Lev. 11:44-45; 19:2), and it is demanded that we, likewise, are to be that way in conduct flowing from our hearts (Isa. 6:3, 5; Psa. 24:3ff).

What are some specifics of this moral code to which all are amenable? The first (and it would seem to be the most obvious) is the institution of marriage. The relationship is

introduced on the sixth day of creation, as recorded initially in Genesis 1:26-28 and in more subsequent detail in Genesis 2:18-25. In Matthew 19:3-6, Jesus accepts the historical accuracy of the Genesis account by His approving use of it in teaching on the marriage relationship.

We can learn that the marital relationship is for those with sufficient maturity to leave the home of their parents and establish their home and family. The woman that is fit for marriage ought to already possess or be able to acquire the qualities as described for us in Proverbs 31:10-31. This woman is labeled as a virtuous woman in verse 10. It must be strongly noted that the only man qualified to have a woman such as this for his wife is described for us in Ephesians 5:22-33. He is to have a love for her that is as sacrificial as is that of Christ for His church. The husband is to cherish her at least as much as he does his own body. It is **this** man that a Proverbs 31 woman will submit herself to and reverence as she ought.

A God-joined marriage (Mat. 19:6) is a relationship between a man and a woman only, a male and female exclusively. These two are to have never previously contracted a marriage (1 Cor. 7:36-38), or if they have been previously married, the marriage must have been one dissolved by either the death of a spouse (Rom. 7:1-4) or by the adultery of the spouse (Mat. 19:9).

To the unacceptability of divorce we must add the unacceptability of separation for even a brief period of time. The only exception to this is for the reason of fasting and prayer, and it must be a mutually-decided upon event that is brief and temporary (1 Cor. 7:5). How brief? Brief enough so that neither spouse is defrauded in their personal needs to avoid fornication in the first place (7:2-4).

Another area covered by this moral code is that of civil government (Rom. 13:1-7). Paul states that civil government as a concept Gene Hill 207 is ordained of God (13:1-2, 4, 6). Agents of civil government are God's ministers. They are to serve His purposes in ruling in the affairs of men. The purpose of civil government is to protect the innocent citizen against evildoers as a revenger against that evildoer.

Citizens are to be obedient to rulers that serve in that capacity and manner (13:2; 1 Pet. 2:13-17). We are not authorized to submit to ordinances that violate any law of God (Acts 5:29), but we must be willing to suffer the consequences without complaint on the basis of persecution (2 Tim. 3:12).

The last item of this list of moral issues is that of the church. Keep in mind that *moral-ity* is defined as the quality of being in accord with standards of right or good conduct and a system of ideas of right and wrong conduct (*American*). This body is part of God's plan from the beginning.

Under the Christian Dispensation beginning in Acts 2, all of mankind is obligated to come to God through Christ (John 14:6; Eph. 1:3). Bible students know that there is a way and manner of life that God has mandated all must follow to have hope of eternal life (Heb. 11:6; 1 John 1:6-7; Mat. 7:13-14; Jer. 6:16; 10:23).

The church which Jesus built (Mat. 16:18) is now the place in which sanctification through His blood is to be found (Acts 20:28; Heb. 9:11-12, 21-23; 10:22, 29; 1 Pet. 1:2). To gain entrance into this body, and to then possess a real hope of eternal life, there are conditions one must meet. These conditions are ordained of God (Eph. 2:8-10).

One must understand who the Father is and what that means (John 6:44-45). Coming unto Jesus as the Messiah is required (John 1:29; 8:24). A change of conduct called repentance, from one way of morality to another, is required (Luke 13:3; Acts 3:19; 26:18; Col. 1:13-14). Confession of Jesus as Lord and Savior on the part of the one coming to the Father is next (Mat. 10:32-33; Rom. 10:10). Immersion in water to obtain remission of sins is the final step to be granted addition by the Lord into His blood-bought body (Mark 16:16; John 3:5; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Rom. 6:16-18).

There is a moral standard to which all mankind is amenable. It is a source of Truth that transcends the human condition being absolute, objective, and obtainable. It is the rule against which all are to be judged concerning our behavior during this period of time

we recognize as our span of life. At the close of this period of probation, our book of life will be closed to be opened again when we stand before the judgment bar to receive the things done in the body. The consequence of ignoring this Moral Standard has eternal consequences (Mat. 25:46).

Remember, everyone has a religious worldview through which they interpret and interact with the world around them. What worldview do you possess, and is it in harmony with the God of this universe?

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What Must I do to be Saved

Guy N. Woods

This question, What must I do to be saved? is the most vital, momentous and far-reaching query ever propounded by man. It is of the greatest importance, both for time and eternity, that it be answered, answered in each generation, answered for every responsible being, answered correctly. It is a question involving the soul's chiefest interests and is personal, pertinent and urgent to all of every race and clime and country. It is possible to receive answers thereto which are deceptive, delusive, and misleading—answers which serve merely to deepen the gloom and enshroud the mind and make more certain the soul's eventual ruin.

The implications of the question are very obvious. He who raises it is lost; he knows he is lost; he desires salvation; and he understands that there is something he must do to obtain it. Only when these considerations obtain is one in proper position to receive the answer. He who is not aware that he is lost feels no need of salvation. One may be lost and not know it, or lost and knowing it, may not desire salvation, or desiring salvation, may be under the impression that there is nothing such a one can do to obtain it.

All accountable beings are lost who have not had applied to them the cleansing blood of the Lamb and, lost, are separated from God. In the long ago, the prophet declared, “Behold, Jehovah's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, so that he will not hear.” (Isa. 59:1-2). This, indeed, is the condition characteristic of every unsaved, responsible person in the world—separated from God and all that is good—in a state of alienation from the Creator. Into this condition one automatically passes on reaching the period of accountability—the age when one knows or is capable of knowing right from wrong—and there remains until death and spiritual destruction remove forever the period of probation this life affords, unless one hears and heeds the proper answer to the question above propounded.

When it is affirmed that one must do something in order to be saved, it is not intended to imply that man can save himself or, through meritorious works earn salvation, thus excluding all divine assistance. Man is lost in a sense in which he cannot save himself, in a sense in which no other man can save him and, therefore, in a sense in which, if saved at all, it must be God's goodness and grace. This is the divine side of salvation. We neither minimize nor disparage this fact when we also assert that man is lost in a sense in which he can save himself; in a sense in which God will not do it; in a sense in

which no other man can do it and, therefore, in a sense in which, if saved at all, man must do it! Peter, on Pentecost, urged his hearers to “save yourselves from this crooked generation,” (Acts 2:40), and Paul taught the Philippians to “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil. 2:12). John warned, “He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoso keepeth his word, in him verily hath the love of God been perfected” (1 John 2:4-5).

It follows, therefore, that what one must do to obtain salvation is to comply with the will of God on the basis of which salvation is offered. This, indeed, is that which distinguishes between the saved and the lost. The former are those who do his will and the latter are those who do not. To the rebellious Jews, our Lord said, “Ye will not come to me that ye may have life” (John 5:40). Thus to be saved we must do the Lord's will. The Lord's will is expressed in his commandments. We must then keep his commandments. When the young ruler inquired, “Teacher, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?” our Lord answered, “If thou wouldst enter into life, keep the commandments” (Matt. 19:17). The statement of the Saviour is clear, simple, and without ambiguity. How may one enter into life? Keep the commandments. There is, for responsible people, no other way. If to our Lord we concede the power and privilege of specifying the conditions precedent to the forgiveness of sins, one must keep the commandments.

What Commandments?

This we may easily ascertain by noting what men, desirous of obtaining salvation, were required to do by those inspired of the Spirit in the early ages of the church. Paul and Silas at the midnight hour in the jail in Philippi, and in response to the query propounded by their captor, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” replied, “Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house” (Acts 16:30-31). Inasmuch as faith comes by hearing the word of Christ (Rom. 10:17), and the jailer could not comply with the obligation to believe until the word was preached, it was not surprising that they “spake the word of the Lord unto him, with all that were in his house.” This done, he was ready to complete his obedience, and we are informed that, “the same hour of the night” he “was baptized, he and all of his, immediately...and rejoiced greatly, with all of his house, having believed in God.” It is noteworthy that his baptism followed belief, and following both, he rejoiced greatly, because only after both did he enjoy salvation. Jesus said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16).

The order of events is significant:

1. He was required to believe;
2. His was possible only after the word was preached;
3. Through the preaching of the word he was offered the forgiveness of sins;
4. His forgiveness was conditioned on both belief and baptism;
5. Following baptism, he rejoiced greatly. Only after they completed their obedience in baptism did men rejoice because of sins forgiven in the days of inspiration.

A similar query was raised on the day of the establishment of the church and the first public proclamation of the great commission. Present on that occasion who fifty and three days before had participated in the crucifixion of the Lord of glory.

Convinced of their great guilt by the powerful preaching of Peter, they were cut to the heart and cried out saying, “Brethren, what shall we do?” Do for what? Obtain the remission of sins, we may well assume, inasmuch as this was the impression which Peter received, and this is that which he proceeded to explain to them: “Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). Already believers, as evidenced by their alarmed cry and anxious query, it remained for them to repent and be baptized unto the remission of sins. *Webster's Unabridged Dictionary* defines the preposition unto to mean “in respect of an unreachend end,” i.e., repent and be baptized to reach an unreachend end. What, in this instance, is the unreachend end? Remission of

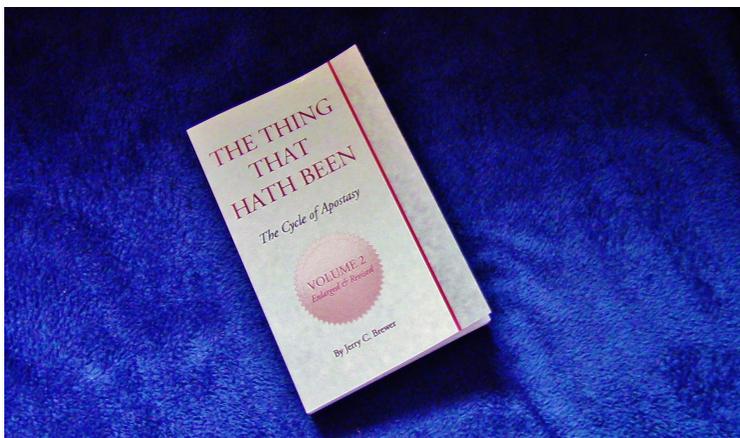
sins. How may it be reached by those already believers? “Repent...and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ.”

To Saul of Tarsus, who had already believed, repented and publicly confessed Christ (Acts 22:3-16), a gospel preacher said, “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name.”

In the three instances adduced it has been seen that sinners inquired what to do to be saved of inspired men and the answers given were by inspiration. Those who have done nothing must first believe and then complete their obedience through repentance, confession and baptism, as in the case of the jailer. Those who have believed—as had the Pentecostians—need to complete their obedience by repenting and being baptized. Those in the position of Saul who have already believed, repented and confessed faith in Christ are merely required to “arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins.”

Reader, at what point are you in God's plan?

“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).

“The Thing That Hath Been...” The Cyclical of Apostasy Volume 2, Enlarged and Revised By Jerry C. Brewer

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Benard Ooko Kagaga

October 10, 1976 – November 28, 2021, 3:17 p.m.

Tribute from his wife, Dorothy (Ooloo) Kagaga

Sadness and joy are mingled in heart. My husband who stood strong for, and in, Christ has departed from this life to eternity. Benard was a pillar that can never be replaced. He was a dear, loving husband friend to me and a truly loving father to the children. We will greatly miss his physical presence amidst us, but with no doubt hoping to meet him when God resurrects His saints. God never forsakes His people (Deut. 31:6). God has better plans for His people. Benard is now in Paradise and would be more than happy to have us; everyone he left behind believing in the Truth to join him when the time comes. I loved my husband and God loved him more.

Tribute from his Son Wayne Duren Kagaa

I am saddened that my dad has passed from this life, but the fact that he has entered eternity brings joy to my heart, and gives me hope and strength. Losing a dad is so weird because you go through the rest of your life not being able to see or talk to him ever again but you still feel like you will. Dad was a loving father and husband. He worked tirelessly spreading the Word of the living God and proclaiming His Name fearlessly. As he desired, my dad's name is written in the Book of Life. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints" (Psalm 116: 15).

I love you dad. Rest in eternal peace.

Tribute from Maragret Lintz (Daughter)

If I start talking about my dad, I will talk forever because I have so many things to say about him. Suffice to say, my daddy was a loving father to us and a loving husband to my mum. Notably, he was a staunch believer in God and died a strong soldier of the Lord. May he have the eternal life and enjoy the fruit of his work. May your soul rest in peace. I love you daddy.

Tribute from Sandy Ruth (Daughter)

My dad was a loving husband to my mum and a loving father to his children. He loved his family very much, and if he had another chance to come back to this world, we would cheerfully go and receive him and be united again as a family. But even if he is gone, we trust he is happy wherever he is because he was a gospel preacher and loved the word of God and died believing in God. May you rest in peace dad!

Tribute from Joy Nadine (Daughter)

My father was a great man and a wonderful father. My daddy was a man of his words. I loved my dad so much, and because he was a preacher, he reached many souls and blessed them with the word of God. I miss my dad. May your soul rest in peace. I love you dad.

Tribute from Veroon Wasonga (brother)

"Woud Baba" we lived together, walked and worked together, but now that you are gone, your fond memories will remain in my heart. Thanks for being my teacher all this time. "Nind gi kuwe wuod Arosi!"

Tribute from Moses Oloo (in-law)

Few people live what they preach. Benard was one of those few people who truly demonstrated in actions, his Christian Faith. I learnt in him what it means to be a cheerful giver. And his zeal for doing good had no boundaries. He seemed to have well understood that, "to whom much is given, much is expected; and to whom much is committed, of him will be asked the more" (Luke 12:48). "Oche" fought the good fight, finished the race, and kept the faith (2 Tim 4:7). Hopefully, we shall see him again, raised imperishable, never to depart again, at the sounding of the last Trumpet (1 Cor 15: 52). Amen.

Birth

Evangelist Benard Ooko Kagaga was born on 10/10/1976 to the late Mzee Lawrence Agaga and Mama Rosa Achieng Agaga. He was the 3rd born in a family of 8 children. Brother to Sheril, Jane, Seba, Agnes, Veroon, Calitus, and Beril.

Education

Benard started his Primary education at Odhiambo Rambo in the early 80s and later transferred to Miranga Primary School where he sat for the K.C.P.E in the year 1991. He joined Miranga Secondary School in 1992 and later, for lack of school fee, dropped out of school for about 2 years, during which time he occupied himself by selling second hand clothes in Migori. He again made a comeback but this time enrolled at Nya-manga Secondary School where he sat for the KCSE in 1996. Benard graduated with a Bachelor of Arts (BA) and Master of Arts (MA) in Bible from the International College of the Bible, Arusha, Tanzania. He also received a Bachelor of Biblical Studies (BBS), from Andrew Connally School of Preaching, Arusha, Tanzania.

Marriage

Benard got married in 1998 to Dorothy Anyango Ooko (Nyasuba). During their marital life, God blessed them with four lovely children. Margaret Lintz, Wayne Duren, Sandy Ruth, and Joy Nadine. He was also a foster father to many orphans whom he assisted and sponsored in schools, ensuring they got a better footing in life.

Church and Work

Benard was baptized in 1994 and the Lord added him to the Church of Christ congregation after studying series of courses from WBS, administered through his teacher brother Wayne Duren. Having a true thirst for the Bible knowledge, he joined several Bible schools but could not complete his studies due to unscriptural teachings he saw. Eventually, he joined Andrew Connally School of Preaching, in Arusha, Tanzania. Later, he enrolled with the International College of the Bible in Arusha, Tanzania for both his Bachelor of Arts (BA) and Master of Arts (MA) in Bible. As an Evangelist, he took much of his time in the field, restoring many brethren to the Faith. He went far and wide, from South Rift to North Rift to Uganda, diligently laboring for the Lord and tirelessly serving his fellow man. Benard was also instrumental in the establishment of Bungoma School of Preaching, Thomas A. Musick School of Preaching, and Bomet School of Preaching. With Gal. 6:10 in mind, he generously supported and selflessly took care of many windows, orphans, and other needy people both inside and outside the Church of Christ fraternity. Even during the peak of Corona scourge, he helped many congregations get relief food and other much needed supplies for their livelihood. Until his demise, Benard was the Director of Studies, Thomas A. Musick School of Preaching, as well as the preacher, Kalamindi Church of Christ.

Benard's Account of His Baptism:

EDITOR'S NOTE: Before I left Kenya in 2012, I asked brother Benard Kagaga to write the story he told me about his conversion and work so I could share it with all. I have heard nothing like this and his story bespeaks a man who has truly "Surrendered All" to Jesus. Brother Kagaga is literate, well read, and fully aware of the liberalism we face in America and which is being exported from here to Kenya. His oldest son (who was my roommate during my stay there) is named Wayne. Benard said he named him for the man who taught him the Truth. He also told me that the man who baptized him was a Catholic and at first objected, saying, "only a priest can do that." He also told me that while he was in school in Tanzania, the instructors told students not to read any of Foy E. Wallace, Jr.'s books. He said brother Wallace's *God's Prophetic Word* was in the library and he took it to his room and read it. He was incensed about the ban on reading brother Wallace's book because he said it answered the Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh Day Adventism which fills his country. Here is brother Benard's amazing story of his journey from darkness to the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

"I, Benard, was taught the Biblical truths of Jesus' church by Wayne Duren of East point church of Christ, Alabama, United States of America through correspondence for several years for I was born in a Catholic family and my father was strong in that, I was brought up in it. For all those years after my study with my beloved brother Wayne, I came to conclude that my parents religion was wrong and I withdrew myself from them and you can imagine by that time there was no Lord's church next to our place but I truly wanted to be baptized to become a true New Testament Christian, I was unable to wait so I just went next to the river if I could be able to get one who will accept to baptize me into Christ. I stayed next to the river waiting for one to come so that I can instruct him on what I want him to do for me for about an hour, but at long last I saw a man grazing his cows on the other side of the river and because of what I wanted, I went to him and I found that he is a man I know, a drunkard. Folks, I instructed him and I was baptized for the remission

of my sins which placed me into the body of Christ on May 16, 1994, knowing that baptism is between me and the God of heaven not the baptizer.

“After my baptism for the remission of sins, it was hard on me for the Lord’s church was not here at home and I did not know if it is existing somewhere. I was struggling on what good I can do for I am now aware that I am a Christian as the Bible commands. This went on until 1997 December when I went to Nairobi. In Nairobi I was looking for the right congregation to worship with but they were just having names but dead. In September 1998 I went back home and went into the Roman Catholic church building where they gave me an opportunity where I preached for only two weeks and they run away from their building and I remained with only seven members from them. I stayed with these people in their building for three months but they started going around saying that we are devil worshipers so I requested those who remained with me to leave the building and they accepted that and we went under the tree where we worshiped for three years before we put up our temporary church building. Folks, from this I started teaching these people and started baptizing them correctly into the body of Christ. For us to do the right thing before the Lord, we must understand why we are Christians, just as I use to say, we are called to call the uncalled, saved to be strong in preaching only the Bible for the Bible only makes only Christians. Right now there are about twenty congregations through this and all glory be to Him, for I have done nothing.

“In 2005-2007 I graduated in Arusha, Tanzania at the Andrew Connally School of Preaching to help enhance my preaching skills and my knowledge of the word of God. Though I was there as a student, I saw some traces of compromising the faith and I do not believe if Andrew Connally could have been alive he could agree with them in matters of faith.”

Illness

Benard had been diagnosed with tuberculosis (TB) and had been on medication for the last five and a half months. Near the tail end of the treatment, he developed some stomach complications. On 17/11/2021, he visited Bosongo Medical Centre in Kisii. Here, several tests were performed and ultra-sound conducted which revealed that his liver was enlarged a little bit. He was then advised to remain in the hospital ward so that he can be closely monitored. His health kept on deteriorating steadily which necessitated his admission to the ICU on Friday 26/11/2021. He stayed at the ICU until Saturday morning 27/11/ 2021. At a round 9:30 am the same day, he had a cardiac arrest which lasted about 10-15 minutes prompting the doctors to move with speed to save his life. They finally managed to bring the lung, kidneys, and liver back to normalcy, but still struggled to wake up his brain. In vain, their efforts continued for about 17 hours. Benard finally succumbed to the illness on Sunday 3:17 p.m.

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“The Thing That Hath Been...”: The Cycle of Apostasy Volume 2, Enlarged and Revised

By Jerry C. Brewer

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