

“Ready To Give An Answer”

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OUR STANDARD OF AUTHORITY

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About the author...

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Part I: Do We Need a Standard of Authority?

To answer the question, we need to know one thing. What is a “standard of authority”? When we learn the answer to this question, the need for that standard will be evident.

C I define “standard” in this context, to be “a consistent and reliable basis.” Without a common foundation comes only confusion. Yet we know that *“God is not the author of confusion.”* (1 Corinthians 14:33). Jesus described the failure to follow God’s established standard as *“the broad way”* in Matthew 7:13, and taught that it leads to everlasting destruction. To the lover of God and subject of Jesus the Lord, the revealed truth is that standard, for Jesus said, *“He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day”* [cf. Romans 2:16].

C Authority I will define as, “having the right or power to act.” People sometimes do things which they have no right to do. When caught, they must pay the penalty. A preacher, for example, marries a man and woman, and that union is approved by God, but also by the civil government. Why the civil government? Because that government gives him permission, or authorizes him to marry them.

In this lesson, we will see that the same principle should be applied to spiritual matters.

II. How Is the Principle of Authority Taught in the Bible?

Jesus is our ruler

In the Christian era, Jesus is to be recognized as the sole source of authority — *“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth”* (Matthew 28:18). In John 5:18-27, Jesus explained this principle very well as he was challenged by certain of the Jews.

“Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God. Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do

nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel. For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgement unto the Son: That all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father which hath sent him. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgement also, because he is the Son of man."

According to Ephesians 1:20-23, the mighty power of God to save is revealed through his works;

"which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all."

Furthermore, Jesus will maintain this authority until HE "puts it down" and delivers the kingdom up to the father [cf. 1 Corinthians 15:22-28]. Christ's authority is further illustrated in Colossians 3:17 we learn that all things done or taught by any man are to be *"in the name of Jesus Christ"*. But what does this mean?

- C Jesus promised the apostles in John 14:13-14, that whatever they asked of God in his name would be granted, this being in the context of their special work of spreading the gospel with the confirmation by the Holy Spirit of that gospel (miracles). The fulfillment of this promise is demonstrated early in church history.
- C In Acts 3:1-8, Peter and John, as we went up to the temple, saw a man asking alms who had been crippled from birth. In verse 6, Peter said, *"Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk."* As the story goes, the man was healed immediately, leaped up walked and was seen praising God. In Acts 4:5-12, we read what happened the next day. Those who questioned Peter and John asked, *"By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?"* Peter made it clear that it was done *"by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth"*. He then continued to show that both the miraculous works AND proclamation of the gospel were *in the name* of Jesus'. This second

part is further emphasized in Luke 24:47, where Jesus said that *“repentance and remission of sins”* are to be *“preached in his name among all nations.”*

- C Consider also Matthew 7:21-24 where Jesus taught, *“many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?”*, to which Jesus will reply, *“...I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”* You see, **saying** something is in the name of Jesus does not make it so! Keeping his word (or commandments) makes it so!

We conclude then, that the Christian needs no other source of approval and therefore needs to seek no other's permission to act! The apostle Paul understood this clearly when he said: *“For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ”* (Galatians 1:10), *“Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels...”* (Colossians 2:18).

Jesus' Delegates

Ok then. Christ Jesus is the Lord, the King, the true Majestic One. How does this fact translate into the everyday lives of Christians? Christ has authorized some men to govern various aspects of our lives. This is all part of the standard of authority taught in the Bible. Why? Because Jesus, through is word, has taught us to be governed in this way.

1. Civil government

To obey Christ, one must be subject to the civil government. Romans 13:1-7 gives an excellent explanation of this, making it clear that “every soul” must be “subject to the higher powers”. In context, it is impossible to misunderstand that he speaks of civil rulers.

2. The Apostles of Jesus

The obey Christ, one must, as those commended in Acts 2, continue “steadfastly in the apostles doctrine...”. In John 15:20, Jesus made it clear that those who would be obedient to himself, would also be obedient to the apostles, when he taught, *“...if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.”* The authority of the Christ's apostles is, after all, merely an extension of his own authority, since he is the one for whom they both worked and taught. Their doctrine was Christ's doctrine, their gospel was Christ's gospel, and their work, Christ's work.

Hebrews 2:1-4

“Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God bearing witness with them, both with signs and wonders, and with divers

miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will?"

Men would also do well to remember John 16:12-13, *"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth..."*. Those who would presume to exclude the doctrine taught throughout the New Testament as a part of the gospel and therefore essential to both salvation and fellowship, need to learn the fear of God.

3. **Elders (or Presbyters, or Pastor, of Shepherds, or Bishops, or Overseers)**

To obey Christ, one must follow the elders who pastor him. In 1 Timothy 3:2-5 Paul clearly taught that the work of these men includes a degree of ruling, else these verses would be meaningless, *"a bishop then must be...one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)"* Peter shows their work to be that of *"feeding the flock"* and *"taking the oversight"*, but not *"as being lords"* (1 Peter 5:1-3). The authority, given by Christ, is not that of creating doctrine (any more than any other mortal). Instead their oversight includes (1) see to it that only the truth is taught and followed; (2) if someone teaches error, leading the flock astray, stop their mouths through the sound doctrine (see Titus 1:9-11).

This "overseeing" incorporates very practical leadership regarding the congregation as a whole, as shepherds lead the sheep, protecting from prowlers, seeing to it that wholesome food is supplied, persuading the sheep to not stray from the flock and seeking to retrieve the ones who do.

4. **Husbands**

To obey Christ, a wife must obey her husband.

Titus 2:4-5

"That they may teach the young women to be...obedient to their own husbands..."

Ephesians 5:22-24

"Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so [let] the wives [be] to their own husbands in every thing."

5. **Parents**

To obey Christ, children must obey their parents.

Colossians 3:20

"Children, obey [your] parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord."

III. Some guidelines for proper use of authority and understanding the Bible

Accept being “governed”

Some people will reject all government in their lives.

2 Peter 2:1-2, 9-10

“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of...The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished: but chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they, selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.”

These individuals believe that to be subject to anyone other than Jesus (even his apostles) takes away their freedom in Christ. But folks, this is a flawed view of “freedom.” As Peter continues, we learn more in verse 19 about the false teachers, *“While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption...”*

In my limited experience, without exception, these individuals are looking for an excuse, a reason to **not** abide in the sound doctrine of the New Testament. They apparently fail to recognize that in rejecting government through the system of authority outlined by Christ in the New Testament, they are failing to be subject to God himself.

Christ’s governing delegates are governed

We must remember, too, that the only reason we are subject to others besides Christ himself, is because he made it so. The individuals holding these lower offices possess no inherent powers. They are authorized to act under the rule of Christ, and thus their authority begins and ends with the voice of Christ. I can teach this with authority, because Jesus said so through the scriptures.

Note the following:

1. **Civil government** has no authority to make one disobey God. Peter and John made it clear that “we ought to obey God rather than men.” [see Acts 4:18-20; Acts 5:27-29]
2. The **apostles** had no authority to alter the gospel of Christ by changing it’s doctrine.

Galatians 1:8

“Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel than what we have preached unto you, let him be accursed”.

3. The **elders** have limited authority as well. Their authority is within only their home congregation. “Feed the flock which is among you taking the oversight” [see Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2]. The plurality of elders within each congregation in the New Testament [c.f. Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5] suggests that their authority exists as an eldership

(not individually). Even within the home congregation, and functioning together, they can neither create new doctrine nor ignore the doctrine of the gospel of Christ. It is this “sound doctrine” which provides them with the necessary tools to “stop the mouths” of those who stir things up, causing division [Titus 1:9]. No place in scripture are they authorized to work outside the parameters of that which was already taught by the apostles. They cannot bind doctrinally anything not already bound in scripture by Jesus and his apostles.

4. The **husband** must use Christ’s relationship to and love for the church as his example for ruling and loving his wife, seeking her purity and sanctification. [Ephesians 5:25-27]. He has no authority to keep his wife from following Christ. This is exactly the context and meaning of 1 Corinthians 7:12-16. If the unbelieving [spouse] decides to leave, simply not content to live with a faithful Christian, be it husband or wife, let that person leave. Serving Christ is job one in the Christian’s life.
5. Even the obedience of the **children** falls within the parameter of that which is “in the Lord” (Ephesians 6:1). So, even parents have no authority to keep a child from following God.

Seek to correctly understand the doctrine of Christ

To be governed by Christ, we must comprehend the teaching of Christ. This takes diligence! This is what Paul taught Timothy to have; 2 Timothy 2:15, “*study [give diligence] to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing [teaching] the word of truth.*” But how can we know we understand the truth of Christ? Here is where many will part ways with the sound teaching of God’s word.

The following principles will help guide anyone into an accurate understanding of the word of God. If we disagree on what the word teaches, by following these guidelines, and maintaining a humble spirit, truth will prevail every time.

1. First, we must accept what we observed earlier, that every part of the doctrine taught throughout the ENTIRE New Testament is Christ’s message and gospel to the world. If we do not know what part of scripture constitutes Jesus’ doctrine, how can we possibly understand his teaching?
2. Then, we must apply a sound hermeneutic that will allow us to discern the meaning and intent of every part of the word as it was originally revealed. Hermeneutic simply means “method of interpreting”. Some want to apply a “loose interpretation” to very precise statements in the scripture; others refuse to acknowledge figures of speech and symbolic texts attempting to take everything literally, even when reading a text that says about itself that it is “symbolic”, such as Revelation. Neither practice is sound.

Some want to interpret everything in light of contemporary culture and language. This

suggests that the Bible if precisely interpreted, is outdated and unusable in modern society. However, the Biblical principle would have us seek original teaching and understanding [consider Matthew 19:8; 2 Peter 1:12-15; Jude 3]. Here is where people err who, for example, think of “alcoholic” wine every time the word “wine” appears in the Bible or others will ignore the straight forward teaching of Paul that no woman may “teach or usurp authority over” men in the church.

It can work the other way too, leading to the creation of some new doctrine when the Bible says it is speaking of cultural things, such as in 1 Corinthians 11:4-6, 14-16 regarding length of hair and head coverings.

This, by the way, is one reason we seek a version of the Bible which is as close as possible to a word by word translation. Let me read what God originally “said” and I will examine it using a sound hermeneutic instead of having the translator(s) interpret it’s meaning or relevance for me. **A sound hermeneutic applied to an erroneous translation will always lead to an erroneous conclusion.**

Careless students of the word might decide what they believe, then look for any verse that might seem on the surface to support the idea. This is what the Sadducees did in Matthew 22:23-32 in trying to prove that there is no resurrection. Today many use John 3:16 or some other similar verse attempting to “prove” that salvation is by faith alone, with no other conditions.

3. Proper interpretation incorporates the best methods which allow the fullest comprehension of the original idea the author meant to convey. Accomplishing this means getting familiar with and using word study helps, such as Bible Greek and Hebrew dictionaries and basic lexicons. Even concordances will have basic dictionaries which can be useful. It will help us to apply first century meanings to first century words (getting us beyond the problem of contemporary changes in word usage).

Sound interpretation also means considering the context of the statement, verse, sentence or paragraph. Context includes the immediate chapter (or set of chapters as seen in John 13-17 and 1 Corinthians 12-14); it can also relate to the entire book (as in the letter to Hebrews or the Revelation). Finally, a correct interpretation will always be in harmony with the complete New Testament and indeed the entire Bible.

To illustrate this last point, I ask a simple question. Is there a contradiction between Acts 2:38 and Romans 10:9? One states, “...*repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...*” and the second teaches, “...*if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*” Are these two alternative methods of salvation? Or are they two passages which can be harmonized in the context of the entire New Testament? Of course the latter is true! When considering Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:47; Acts 22:16; Romans 6:3-4; Galatians 3:26-27; 1 Peter 3:21 and many

other passages, one gets a more complete picture of what the non-believer must do to come into *“the general assembly and church of the firstborn ones”* Hebrews 12:33). And as one becomes familiar with more texts, he begins to recognize just how many allusions to these various steps toward salvation are contained in Holy Scriptures. Whereas, if the conclusion from our interpretation is wrong, the more passages we study on the matter, we will find increasing scriptural opposition to that conclusion. Even in very specific contexts, however, broad principles can appear which may not be taught anywhere else. For example, in 1 Corinthians 14 the principle of maintaining order in the assemblies of saints is stressed as an underlying principle. This principle is applied in that chapter to explain the orderly and practical use of miraculous gifts in assemblies. A broader application, however, is accurately made, which would govern our assemblies today. Even without verse 33, this would seem obvious, but perhaps only to eliminate any doubt on the matter, Christ made an explicit statement, *“For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches (assemblies) of the saints.”*

Proper interpretation will take into account who is speaking. Is it set forth in scripture as truth or as error? Is the one speaking inspired, or are we simply reading an inspired record of something an uninspired person said?

Proper interpretation will also consider, who is being addressed?. Was it meant for all Christians? Was it directed specifically to the apostles? Was it intended for non-believers? All of these things can make a difference in whether the passage has a direct application in our own lives today.

In connection with this point, one thing to keep in mind is this: **anything written to an individual Christian or congregation in the New Testament will apply to every Christian today, either specifically or in principal, unless it's application is impossible to duplicate**, such as matters dealing exclusively with the apostles or the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit [the reason our earlier example from 1 Corinthians 14 applies is because it did not deal exclusively with miraculous gifts, but included a discussion of something that does occur today, namely Christian assemblies].

Every Christian has the authority to teach and practice anything that is directly stated or implied to be truth in the New Testament. Implied truth can be determined by approved example or sound inference.

Two Methods of Applying Authority

Once we understand what the New Testament really teaches, we must decide how to approach it's doctrine. There are fundamentally two methods of viewing authority

Method #1 suggests that we may practice only what has been either implicitly or explicitly authorized. This view leads to the following:

- a. It rejects restructuring the church;

- b. It rejects reformulating worship;
- c. It rejects infant baptism and/or infant dedications;
- d. It rejects polygamy;
- e. It rejects mechanical instruments of music in worship; etc.
- f. The person who approaches Christianity in this way humbly seeks God's approval before acting.
- g. This view is supported and approved in scripture [c.f. Leviticus 10:1; Hebrews 8:4; 7:12-16].

Method #2 takes the position that we may practice anything which has not been explicitly forbidden. This view does the following:

- a. It accepts restructuring the church;
- b. It accepts reformulating worship;
- c. It accepts infant baptism and/or infant dedications
- d. It must accept polygamy to be consistent;
- e. It accepts mechanical instruments of music in worship; etc.
- f. The person who approaches Christianity in this way proudly assumes God's approval.
- g. This view is not supported and in fact has been rejected in scripture [c.f. Leviticus 10:1; Hebrews 8:4; 7:12-16].

Silence of Scriptures

Respecting the silence of the scriptures, as is consistent with Method #1, can seem difficult to understand and master. This fact has no doubt contributed to the rejection by some of this principle of authority. [Although most accept this principle regarding matters other than religion]. The silence of scriptures regarding a religious practice implies that we have no authority to have that religious practice. There are times, however, when the scriptures appear silent when they, in fact, are not (through implication). And this can work to either loosen restrictions brethren sometimes apply or to limit activities brethren sometimes practice. For example, if a Christian honestly believed he should keep a Sabbath day, there is nothing inherently wrong with that. Colossians 2:17 authorizes both the individual who keeps it and the one who does not keep it. On the other hand, teaching that one is more spiritual who keeps a Sabbath day would violate the context of the entire Chapter 2 of Colossians and therefore would be wrong. The same might be said of other religious holidays, which also are not part of the gospel of Christ, so long as they do not violate that gospel (Romans 14:1-10). At the same time, for the local church to introduce a practice of celebrating a religious day other than those which the churches observed in the first century (namely each first day of the week) moves it well beyond the scope of one's personal preference and into the realm of doctrine, if only by implication, just as when some in the church at Colossae wanted the whole church to practice keeping the Sabbaths.

Adding a piano or some other instrument has been implicitly rejected in scripture. Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 teach that we should "sing and make melody" and the melody is made "in the heart" not "in the ear". If a piano assisted in "teaching and admonishing" associated with that singing, then it might then be an expedient, but it does not. If that instrument assisted in having thanks in our hearts to the Lord (making melody in the heart) it might be an expedient, but it does not. Instead

the added instrument appeals to that for which spiritual singing was never intended. It appeals to the physical, the sensual and not the spiritual. The melody we are taught to make is for God's hearing, and the verbal expressions of teaching and admonishing are for Man's hearing.

Be Slow to Judge

Furthermore, as we learn from both Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 8, some things that may be judged as "not expedient" by one or many mature Christians may still not be sinful! We must be slow to judge others until we understand what is going on. If one practices idolatry, that would be wrong, but eating meat that had been sacrificed to an idol, while opposed by some first century Christians, and perhaps not expedient in most instances, in an of itself would not constitute or even imply idolatry, even though some might think that it does. We must learn to properly apply this principle in our day. Proper use of authority demands it.

Conclusion

We have discussed a great deal in this lesson. Good principles that, if applied, will help us to (1) understand what the Bible really teaches; (2) know what applies to ourselves today; (3) know who has the right to govern and what their limitations are; (4) realize that we must follow Christ's revealed word to be obedient to Christ; and (5) see that we must follow Christ to be saved.

With diligence, through prayer and a humble spirit, we can find ourselves pleasing to Christ and subject to his authority. May God help each of us to accomplish this in our lives.

THE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE

Steven Harbison



About the author...

Steve graduated from Oklahoma Christian College in 1978 with a degree in Bible. His wife Susie is a preschool teacher and they have two sons, Kenneth and Darren - both college students. He has preached since 1984, having preached for 4 years in Cape Fair, Missouri then in Ottawa, Kansas since 1988. He has been associated with the Midwest School of Biblical Studies as an instructor for four years and also labors with the International Bible Studies work. He has spoken for the last four years on the Mid-West Lectures.

I want to begin this lesson by noting something of particular interest in the book of Exodus. In chapter 25 and verse 9, God is giving instruction to Moses about the building of the tabernacle. He said, *“According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it.”* And then in the first few verses of chapter 31, the Lord spoke to Moses saying, *“See, I have called by name Bezaleel...and I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship. And I have given with him Aholiab...I have put wisdom (in them) that they may make all that I have commanded thee.”*

We find in these verses that God did not make the tabernacle with His own hands. But He gave Moses the pattern, and He gave His Spirit to Bezaleel and Aholiab so that they may have the wisdom and the skill needed to make the furnishings and the items of that tabernacle which God had commanded Moses to make. If you read through Exodus you will find that those are the men who did the work of constructing that tabernacle. Here was God and man working together. And just as God didn't make that tabernacle with His own hands but gave His Spirit to certain chosen ones so that they might do the work, the same thing is true with the production of the Bible.

God did not write the Bible with His own hands, but He gifted certain, chosen individuals to be the hands and the minds to write His Word. This He did through the agency of the Holy Spirit. When it comes to providing things for the benefit of man, God works in this way. He and man work together. It is a pattern we see throughout the Bible.

WHAT IS INSPIRATION?

When we talk about inspiration, what do we mean? I'm going to try to define inspiration and to understand, from the Word of God exactly what He means by this term. In 2 Timothy 3:16 the word inspiration can be found. Here, Paul teaches us that, *“All scripture is given by inspiration of God.”* All Scripture! I've been interested to find out that in the Bible, when the word “Scripture” is used, it is used to refer to the Bible. Literally, the word scripture means anything that is written. But when the word is used in the Bible, it always has reference to something between Genesis and Revelation. It always has reference to what God has given us in this book. So “all scripture” that is, all of these 66 books is given to us; we received it, by the inspiration of God. To inspire means to breathe into. The

Greek word that Paul used here is a compound word. The first part of the word means “God.” And the second part of the word means “breathed into.” (Vine II:263) What Paul is literally saying is that all Scripture is given by the breath of God. And just as you are listening to the words that I am breathing right now, when we read the Scripture, the Holy Bible, we are reading the words that at one time, God breathed to those men who wrote them. And they are authentic, they are His Words. I need us to understand that point. When we read the Bible we are reading the Word of God. I hope as we go through this lesson, that point will become more apparent and we will begin to appreciate the full meaning of that phrase. It’s a phrase we have used a lot: the Word of God, the Scripture, the Bible, we use them interchangeably. But do we realize the full impact of saying, that volume, which you may be holding in your hands, is actually “God breathed?”

I like the way Jesus said it to Satan in Matthew 4:4, when He said, *“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”* What comes from my mouth are the things which I breathe out. And when we speak, we are breathing those words out. God breathed these words in the Bible.

I’ve heard some people say that you really can’t go to the Bible and read a verse that says the Bible is inspired and take that at face value. For I can say that I am inspired, and how would that prove that it was so? Well it’s really not the focus of my thinking in this lesson to prove that the Bible is inspired. But I will spend just a little time on that thought.

PROOFS OF THE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE

The Bible Claims Inspiration

The Bible certainly claims to be inspired, in fact, I have read it through from beginning to end and counted the number of times that it claims to be God’s Word and not man’s word. And just using the Old Testament alone, which emphasizes that the words which were written down were not the author’s words but the words of God given to them, in such phrases as, *“Thus saith the Lord”* or *“The Lord spoke by me”* I have documented 1,904 times where this can be found. There are also passages in the New Testament that make this abundantly clear as well. In 1 Corinthians 2:13 Paul stated. *“Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth.”* The words which Paul was speaking and writing, Paul says that they were not his words. My wisdom didn’t invent them. I didn’t think about them and prepare them and then write or speak them to you, but the Holy Spirit gave me these words, he said. That was their source and where they actually came from.

Verses Which Describe Inspiration

Exodus 20:1	Isaiah 1:2
Exodus 24:4	Jeremiah 1:9
Exodus 35:1	Ephesians 3:3,4
2 Samuel 23:2	Revelation 1:1

The Bible certainly claims to be the Word of God.

Fulfilled Prophecy

We could spend time studying fulfilled prophecies and there are literally hundreds of them in the Old Testaments that have come true. There has been no other religion on earth that has been able to equal what God has done in the matter of prophecy. In fact it is prophesy that sets the religion of God apart from all other religions in this world. Because God knows the future and He can then foretell things that will come to pass.

Real prophecy, the foretelling of events that would not naturally occur, is found only in the Bible. Without God, man can only make guesses, some good but most wrong. A few examples of the prophetic accuracy of the Bible are here given.

1. The succession of nations is foretold in Daniel 2:36-45. The meaning of the king's dream is said to foretell the kingdoms of Persia, Greece and Rome all after the kingdom of Babylon. History reveals that this did happen.
2. The work of Jesus' predecessor, John the Baptist is prophesied in Malachi 4:5 and its fulfillment is recorded in Matthew 11:14 and Mark 9:11-13.
3. But by far, the prophecies which were fulfilled in Jesus are the most exciting. For example, His birthplace is foretold in Micah 5:2 as being Bethlehem. Its fulfillment is found in Matthew 2:6.

Historical Accuracy

The historical accuracy of the Bible, even though it is an ancient book, gives evidence that proves the inspiration of its words. Scholars, historians and archaeologists have never been able to disprove the facts that the Bible teaches.

For instance:

1. Unbelievers used to scoff at the mention of the nation of Sheba in the book of 1 Kings. They denied that such a nation ever existed. But about 100 years ago, archaeologists found Marib, the capital of Sheba in southern Arabia.
2. Archaeologists have also proved the existence of the Assyrian king named Sargon from his own records found in ancient Assyria. Sargon even mentions the battle which Isaiah records in Isaiah 20.
3. The Bible also reveals that the Persian Empire allowed the nation of Judah to return to Judea when Persia conquered Babylon. On the "Cyrus Cylinder" this policy is stated and was applied to all conquered peoples. This policy had formerly been in dispute.

Impossible For Man Alone

And I would ask you to consider this: man could not write the Bible if he wanted to because of all the prophecy and the historical accuracy which it contains. Man has written many histories and many mistakes have been found in them but not when it comes to the Bible. In Deuteronomy 18:20-22, the Bible reveals to us that when man tries to prophesy, or to write the Bible without the help of God, he will make mistakes. This in fact is the way God wants us to distinguish the inspired writers and speakers from those who are uninspired. God says in this passage that when man makes a mistake and says something which is wrong, then that man is not speaking the words of God. He is

only speaking his own words. The Bible is far above all of the words which man has written alone. So man couldn't have written the Bible if he had wanted to, neither would man write the Bible if he could. The Bible speaks against so many of the sins which are dearly loved by man. Things which men desire to practice, the Bible condemns. Mankind wants to live for himself and for pleasure and for profit, engaging in all kinds of sin. It is very difficult to believe that man would write the Bible even if he could.

WHAT IS MEANT BY THE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE?

Well when we say inspiration, what exactly do we mean? There are a lot of different theories, but if you boil them down, they all fall into one of three categories. Some people believe that there is really no inspiration at all in the Bible, other believe that part of the Bible is inspired and part of it is not, then there are those who believe that it is completely inspired. Let's spend a few moments looking at each of these three theories.

No Inspiration At All

There are some who say that the Bible is not inspired at all, that it is just a good book. You could put it on the shelf with the other great works of literature. It is the same as all the other books in the library, it is just one of the good books that man has written. Or there are some who really would say, "Well it's inspired all right but it's kind of like the inspiration of Shakespeare, Milton or Keats." Now, we will admit that in one sense, they were inspired in the writing of their works. But that is not at all what the Bible means when it says that it is inspired. If the Bible was only inspired like that, then it wouldn't be inspired at all, at least, not by God.

Partial Inspiration

There are also some who claim that the Bible is only partly the Word of God, that is, a partial inspiration. Some would say that parts were written by God, therefore those parts are inspired and that other parts were not written by God, therefore those parts could not be inspired by God. This is a very popular notion. Many in the religious world hold some kind of view in this category.

I first discovered this view when I was in high school. I was talking to a friend about what the Bible said. We were discussing things when I used a verse from the Bible. His response was something like; "I don't care if the Bible says that." I said, "Why not?" His reply was, "I don't believe that part is inspired." I was quite surprised. If you've ever heard someone say that or something like it to you, you might be startled. You then become tempted to ask them, "Well, which part is inspired and which part isn't?" You think that you can at least use "their inspired part" to teach them. But when you think about it, if you're going to believe that part of it is inspired and part of it isn't, how are you ever going to tell which part is inspired. I asked my friend that. He couldn't answer me. Basically, I think that his answer would have been, "Whatever I want to be inspired, is inspired and whatever I don't want to be inspired, is not."

For if part of it is inspired and part of it isn't, there would be no way to know. You would have to be inspired yourself to know which part of God's Word is inspired and which part isn't. How could anyone know which part is inspired? The verse that was read a moment ago, teaches us that the

Bible came *“not by the will of man.”* In Romans 3:4, Paul wrote, *“Let God be true, but every man a liar.”* That ought to tell us, if it’s not God’s Word, then it’s man’s word and compared to God, all we can do is lie, for God is the One Who speaks the truth (John 17:17).

Thought Inspiration

There are others who teach an inspiration that is called “thought inspiration” and this is another form of partial inspiration. This is an idea that seems to be growing very rapidly today. This is the view that even some of our own brethren are adopting. Basically it says that God only put an idea into the mind of Moses or Paul or Peter and left them free as to how that idea should be stated in words. Brethren, that’s a very popular notion these days. But it is not what the Bible teaches about its own inspiration.

The Bible, as we read in 2 Samuel 23:2 has David saying, *“The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue.”* David was not speaking about ideas, he said it was God’s Word that was given to him. In Matthew 4:4 Jesus said, we shall live *“by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”* Jesus is the one Who in Matthew 5:18 said, *“Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.”* For those of you who don’t speak Hebrew, a jot is the smallest Hebrew letter. And a tittle is just a part of a letter like we might put a cross on a “T” or an “F.” Just a part of a letter, not one letter, not one part of a letter will pass from the law until it has all fulfilled the purpose for which God has given it. Does that sound like the Lord just put thoughts into people’s minds and left them free to choose which words and which letters to use in expressing those thoughts? Or does it sound like God was very careful about inspiration and that the words and even the letters were very important to Him? The impression that I get is certainly that God inspired the words and even the letters. Every one of them, for Jesus said, not *“one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law,”* until God is finished with it.

Thought inspiration is the idea that God inspired men by giving them the thoughts and leaving them free to find the words. But you know, I have never realized that a person could have a thought without having a word in their mind. Can you? Can you have a thought or an idea in your mind and it not be in the form of words? You might think, “I can see a picture in my mind.” But a picture is not an idea. And when you see a picture in your mind you think: tree, house, grass etc. You will put words with all those images you see in your mind. If you cannot have a thought in your mind without words, then how could God use something like thought inspiration? It isn’t possible!

There is another way to be sure that thought inspiration is not the method God used to create the Bible. When you look into the Bible you will find occasions when they wrote the Word of God but they did not understand what it was they were writing. In Daniel 12:8,9, Daniel says about a vision which he had just received, *“I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.”* Now, here is Daniel who has received many such visions in this book and upon the completion of this one he doesn’t understand what it means. He asks the man in his vision to explain it for him but he is denied an explanation. Now how could a thought have been put into his mind and he be left to write it down if he did not understand the thought in the first place? Peter tells us in 1 Peter 1:10-12 that when the prophets were writing about the coming salvation, they too did not fully understand what they were saying. He says that they *“inquired and searched diligently”* about

it. They wanted to understand what the *“Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified”* about the Christ who was to come. In verse 12 Peter tells us that they did understand that they were not writing *“unto themselves but unto us they did minister”* in the messages they were writing. Again, how could anyone explain to others in writing what he did not understand himself? This could only be accomplished by inspiration that included the very words God wanted revealed.

If thought inspiration were God’s method then the Bible would not be the Word of God at all, it would be the “Thought of God.” The Bible writers would have used their own fallible minds to decide how to reveal the mind of God. We would have no sure way to tell whether they succeeded or not. We could not know for sure if what they wrote was true or false.

But perhaps the best evidence against the thought inspiration idea is found in the words of Jesus in Matthew 10:18-20. Here Jesus is giving instructions to His apostles concerning the coming times when they would be arrested and put on trial for preaching the gospel. He tells them, *“And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.”* Notice that Jesus says they were to *“take no thought”* about what they would be speaking in their own defense. They would receive at that time the content of their message and the manner of its delivery. They were not to apply their own minds to their defense. They were not to give any thought to what they would say. And yet this is exactly the opposite idea that is found in the notion of thought inspiration, where only an idea is given to the speaker or writer and they are free to apply their minds to choose the words to speak or write in the Bible. Notice again what Jesus said, *“it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.”* Words would come from their mouths but those words would be under the control of the Spirit of God. This also happened to these same men on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2:4 when they *“began to speak...as the Spirit gave them utterance.”*

In fact when you think about it, if thought inspiration were God’s method of doing it, then the Bible is not God’s word at all, it is man’s word. Because man’s own fallible mind was left free to choose the words that were written in the Bible. And how could you call that the “Holy Bible?” Is that what it says on your book, the “Holy Bible?” That word “Holy” is there because it means that it is from God and not from man. But if this is written and produced by thought inspiration, then we ought to take the word “Holy” off of the cover because it would then be man’s word. That is exactly what one Bible maker has done; it is called “The Book.” They have taken God out of the picture entirely. That is the difference between the “Holy Bible” and what man has produced in these modern days and called “The Book.”

Verbal Inspiration; Total Inspiration

The Bible teaches that it was verbally or word inspired and that it was completely inspired. In 2 Peter 3:2 the apostle Peter there wrote, *“that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord.”* Notice that it is the words that we are to be mindful of, both of those written before, that is the Old Testament and of those written by the apostles, that is the New Testament. We are to be mindful of the very words! The Bible expresses this thought very well. Jesus said in Matthew 24:35, *“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.”* But according to those who think that the Bible is

thought inspired, they have already passed away because as soon as someone wrote anything down, God's Words were gone and only man's words were left for us to read.

But not only does the Bible teach word inspiration, it also teaches total inspiration; that is, every part of it is inspired not just some parts of it. In 2 Timothy 3:16 it says "*all scripture is given by inspiration of God,*" all of it. And this verse leaves only one method for all of the scripture, not one method for one part of it and another method for another part of it, as if only part of it was inspired. "*ALL Scripture is inspired of God.*" And when we get that thought in our minds then it becomes apparent to us that this book is the Word of God! Brethren, I want you to understand that. If you have a Bible with you there and you are holding it, that is God's Word, that is the will and testament that He has left for us, that is the method by which we can hear God speak to us today. It is essential for us to believe this.

CONCLUSION

- And when we have established that, there are some things that this means to each of us.
- C *That the Bible is the Word of God means the authority of the Bible is established.* Did you ever think that if the Bible is not the Word of God, or if we couldn't tell which part might be inspired and which part wasn't inspired, that the Bible would actually be of no use to us at all? How could we use it in any authoritative manner? Someone else might say, "Well, I don't think that is one of the inspired parts." How could we say otherwise, if you accept that some is and some isn't inspired? The Bible is only useful to us if it is completely inspired and if it is, then it's authority is established. We have the responsibility of doing what the Bible says, since it is God's Word.
 - C *That the Bible is the Word of God means the inerrancy of the Bible is established.* If this is God's Word then there's no mistake in it. It's true from beginning to end. We should not argue about whether a verse means what it says, it is all correct since it is the Word of God (John 16:13).
 - C *That the Bible is the Word of God means the all sufficiency of the Bible is established.* That is what Paul taught in 2 Timothy 3:16,17. The Scripture "*is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*" It is all sufficient to make me everything that God wants me to be in order to be pleasing to Him. This book is that, because it is God's Word. When you think about it, He says here that this book is useful for "*correction.*" How could I be corrected by something that wasn't the Word of God? Why would I follow that?
 - C *That the Bible is the Word of God means we have reason to study it like no other book.* The Bible is not just one of many books that are of equal value in this world. It is the book that is "on a shelf by itself." IT is the book that is like no other book in all the world. It is the book that we must, as 2 Timothy 2:15 says, "*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*" We need to know how to use the Bible. It is that important. It is by using this book that we please God and by no other book.

This book is like no other because its author is like no other. It is the Word of God.

C *That the Bible is the Word of God means we can all understand the Bible alike.* It is God's Word and it is the authority, in it is no mistake, it is all sufficient to make us the faithful children of God we ought to be. If in studying this book, we are studying God's Word, why would someone say, "Well you can understand it your way and I'll understand it my way and we'll both be right." That doesn't make any sense at all. Would God write a book for man that could not be understood by man? This doesn't sound like the God I serve. We can understand the Bible alike if we will study it properly, if we will apply ourselves with diligence to learn His will and not try to enforce our will upon the pages of His book.

C *That the Bible is the Word of God means we can trust it and obey it.* We can believe that the blessings that are promised within its pages can be ours if we will do what it says. It's just that simple. Some people make a contract here in this world, if it's an honorable contract, they can expect to receive what the contract stipulates if they do what is required of them in that contract. Well if this is the Word of God and there is no mistake in it then we can trust it, we can put our faith in it, we can be obedient to it and expect to receive the blessings that it promises us.

All of this is based upon the fact that this book is the Word of God. The doctrine of the inspiration of the Bible is so basic yet so important. Because if our Bible is not inspired, then nothing it teaches or says is worthwhile. Why would I want to be obedient to a book that was written so long ago by some men? Many other books are even older than this one. Could a human author bless me today? No! But God can! I have to believe in the inspiration of the Bible, the God inspired Bible. This is the only book in all the world that teaches me what I must do to be saved and to live a faithful Christian life of service to God and to have any hope of eternal life in heaven. And that is where I want to go when this life is over. It is my hope and prayer that you have the same desire too and that you realize that you cannot obtain that without the use of the God inspired Bible.

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THE DEITY OF CHRIST

Wayne Brewer



About the author...

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Introduction

The Bible says, *"...being ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you A reason concerning the hope that is in you, yet with meekness and fear"* (1 Peter 3:15), and *"... contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints"* (Jude 3) [All Scripture quotations are from the American Standard Version of 1901]. One answer that needs to be given concerns the deity of Christ. There are some religious organizations that deny the deity of Christ. Jehovah's Witnesses, Christadelphians, Unitarians, and many New Age religions are among these. However, the Bible clearly teaches, affirms and establishes the fact that Jesus is deity. The Greek word *"theotes"*, which is translated *"deity"* and also *"Godhead"*, means "the Divine essence of Godhood, the Personality of God" (Vine 1:329), or "the state of being God" (Thayer 288). The answer the Bible gives about the deity of Christ is that he is God.

The New Testament Affirms The Deity of Christ in The Four Gospels

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John overwhelmingly demonstrate the fact that Jesus is God. John probably sums up best their purpose in writing, *"...these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye may have life in his name"* (John 20:31). The purpose of their writing was to affirm the deity of Christ.

Matthew's account begins with the events preceding the birth of Jesus when an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and says, *"And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus, for it is he that shall save his people from their sins...Behold, the virgin shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel, which is, being interpreted, God with us"* (Matthew 1:21-23). There are three major points in this passage affirming the deity of Christ. First, concerning Jesus' work of salvation, *"...it is he that shall save his people from their sins..."* God had said 800 years earlier, *"...before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am Jehovah, and beside me there is no savior"* (Isaiah 43:10-11). God's message is that only God can be the Savior. When the angel says concerning Jesus, *"...it is he that shall save his people from their sins"*, he is saying that Jesus is God. Second, concerning his virgin birth, *"...the virgin shall bring forth a son..."* This was the fulfillment of a prophecy made in the Old Testament (Isaiah 7:14). Since Jesus had been conceived through miraculous or supernatural means, and not

through natural laws, he had to have been God. Third, concerning what Jesus was called, "...they shall call his name Immanuel, which is being translated, God with us", which fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy (Isaiah 7:14). Matthew quickly establishes the deity of Christ.

Mark begins his account, *"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God"* (Mark 1:1). Right away he uses the phrase *"the Son of God"* which signifies the true nature of Jesus, that he is God. The Psalmist wrote, *"Jehovah said unto me, Thou art my son; this day I have begotten thee"* (Psalms 2:7). Paul said, *"And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers, that God hath fulfilled the same unto our children, in that he raised up Jesus, as also it is written in the second Psalm, Thou art my Son, this day I have begotten thee"* (Acts 13:32-33). Paul's point, citing the Old Testament book of Psalms, is that Jesus' resurrection from the dead is proof that he is the Son of God, the same nature as God, and therefore he is God. The phrase, *"Son of God"*, is defined as *"An eternal relationship subsisting between the Son and the Father in the Godhead is to be understood"* (Vine 4:48). Mark affirms the deity of Christ right away by calling Jesus *"the Son of God."*

Luke proves the deity of Jesus when he writes of Gabriel's announcement unto Mary that she is going to give birth of Jesus.

And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shall call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High... and of his kingdom there shall be no end. ... The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee: wherefore also the holy thing which is begotten shall be called the Son of God (Luke 1:31,32,33,35).

Luke also records the words of the angel on the night of Jesus' birth. *"I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people: for there is born to you this in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord"* (Luke 2:10-11). There are four major points in these passages proving the deity of Christ. First, Jesus would be conceived miraculously. Second, Jesus would be called *"the Son of the Most High"* and *"the Son of God"*, both of which point to his divine nature. Third, Jesus would have an eternal kingdom, one with *"no end."* Fourth, on the night of his birth, Jesus is called *"Savior"* and *"Lord"*, which again is evidence of his deity. These statements are seen as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies, such as,

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end... (Isaiah 9:6-7).

Luke affirms the deity of Christ at the very beginning of his account.

John begins his account as he logically sets for the truth that Jesus is God. John writes, *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that hath been made"* (John 1:1-3). John continues to provide more information about the Word when he

writes, “*And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth. For of his fullness we all received, and grace for grace...grace and truth came through Jesus Christ*” (John 1:14,16-17). John begins his book by referring to Jesus as the “*Word*”. First, John writes that the Word was “*in the beginning...*” John is saying that Jesus was already in existence at the beginning of material things (*Genesis 1:1*). Jesus existed before the creation so that makes him eternal or deity. Second, John writes that the Word “*was with God, and the Word was God.*” When the things were being created in the beginning the Word was there in the position and essence of God. Third, John writes that the Word was the agency of the created things. He was not just there for part of the creative process, but was there creating everything. This Word who is God “*became flesh*” and is known to us as Jesus Christ. John affirms that the Word, Jesus, is God.

However, the Jehovah’s Witnesses, in an effort to take away the deity of Christ, have come up with their own unreliable translation of the Bible. In their version, *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*, they translate John’s words this way, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god” (John 1:1, NWT). Relating to the correct translation of this passage Merrill C. Tenney writes:

The Greek word *theos*, translated God, is employed here without the article...When the article is used, the emphasis of the word is on individuality, God as a person; without the article the emphasis is on quality, God as a kind of being... “Deity” is a better rendering. “The Word was deity” clearly asserts that the LOGOS possessed and eternally manifested the very nature of God. (65)

The four gospels also affirm the deity of Christ by writing of his attributes. Jesus possessed attributes that only belong to God. As God he would have the ability to assume whatever form he desired, something that a mere human being could not do. Being God, Jesus did take on the form of a human being, flesh “*...and the Word was God...And the Word became flesh...*” (John 1:1,14). Mark records that after Jesus’ resurrection he appeared in different forms. “*And after these things, he [Jesus] was manifested in another form unto two of them...*” (Mark 16:12). Luke records another incident after Jesus’ resurrection, “*...and he [Jesus] vanished out of their sight*” (Luke 24:31). The word “*vanished*” literally means, “became invisible” (Vine 4:182). As a mere man Jesus could not have done this, but because he is God, he could. The gospels show the attributes of Jesus to be in the following categories. First, Jesus could be everywhere, so he is omnipresent. “*...and lo, I am with you always...*” (Matthew 28:20). Second, Jesus has all knowledge, so he is omniscient. “*And Jesus knowing their thoughts said...*” (Matthew 9:4). Third, Jesus has all power, so he is omnipotent. “*Then he [Jesus] arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm*” (Matthew 8:26). “*And when he [Jesus] had thus spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. He that was dead came forth...*” (John 11:43-44). Since these are attributes that only God could have, and Jesus possessed them, the logical conclusion is that Jesus is God. The four gospel writers confidently affirm the deity of Jesus.

The New Testament Affirms the Deity of Jesus Through the Remaining Books

Evidence of the deity of Christ is not only seen in the four gospels, but also throughout the remainder of the New Testament. The book of Acts begins with evidence of Jesus' deity.

To whom he [Jesus] also showed himself alive after his passion by many proofs... And when he [Jesus] said these things, as they were looking, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight...this Jesus who was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner... (Acts 1:3,9,11).

Luke begins Acts by affirming the deity of Christ through Jesus' resurrection from the dead and ascension back into heaven. In Acts evidence of Jesus' deity is affirmed through the preaching of men like Peter and Paul. Peter said, *"Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus..." (Acts 2:36)*. Peter provides his own commentary concerning what he means by calling Jesus "Lord." Speaking to Cornelius, Peter said, *"The word which he sent unto the children of Israel, preaching good tidings of peace by Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all)" (Acts 10:36)*. To be Lord of all is to be God. Speaking of Jesus, Peter said, *"But ye denied the Holy and Righteous One..." (Acts 3:14)*. Years earlier, Isaiah had said of God, *"Our redeemer, Jehovah (Lord) of hosts is his name, the Holy One..." (Isaiah 47:4)*. The words used by Peter places Jesus on an equality with God the Father. Paul also preached that Jesus is God when he told the Ephesian elders, *"Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28)*. The King James Version says, *"...to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."* The New American Standard Version says, *"...to shepherd the church of God which he purchased with his own blood."* In this passage Jesus is called "Lord" or "God".

Other New Testament books affirm the deity of Jesus just as strongly leaving no doubt that Jesus is God. *"Have this mind in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men" (Philippians 2:5-8)*. The words, "form" and "equality", affirm Jesus' deity because the word "form" (*morphe*), means "the special or characteristic form or feature of a person or thing" (Vine 2:123), and the word "equality" (*isos*) means "the same in size, number, quality, etc" (Vine 2:38). Jesus existed in the very "form of God" concerning who he was, and concerning his existence in the spiritual realm, for *"God is spirit..." (John 4:24)*. Jesus was *"on an equality with God"* in his divine nature or quality as Paul also writes in Colossians.

Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth ,things visible and things invisible...all things have been created through him, and unto him, and he is before all things, and in him all things consist (Colossians 1:15-18).

Aside from explaining that Jesus existed before all things, which would make him God, and that he

is the creator of all things, which would make him God (Genesis 1:1), Paul again uses two words, “image” and “firstborn”, which point to Jesus’ deity. Vine says the word “image” (*eikon*) means

essentially and absolutely the perfect expression and representation of the Archetype, God the Father” and “Christ is the visible representation and manifestation of God to created beings; the likeness expressed in this manifestation is involved in the essential relations in the Godhead, and is therefore unique and perfect. (2:246)

He also says that the word “firstborn” (*prototokos*) “is used of Christ...in his relationship to the Father, expressing his priority to, and preeminence over, creation, not in the sense of being the first to be born” (Vine 2:105). With reference to the word “firstborn” Hugo McCord said,

When one realizes that figuratively a *protokos* is a most important person, a prince, a sovereign, with no genealogy under consideration, then real meaning comes to the expression “firstborn of all creation.” Christ is being placed above and is superior to all things which he has created. Instead of Christ’s being demoted and depreciated to a position limited in time and to a position of being a part of created things, the expression...exalts Christ as the sovereign maker of all things. The phrase reflects not an origin of Christ but the status of Christ: he is chief of all things. (22)

Paul’s point is that Jesus has preeminence over the creation because he is the Creator, and that makes him God.

The Jehovah’s Witnesses have changed the word of God in another place (Colossians 1:16-17) by inserting the word “other” into the text. Their version says, “because by him all [other] things were created...All [other] things have been created through him...he is before all [other] things.” They are taking away the deity of Christ by adding the word other and making him a created thing. The forward of the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* says, “[] Brackets enclose words inserted to complete or clarify the sense in the English text” (NWT 6). The truth is that they have added to God’s word to take away the deity of Christ. They have in effect violated both principles of adding to and taking away from the word of God (Deuteronomy 4:2, Revelation 22:18-19).

Paul again teaches the deity of Christ when he writes, “For in him [Jesus] dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and in him ye are made full, who is the head of all principality and power” (Colossians 2:9-10). As has previously been noted the word “Godhead” (*theotes*) “indicates the Divine essence of Godhood, the personality of God” (Vine 1:329). When Paul writes that in Jesus “dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead” or the “essence of Godhood” he is affirming that Jesus is God. Paul again speaks of Jesus being God when he writes to Titus, “Looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13). Jesus is called “God” and “Savior”. The Hebrew author begins his book by showing that Jesus is God.

God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds, who being the effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance, and

upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high (Hebrews 1:1-3).

The word “*effulgence*” (*apaugasma*) means “radiance” and in this context means “The Son, being one with the Father in Godhood, is in Himself, and ever was, the shining forth of the glory, manifesting in Himself all that God is and does...” (Vine 2:19). The Hebrew writer uses a different Greek word for “*image*” than was used in the Colossian letter. The Hebrew author used the word “*character*.” It is easy to see from the anglicized form that the word has come to the English as “character.” The word means “a stamp or impress, as on a coin or a seal, in which case the seal or die which makes an impression bears the image produced by it... In the New Testament it is used metaphorically ... He is the image or impress of His substance, or essence” (Vine 2:247). The writer does not stop there, but goes on to quote an Old Testament passage, where the author, referring to Jesus. “*But of the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever...*” (Hebrews 1:8). The Hebrew author’s point is that Jesus is God.

Peter begins his second letter by writing, “*Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained a like precious faith with us in the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ*” (2 Peter 1:1). Later in the same chapter Peter writes “*our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*” (2 Peter 1:11). Jesus is God, Lord, and Savior. The book of Revelations confirms the deity of Christ, “*I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end*” (Revelation 22:13). God said of himself through the Old Testament prophet Isaiah, “*I am the first, and I am the last, beside me there is no God*” (Isaiah 44:6). The message of the book of Revelation is meant to confirm the deity of Christ, as is the whole Bible.

Conclusion

Jesus Christ, who was born of Mary, existed as God, with God, from all eternity (Micah 5:2). Jesus left heaven, according to God’s plan, and took on the form of humanity that he might serve as the sacrifice, “*propitiation*” (1 John 2:2), for our sins. When Jesus lived on this earth he was both God and man. He was the “*Son of God*” and the “*Son of man*”.

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GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

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Introduction

The Bible begins with God. *"In the beginning God"* (Genesis 1:1). God created man (Genesis 1:26-27) and placed him in the garden of Eden to dress it and keep it (Genesis 2:16). Man violated God's law (Genesis 3:1-6). Sin entered the world. Did God have a plan whereby man might be forgiven? What was that Plan?

In this study let's consider: (1) God's Plan of Salvation Was in His Mind before the World Began; (2) God's Plan of Salvation was Promised; (3) God's Plan of Salvation was Prophesied; (4) God's Plan of Salvation was Revealed by the Spirit through the Apostles and Prophets; (5) God's Plan of Salvation Clearly Reveals the Conditions of Salvation; and (6) God's Plan of Salvation Clearly Reveals the Church is the Saved.

God's Plan of Salvation Was in His Mind Before The World Began

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

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; Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will (Ephesians 1:4-5).

Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began. But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour

Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel (2 Timothy 1:8-10).

Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you (1 Peter 1:18-20).

God, even in eternity, set before himself the entire plan for the redemption of the souls of men. God's purpose is not determined by man, or by his merits; God's purpose is after the "counsel of his will" (Ephesians 1:11). God's purpose is an eternal purpose, which he purposed in Christ before the world was, before time eternal (Ephesians 3:11; 1 Peter 1:18-20).

God's Plan of Salvation Was Promised

God made his first promise in the Garden of Eden. *"Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee"* (Genesis 3:16). This was the first indication that one should be born of a woman apart from the natural begetting by a man.

Centuries passed but God's promise was still in mind when he selected Shem and his seed (Genesis 10). Twenty centuries or more after the promise in Eden God called Abraham and promised him that *"in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed"* (Genesis 12:3). He later renewed the promise saying, *"And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed"* (Genesis 22:18). Later God said, *"In Isaac shall thy seed be called"* (Genesis 21:12). God chose Jacob instead of Esau and said, *"In thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed"* (Genesis 28:14). Jacob had twelve sons, but it was to Judah that God announced the following: *"The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come"* (Genesis 49:10).

Six hundred and fifty years after Jacob's death, David wanted to build a house for God (which God did not allow), but God promised David to set up his seed after him (1 Samuel 7:11-17). This promise to David is repeated in the Psalms. *"I have made a covenant with my chosen. I have sworn unto David my servant: Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations"* (Psalms 89:3-4). Three hundred years later Isaiah combined the promise made in Eden with the promise made to David and declared that the one to come should be born of a virgin. *"Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel"* (Isaiah 7:14).

And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us (Matthew 1:21-23).

In Paul's letter to the Galatians he affirmed that Christ fulfilled the promise made to Abraham.

And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.... Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ (Galatians 3:8, 16).

Therefore, in Jesus Christ is realized the fulfillment of the promise to the three in the garden, to Abraham, to Isaac and Jacob, to Judah, to David and to Israel through the prophets. He is the fulfillment of God's promise and the fulfillment of His purpose. (Hailey 34)

God's Plan of Salvation Was Prophesied

Six hundred years before Christ was born Isaiah prophesied that the Lord's house (the church, 1 Timothy 3:15) would be established in Jerusalem.

And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:2-3).

Daniel's explanation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream revealed four great world empires (Daniel 2). The prophet then said,

And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever (Daniel 2:44).

This prophecy was fulfilled in the days of the fourth great empire, the Roman, when God established his kingdom under the reign of Jesus Christ. The kingdom foreseen by Daniel would never be destroyed and the Hebrews had "*received a kingdom that cannot be shaken*" (Hebrews 12:28).

Zechariah foretold the entrance of the king into Jerusalem (Zechariah 9:9; cf. Matthew 21:4-5). He foretold a kingdom of peace (Zechariah 9:10) and that the shepherd (Jesus) would be sold by Judas for thirty pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:12-13). He also foretold the fact that they would look on him whom they had pierced (Zechariah 12:10; cf. John 19:37) and of the fountain that through his death should be opened for sin and uncleanness (Zechariah 13:1).

Peter stated that the prophets prophesied of this salvation.

Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow (1 Peter 1:9-11).

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost (2 Peter 1:20-21).

God's Plan of Salvation Was Revealed by the Spirit Through the Apostles and Prophets

Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to guide the apostles into all truth. *"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come" (John 16:13).*

The Holy Spirit revealed the mystery (that which had not previously been revealed) to Paul.

Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual (2 Corinthians 2:6-13).

Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him (Ephesians 1:8-10).

For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to youward: How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words,

Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel (Ephesians 3:1-6).

The apostle Peter testifies to the revelation of God's plan of salvation.

Unto whom it was revealed, that no unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into (1 Peter 1:12).

God's Plan of Salvation Clearly Reveals the Conditions of Salvation

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men" (Titus 2:11). God wants all men to be saved. "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4). But man must meet the conditions which God has set forth in order to procure this salvation unto himself.

First, one must hear the Word of God.

For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world (Romans 10:13-18).

Second, belief in Jesus Christ is essential to salvation. *"And I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24). "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (John 20:30-31).*

Third, repentance is an essential part of salvation. *"I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3,5). "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). God "commandeth all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30).*

Fourth, one must confess his faith in Christ as the son of God, *"For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans*

10:10). Before his baptism the eunuch said, *"I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God"* (Acts 8:37).

Fifth, baptism into Christ is essential for the remission of sins. *"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned"* (Mark 16:16). *"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins"* (Acts 2:38). *"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ"* (Galatians 3:26-27).

Sixth, one must be faithful to the end of the journey. *"Be thou faithful unto death (even dying for your faith), and I will give thee a crown of life"* (Revelation 2:10).

God's Plan of Salvation Clearly Reveals That the Church Is the Saved

The church was in God's eternal purpose. *"To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Ephesians 3:10-11). The Lord promised to build his church and did build it (Matthew 16:13-19). The Lord has one body which is the church. *"But now are they many members, but one body"* (1 Corinthians 12:20). *"And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all"* (Ephesians 1:22-23). *"There is one body"* (Ephesians 4:4). *"And he is the head of the body, the church"* (Colossians 1:18).

The Lord reconciles both Jew and Gentile in the one body.

For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace (Ephesians 2:14-16).

Those that obey the gospel are added to the church (to that saved group of people). *"And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved"* (Acts 2:47).

Conclusion

God's plan of salvation was in his eternal purpose, was promised, was prophesied, was revealed, clearly sets forth the conditions of salvation, and shows the church to be the saved.

Jesus Christ is the way (John 14:6). There can be no other way. There can be no other gospel (Galatians 1:6-9). God warns against adding to or taking from his word (Revelation 22:18-19).

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BAPTISM

John Shafer

*About the author...*

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Introduction

Our study today will look at a number of questions concerning baptism:

1. What is baptism?
2. What is the purpose of baptism and is it essential for salvation? Is baptism an outward symbol after you're saved or are your sins forgiven at baptism and is therefore essential to salvation?
3. Who should be baptized?
4. Is denominational baptism valid?

Shortly before Jesus ascension to heaven, Jesus gave his apostles what is called the "Great Commission."

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in 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. Amen. (Matthew 28:18-20)

In the gospel of Mark the commission is worded this way. *"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned"* (Mark 16:15-16). In both places we notice the mention of baptism.

C In Matthew it is related to the process of making disciples

C In Mark it is mentioned in connection with salvation.

Whatever the purpose of baptism, it must be important to Jesus, for He commanded it!

What Is Baptism?

First of all, a definition of baptism is in order. The word "baptize" in most of the Bible

translations we have today is actually a transliterated word (where English letter equivalents are substituted for the Greek letters in the original word). Instead of translating the meaning of the word into the English equivalent, the Greek word in the original text is just changed into an English word.

The Greek word translated "baptize" is the word "baptizo". "Baptizo" is defined in *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon* as, "1) to dip, to immerse, submerge (of vessels sunk); 2) to cleanse by dipping or submerging, to wash, to make clean with water; 3) to overwhelm" (57). *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* defines "baptisma" (translated "baptism") as "consisting of the process of immersion, submersion, and emergence" (50). As can clearly be seen, the New Testament writers intended to indicate that baptism is an immersion. The mistranslation of using the transliterated word began with the King James translators because the church of England (who sponsored the translation) did not want the word "immersion" used for baptism. The only Bible translation that I know of that correctly translates the Greek words we call "baptism" is McCord's *New Testament Translation of the Everlasting Gospel*. For example in Mark 16:16 McCord translates, "He who believes and is immersed shall be saved..."

Baptism does not always mean "dunking in water," but it does always mean "immersion." An example would be in Matthew 20:23 where Jesus asks James and John, "Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" What is Jesus referring to here when He mentions His baptism? Not His water baptism. Rather Jesus is giving a picture of the agony that He is about to endure. H. Leo Boles in his commentary on Matthew has stated concerning this, "Incidentally we see what is meant by baptism; it is not a mere sprinkling of suffering, but an overwhelming of suffering in death" (247)

Suffice it to say, most times that baptism is mentioned in the New Testament, immersion in water is meant. Yet one must still examine the context of the passage to see what is truly being discussed.

What Is The Purpose of Baptism?

What does man say as compared to what the Bible clearly teaches? The *Handbook of Religious Quotations* gives us the following information:

- C The *Standard Manual for Baptist Churches* on pages 20-21 states, "Baptism is not essential to salvation ... but it is essential to obedience, since Christ commanded it. It is also essential to membership in the church which is his body" (Dawson 10)
- C The Baptist paper *Good News* in their March 2, 1972 issue wrote: "Is baptism necessary for salvation? I don't beat about the bush about it at all. I come out with a plain, definite, **no!** No, baptism doesn't save, doesn't help save, and I'll go even further to say that it doesn't have anything in this world to do with the saving of a soul" (Dawson 6)
- C The Seventh Day Adventist "Baptismal Vow" requires a person, *before* baptism, to answer this question: "...have you accepted Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, and do you believe that God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven your sins, and given you a new heart?" (Dawson 12).

This is why, when a person expresses a desire for baptism, most churches schedule him/her for a baptismal service someday in the future. They believe the person is saved, even though he has not been baptized, so there is no hurry. This is standard doctrine in nearly all Protestant denominations (though many make no major point of it).

Scriptures about the Purpose of Baptism

C **Mark 16:15,16 - He who believes and is baptized will be saved.**

Where does this passage place salvation in relation to baptism? Does salvation come before baptism or as a result of it? We can no more be saved before baptism than we can before believing. It is like $1 + 1 = 2$. Take away either of the "1's" and you no longer have two. Likewise if you take away either faith or baptism, you no longer have salvation.

Someone may respond, "It says you will be condemned if you don't believe, but it doesn't say you will be condemned if you are not baptized." The Bible does not always spell out what we have to do to be lost. It tells us what we have to do to be saved and expects us to realize that, if we don't do it, we will be lost. It says we must do **two** things to be **saved**. To be lost, you only need to omit one of them. If you don't have faith, you probably would not be baptized, and if you did it would not do any good. To be lost is easy - just don't believe. To be saved is harder - you must both believe and be baptized. Further, the person who has a true faith will believe that baptism is necessary. Jesus said to believe the **gospel** (vs 15). What does the gospel say? "*He who believes and is baptized shall be saved.*" What if I don't believe that? Then I don't believe the gospel! What does the passage say about people who don't believe the gospel?

Note the difference between what men say and what the Bible says:

C **Men say:** He who believes is saved and may then be baptized.

C **The gospel says:** He who believes and is baptized will be saved.

Both faith and baptism are essential in order to receive salvation. Remember, following human doctrines that differ from the gospel leads to condemnation (Galatians 1:8; Matthew 15:9; etc.).

C **Acts 2:38 - Repent and Be Baptized for Remission of Sins**

Where does this passage place remission in relation to baptism? Are sins forgiven (remitted) before baptism or as a result of it? Note that the **purpose** of baptism is clearly stated: it is **for remission** of sins.

What does "for remission of sins" mean? Some say that "for" means "because of," like "He received a ticket for speeding" - he received the ticket because he had been speeding, not in order that he might speed. "For" can have this meaning in English, but the word cannot mean this in Acts 2:38 (see ASV and other translations.)

Consider the people to whom Peter was speaking. If "for" means "because they already had remission," then Peter must have been talking to saved people. Was he? He had just convicted them of the sin of killing Jesus (36), and they were pricked in their hearts and asked what to do (37). They did not already have remission, but stood in need of receiving it. Peter then told them to "repent." If they already had remission, why did they need to repent?

The command to repent proves these people were not already saved, but were still sinners needing to receive remission. After verse 38, Peter told them to "be saved" from the wicked generation (40). If they were already saved, why tell them to be saved? Clearly these were not saved people being told what to do because they had remission. They were lost sinners being told what to do to receive remission. Hence, "for remission of sins" means "in order to receive remission."

Consider the parallel to Matthew 26:28. Acts 2:38 says be baptized *"for remission of sins."* Matthew 26:28 says Jesus blood would be shed for many *"for remission of sins."* Did Jesus shed His blood because people already had remission of sins? Not at all. He did it so people who did not have remission **could receive** it. Likewise baptism is not administered because people already have remission but so people who do not have it can receive it.

Suppose a person is baptized not realizing that this is the purpose for which he should be baptized. Suppose he believes he was saved before baptism. Would he be baptized in order to receive remission? How could he, if he believes he already has it? How then could his baptism be according to the pattern of God's word?

C **1 Peter 3:21 - Baptism Saves Us**

Noah illustrates how we are saved. Verse 20 says he and his family were saved *"by (or through) water."* The flood water destroyed the wicked, but it also saved Noah because it bore the ark up, delivering (saving) Noah from death. This illustrates the fact that baptism is what saves us. This does not mean that we are physically washing dirt from our bodies. The power is not in the water but in the death and resurrection of Jesus. But we contact that blood in baptism.

C **Galatians 3:27 - We Are Baptized into Jesus**

How many people are in Christ? Just as many as have been baptized into Him. What if a person has not been baptized into Him? Then that person is not in Him. Why is it important to be in Christ?

C Ephesians 1:7 - Forgiveness of sins is in Christ.

C 2 Timothy 2:10 - Salvation is in Him.

C 1 John 5:11,12 - Eternal life is in the Son

C Ephesians 1:3 - All spiritual blessings are in Christ. [Cf. Romans 8:1; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Philippians 4:7]

If a person is outside Christ, he does not have forgiveness, salvation, eternal life, or spiritual blessings. But how does one come into Christ? He must be baptized into Christ. Then what is the condition of one who has not been baptized or who does not believe baptism is for the purpose of being saved?

Hearing, believing, repenting, and confession are all essential steps toward Christ, but baptism is the step that puts a person **into** Christ. Before baptism, a person is still outside Christ, still without forgiveness and the other blessings that are in Christ. If he wants those blessings, he must be baptized for the purpose of coming into Christ.

Who Should Be Baptized?

The following announcement appeared in a denominational bulletin: "This afternoon there will be a meeting in the north and south ends of the church building. Babies will be baptized at both ends." While amusing, there's more wrong with this statement than mere grammar alone. Are babies really fit subjects for baptism?

Most of those who practice "infant baptism" actually do not baptize their infants. No, they usually sprinkle, pour, or dab small amounts of water on the infant. According to its very definition, to baptize means to immerse. As one notices the cases where folks were being baptized by first century teachers (including Jesus and John the immerser), they went to the water, then went down into the water and came up out of the same.

Infant baptism is objectionable for several reasons.

- C *First, infant baptism is an unauthorized change in God's pattern for baptism.* God tells us whom to baptize. He tells the conditions people must meet in order to be baptized, but babies do not fit. To baptize babies is to act by human authority without divine authority.
- C *Second, infant baptism leads people to believe they are saved when they are not.* God requires people to be baptized for the remission of sins when they are old enough to make their own decision about the matter. But many people have been baptized as babies. Then, when they are old enough to be responsible for their conduct so they should be baptized, they refuse because they believe they have already done so. But their infant baptism was not Scriptural. So the person goes through his whole life never having been Scripturally baptized, and therefore he never has received forgiveness of his sins!
- C *A final objection to infant baptism is that it is almost always done by sprinkling or pouring, not by immersion.* But the Bible says that baptism is a burial (Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12). A person must go down into the water and come up out of it (Acts 8:38,39; Mark 1:9,10). Bible baptism requires much water (John 3:23). Infant baptism does not fit God's pattern on any of these points. The evidence clearly shows that Bible baptism is an immersion, not a sprinkling or pouring.

There is no mention of infant baptism in the Bible. Where some may become confused on this is that in Acts 11:14; Acts 16:15, and 1 Corinthians 1:16 it is said that entire households were baptized. The assumption is then made that this must necessarily include infants. However, there are several things that preclude this conclusion.

- C The bible teaches, "*the soul that sinneth, it shall die*" (Ezekiel 18:20.) Matthew 18:3 states that we need to become as little children. If children are born with sin, then why would the Lord tell us to become such in order to enter into His kingdom?
- C Numerous passages teach that baptism is preceded by faith or reception of the message (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:41; 8:12). Infants are incapable of such faith or reception of the Word.
- C Acts 2:38 states that one must repent. Infants cannot do such.
- C Romans 10:10 and Acts 8:37 teach that one must confess faith in Jesus. Again an infant is incapable of speech.

So who should be baptized? The one who hears and acts on that hearing with belief. In their belief

they then repent of their sins, not anyone else's. They are capable of confessing Jesus and are then baptized (immersed) for the remission of their sins.

Is Denominational Baptism Valid?

Many, even in the Lord's church, believe and teach that if one is baptized for the remission of sins, we must accept their baptism.

C *Are they then willing to accept those from the Latter Day Saints denomination? If not why not? Here is what they believe and teach as stated in the foundational LDS doctrine given as their Fourth Article of Faith: "We believe that the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are: first, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; second, Repentance; third, Baptism by immersion **for the remission of sins**; fourth, Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost" (emp. JS) (Smith 1). Surely none would be so naive to accept a member of the LDS without being properly baptized.*

C *Would they accept one from the Seventh Day Adventist denomination? If not why not? Here is what they believe and practice concerning the mode of baptism.*

By baptism we confess our faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and testify of our death to sin and of our purpose to walk in newness of life. Thus we acknowledge Christ as Lord and Saviour, become His people, and are received as members by His church. Baptism is a symbol of our union with Christ, **the forgiveness of our sins**, and our reception of the Holy Spirit. It is by immersion in water and is contingent on an affirmation of faith in Jesus and evidence of repentance of sin. It follows instruction in the Holy Scriptures and acceptance of their teachings (Rom. 6:1-6; Col. 2:12, 13; Acts 16:30-33; 22:16; 2:38; Matt. 28:19, 20). (*What... 1*)

C *What about baptism in the Christian Church denomination? I believe we all realize that most of the Christian Church denomination also baptize for the remission of sins. Now for some reason many of our brethren will accept this denomination's baptism where they outright reject the others just mentioned. My question to them is why? I will state four reasons why one brother gave he believed it (Christian Church denomination baptism) to be invalid just as I do.*

1. First, they (as unbelievers, thus not in fellowship with God) have no authority to take his covenant into their mouths and try to teach others (Psalm 50:16).
2. The baptism they practice is not into the one body...they are a different body (1 Corinthians 12:13).
3. They have no authority to invoke the name (or authority) of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:18,19; Mark 16:15,16; Colossians 3:16).
4. According to Acts 8:12, the gospel presentation consists of at least these points: "*But when they believed Philip preaching good tidings* [#1-the gospel:

death, burial, and resurrection] *concerning the kingdom of God* [#2-the church] *and the name of Jesus Christ* [#3-the name Christian ONLY and what it means], *they were baptized* [#4-the plan of salvation unto remission of sins], *both men and women*" (Haley).

The christian church denomination does not teach the truth regarding these subjects.

As has been said correctly by so many: "YOU CANNOT BE TAUGHT WRONG CONCERNING SALVATION, THE UNIQUENESS OF THE ONE CHURCH AND THE ESSENTIALITY OF BAPTISM AND BE BAPTIZED CORRECTLY!" Another fine brother says it this way. "Is denominational baptism valid? Can one hear, believe, obey and be added to that which is without God and Christ, that which is evil, that which is corrupted, tainted, that which is a lie and be added to the one true church? I do not believe it for a moment. If God did take one from a denomination and add him to the Lord's church (and He does not) then God would be doing that without that persons knowledge or consent" (Yeager).

Even though many of our "sound" brethren believe and teach that there are not "Christians" in denominations (and there are not), they still teach that some denominational baptism is valid. Brethren we cannot have it both ways! We cannot sneak into the Lord's church through a denomination!

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THE CHURCH

Tom Bright, Sr.

**About the author...**

Tom and his wife of 37 years, Jane, have two children, Tom Bright, Jr. of Olathe and Michelle Lyons of Muskogee, Oklahoma. Tom is a graduate of the Elk City School of Preaching in Elk City, Oklahoma. He has done local work in Oklahoma, Texas, Louisiana and Missouri. He has conducted meetings in 9 states and has participated in lectureships in 8 states. Tom has been an instructor in the Elk City School of Preaching, Owasso School of Preaching and Houston College of the Bible. He is a past director of the West Plains School of Biblical Studies. He has done radio work in Oklahoma, Texas and Missouri. He debated Richard Jackson of the United Pentecostal Church in 1994 on the subject of miracles and Bob Ross of the Baptist Church in 1995 on the subject of Mechanical Instruments of Music in Worship. He and his wife now live in Dyersburg, Tennessee where he preaches and is director of the Online Academy of Biblical Studies.

Introduction

Anytime the word “church” is mentioned in a group of people, it is distinctly possible there will be as many different ideas about “Church” as there are people. Clearly the world does not have a proper understanding of the word “Church.” In fact, many people look upon the “Church” as nothing more than a social club, a hobby, a place to go when there is nowhere else to go, or an institution that exists merely for the purpose of helping those who will not work.

However, the Bible nowhere gives this picture of the Church. The truth is, inspiration presents the Church as being of Divine origin. The Bible teaches the Church has a heavenly mission and a righteous purpose. Paul makes a sobering statement in Ephesians 3:20-21 when he wrote, *“Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.”* Glory is directed toward the Great I Am *“in the Church by Christ Jesus.”* Does Deity have the same idea of the “Church” as man does? Certainly not!

Undoubtedly Paul’s thoughts were not based upon how historians see the “Church,” as theologians view it, modernists consider it, agnosticism sees it, denominationalism depicts it, or liberalism thinks of it. There is no doubt, inspiration’s view of the Church does not agree with the world’s concept. God’s view of it is distinctly different than man’s idea. They are as far removed for each other as the east is from the west.

The Church Is The “Called Out”

Our Lord first used the word “Church” in response to Peter’s confession that He was the Christ. He said, *“Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”* (Matthew 16:17-18). This word is found an additional one hundred and fourteen times in the New Testament. Interestingly enough, not one time is it ever used in the sense of a hobby, a social club, an oasis of recreation or

“just some place to go.”

The word translated “Church” denotes the idea of “called out.” The Church is comprised of those who have been “called out” of the world by the gospel. The apostle Paul wrote, *“Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father”* (Galatians 1:4). Peter adds, *“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light”* (1 Peter 2:9). The Lord informed Paul that his mission was *“To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me”* (Acts 26:18).

However, even though we are called out of this present evil world, we are not left in “limbo.” We are called unto a specific life. In Ephesians 4:1, we read *“I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.”* The words here translated “vocation” and “were called” are from the same root word. Thus, we are to walk worthy (in a manner which befits) of that “calling.” This calling is by the gospel (2 Thessalonians 2:14), and we are called into His kingdom and glory (1 Thessalonians 2:12).

It is a “holy calling” (2 Timothy 1:9; 1 Corinthians 1:2), by which He calls us into fellowship with Him (1 Corinthians 1:9). We are called into the grace of Christ (Galatians 1:6), unto liberty (Galatians 5:13), in one hope (Ephesians 4:4), in one body (Col. 3:15), unto holiness (1 Thessalonians 4:7; 1 Peter 1:15-16), a “new man” (Colossians 3:10; Ephesians 4:24), and purity (1 Timothy 5:22; 2 Timothy 2:22). This is what Paul was alluding to when he wrote, *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new”* (2 Corinthians 5:17).

When one walks worthy of that Divine calling, he presents to the world *“a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish”* (Ephesians 5:27). This, then, is the “called out” feature of the Church.

The Church Is the Body of Christ

Inspired men taught that the Church was the ‘body of Christ.’ Paul wrote, *“And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all”* (Ephesians 1:22-23). In very clear and strong terms, Paul tells us the “the church...is his body.” For one to deny this simple truth is to deny a clear passage of Scripture. This body is spiritual in nature, with Christ as its head.

Paul adds in Colossians 1:24, *“Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church.”* If we link this to the apostle’s statement in Colossians 1:18, there can be no doubt—the Church is His body. Here Paul wrote, *“And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.”*

The Church is the only institution through which God receives glory. Nothing man-made can attain to its glory, majesty, or pre-eminence.

The Church Is Blood-bought

The purchase price of the New Testament Church was the blood of Christ. In Acts 20:28, Paul told the Ephesian elders, *"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."* Never before this time or after this time has there ever been such an instance when the cost was so high!

It is amazing some view this blood-bought institution with such indifference. Anything which cost the only begotten Son of God His blood should be treated with respect and viewed with reverence and awe. No other institution, Divine or man-made, can make this claim. For instance, the 'home' is a Divine institution, but Christ did not give His blood to purchase the home. Likewise, civil government is of Divine origin, but it did not cost Christ His blood. From heaven's throne, the Great I AM views the Church as something special and precious. Woe to the man who views the blood-bought body of Christ as trivial, unimportant, and non-essential.

The Church is blood-bought in the sense it is comprised of people who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ. Peter wrote, *"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot"* (1 Peter 1:18-19). When one connects this passage with Romans 5:9, the results are impressive. Here, Paul wrote *"Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him."* Notice that 'redemption' and 'justification' are by the blood of Christ.

Let us now link these two passages to Acts 20:28 in which Paul said, *"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."* Herein is revealed an important aspect of the Church many fail to understand. Notice the following: (1) The Church was purchased by Christ's blood, (2) We are redeemed and, (3) justified by His blood. Is there any connection? Surely no one would argue that Christ purchased the Church with His blood, that He redeems and justifies man by that same blood, yet there is no connection at all!

Without doubt there is a connection in the three ideas just presented. When one is 'redeemed' by the blood of Christ, he is also 'justified' by His blood; when one is 'redeemed' and 'justified,' he is also 'purchased' by the precious blood of Christ. It is at that moment this person is added by the Lord to the Church (Acts 2:47). What is this 'purchase price' and the means by which we are 'redeemed' and 'justified'? The blood of Christ!

The Church Is the Bride of Christ

The apostle Paul clearly teaches this in 2 Corinthians 11:2. He writes, *"For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ."* No one can deny the clear implications of this passage.

This same writer further adds to this thought. In writing to the Roman Christians relative to the fact they were not under the law (see Romans 7:1-3), he made this astounding statement, *"Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto*

God” (Romans 7:4). Notice Paul mentions the idea of bringing “forth fruit unto God.” Can any who are not ‘married’ to Christ bring forth the fruit here mentioned? Surely not!

God intended for marriage to be the closest relationship man and woman would enjoy in this life. He said in the long ago, *“and they shall be one flesh”* (Genesis 2:24; Ephesians 5:31). It is only when man recognizes God’s plan, design, and purpose for marriage, can he truly appreciate “the bride of Christ.”

The Church Is the Family of God

In Ephesians 2:19, Paul wrote *“Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God.”* The ‘household of God’ clearly shows the Church is God’s family (see also Ephesians 2:19). Even though the Father loves all men, it is the Church that sustains a “family” relationship to Him.

He is the ‘Father’ (2 Corinthians 6:17-18) of those who comprise the Church. They have been adopted (Galatians 4:4-7); thus they are His children (1 John 3:1), and they are heirs (Romans 8:17; Galatians 3:29; 4:7; Titus 3:7) of the promises He has given. Truly we join with John in his exclamation, *“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not”* (1 John 3:1).

No other institution can claim to be “The Family of God.” No wonder Paul wrote *“Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen”* (Ephesians 3:21).

The Church Is the Temple of God

Man has always erected magnificent edifices in honor of their deities. Although God instituted the Tabernacle, David wanted something greater (as man sees it) than a “tent.” Solomon, David’s son, erected a majestic structure that was truly an elegant edifice.

In the time of Christ, Herod had busied himself at least forty-six years (John 2:20) in the construction of an elaborate temple for the Jews. However, some forty years later, this magnificent structure was leveled by the Romans.

It seems that man does not understand these huge cathedrals and mosques do not impress the Father. On Mars hill in the city of Athens, the apostle Paul proclaimed the God which he served *“dwelleth not in temples made with hands”* (Acts 17:24). The very essence of Deity calls for something much more noble and grand than mere sticks and stones, mortar, timbers, jewels, or gold and silver.

He dwells in His temple, the Church. Paul said,

Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord (Ephesians 2:19-22).

In this context, Paul establishes that God reconciled both Jew and Gentile unto God in one body

(Ephesians 2:16). This body is the Church (Ephesians 1:22-23), of which there is only one (Ephesians 4:4). It is this one body which, composed of Jew and Gentile, “*groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord*” (Ephesians 3:21).

In 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, we find these words, “*Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.*” This should forever cause sensible men to stop and ponder the greatness of God’s scheme of redemption, which necessarily includes the Church. God had determined to offer man a way whereby he could be saved. When man reaches that justification through Christ by obedience to the Divine will, he is added to this Church, which is the temple of God.

Realizing the Church is the temple of God, we ask, as did Peter, “*what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness*” (2 Peter 3:11). The temple of God can be nothing less than pure and undefiled. Paul asked, “*And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.*” (2 Corinthians 6:16). Without doubt, God expects His temple, the Church, to be without “*spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish*” (Ephesians 5:27).

The Church and God’s Eternal Purpose

Paul wrote one of the most impressive statements ever penned about the Church. In Ephesians 3:10-11 we read, “*To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.*” Here, an inspired apostle clearly affirms the Church reveals God’s manifold wisdom and this was according to God’s eternal purpose in Christ Jesus. Thus, from the beginning, God determined that His great wisdom in saving man would be made known through the Church.

The Church is composed of all of the saved (Acts 2:47). Every single person who has been saved by the blood of Christ since the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) has been added to the Church by the Lord. There are no exceptions to this! Man does not vote to make his fellow man a member of the Church. Jesus adds to the Church those who obey from the heart that form of doctrine and is then made free from sin (Romans 6:17-18).

All people come to Him in exactly the same way. The richest man alive must come to Him in the same way the poorest man in the world comes to him, in obedience to the gospel of Christ (Romans 1:16). The greatest politician comes to God in the same manner as the lowliest of the low. God will accept the kings of the world, but they have no advantage over the pauper. Regardless of one’s background, he comes to the salvation that is in Christ exactly like everyone else. God plays no favorites in justifying man.

It is in this manner the Church reveals God’s eternal purpose in Christ. Whosoever will can come, but he must come upon those conditions God has set forth in the gospel of Christ. Regardless of whether one is rich or poor, black or white, red or yellow, educated or uneducated, king or pauper, high or low on the “social ladder,” employer or employee, each comes to God in precisely the same way!

This is how the Church reveals the “*manifold wisdom of God*” (Ephesians 3:10). No longer is acceptance with God conditioned on one being able to trace his lineage to Abraham. God no longer looks upon one’s ancestry, but upon the heart that is bowed in honor, adoration, reverence, awe, and humble obedience to the gospel of Christ.

In closing, we ask this very important question: Are you a member of the New Testament Church that is revealed upon the pages of inspiration? Are you satisfied with an attempt to “trace your church back” several generations? Why not simply go to the New Testament and do what first century Christians did that was acceptable to God. Why not simply teach what they taught with God’s approval, do what they did with God’s endorsement, and worship as they worshiped? If they did or taught something then with God’s approval, why can we not do the same thing?

What do you think of the Church? The importance of this question should never be underestimated.

DENOMINATIONALISM

Bob Patterson



About the author...

Bob Patterson was born in Austin, Texas and grew up in that city. He graduated from Sunset School of Preaching in 1977. He has served as an evangelist at various congregations in the state of Texas. Presently brother Patterson preaches for the Lee and Walnut congregation in Sapulpa, Oklahoma and also serves as one of the elders. He is the director of the annual North East Oklahoma Lectureship. He and his wife, Luanne (Tham), are the parents of two children and grandparents to four grandchildren.

Introduction

In our nation alone, there has been the multiplying of religious institutions to the point that we can find some four hundred different religious bodies. Each of these bodies exists separately with certain distinctions about each one that sets them apart from the others. Usually, they have different names, characterized by different doctrines and practices, and governed by varying governmental systems, yet each of them claim to be faithfully following Jesus Christ. Amid all of this religious confusion, it becomes all the more complicated because too many are not willing to investigate the matter of denominationalism. Simply stated, they are satisfied with what exists!

In view of this we must ask how all of this religious division compares with what is set forth in the New Testament. Does the Lord's will condone or condemn denominationalism? To properly deal with this question it can only be answered properly and fairly by asking the question "*What saith the scripture*" (Romans 4:3; 11:2; Galatians 4:30).

Some Attitudes Toward Denominationalism

As one might think, the attitude of people toward denominationalism varies. Certainly those who compose the various denominational bodies are unconcerned about divided state of what is termed "Christendom." They are content and they really do not want to compare denominationalism with the scriptures.

On the other hand, there are others who are indeed concerned about the division that exists. Many efforts and suggestions have been implemented in order to set forth an "ecumenicism" to exist in order to do away with the strife and contention that denominationalism has fostered with all the various doctrines and creeds of men. The general thought is that there is no room in religion for that kind of "exclusiveness!"

There are also those honest and sincere people who believe that denominationalism is sinful. Since there is no divine authority in Scripture for such confusion, division and frustration, they view denominationalism as one of the greatest hindrances to the real cause of Jesus Christ.

What do we find in the Word of God? Jesus prayed,

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their

word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one is us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me (John 17:20-21).

The Lord prayed that all men who would ever believe in Him (and that would be through the words of the apostles) would be “one”. Jesus also said, *“I and the Father are one”* (John 10:30). Again, *“Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me...”* (John 14:11). And again, *“He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father’s which sent me”* (John 14:24). All of these statements compound the emphasis on the oneness of the Father and Son. This relationship of the Father and Son is shown to be a complete unity and perfect oneness. They are in agreement as to teaching (or doctrine), practice, plan, intent, and purpose. There is not even the slightest indication whatsoever of there being any conflict, contradiction, or variance between them. All of this is presented by Jesus as the standard of unity for all who would be His disciples.

A Conflict Between Unity And Denominationalism

The question must be asked, “Is this unity just mentioned characteristic of the system of denominationalism?” Really, to ask is to answer as far as the scriptures are concerned. Certainly it is not! When we think of denominations, they exist separate and apart, even contradicting each other, with many differences in doctrine, practice, and purpose. No one can be so naive as to think that this picture promotes the will of God and unites people in truth! Thus, denominationalism exists in direct opposition to the prayer and teaching of Jesus regarding the matter of unity. How can anyone truly respect the Lord’s prayer for unity and at the same time be sympathetic toward denominationalism? Obviously, one or the other must be rejected, because it is impossible to accept both.

This is enough to establish the conflict between the unity of believers that our Lord prayed for and denominationalism. To further establish what our attitude ought to be toward denominationalism, let’s notice a couple of more passages that are relevant to our study. The apostle Paul makes the appeal, *“Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment”* (1 Corinthians 1:10). Also, *“Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded toward one another according to Christ Jesus: That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (Romans 15:5-6). The contrast between the requirement of these inspired statements and the condition of denominationalism is very apparent. There is denominationalism with hundreds of divisions, speaking different things, with different standards, with different judgments, attempting to glorify God in many ways. Yet the Scriptures teach one body, with the same message, the same standard, glorifying God the way that He sets forth in His word. Yes, my friends, there is a conflict between the unity set forth in the Scriptures and denominationalism.

The New Testament Church, The One Body

Notice the use of the word “church” in the New Testament. It is used to refer to all who are Christians, or in a universal sense, in such passages as Matthew 16:18 or Ephesians 5:23. It is used

in speaking about local congregations of the Lord's people (Romans 16:16; 2 Corinthians 1:1). It is used when speaking of the saints in assembly (1 Corinthians 11:18). However, it is never used in reference to a denomination. The obvious reasons why the word "church" cannot refer to a denomination is because no denomination claims to be all the followers of Christ, yet the church consists of all of them; also, no denomination is simply a local congregation or saints in assembly! Thus, we see that a denomination does not fit in any sense of Biblical usage and cannot be scripturally called the church of the New Testament.

It is readily admitted that denominationalism represents a multiplicity of different religious bodies, yet they insist that they exist with divine approval based on the fact that they all recognize Jesus Christ as the one head. When we turn to the scriptures, it must be agreed that Jesus is *"the head of the church"* (Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 1:18). The scriptures also teach there is but *"one body"* (Ephesians 4:4; 1 Corinthians 12:12,20). For one to insist that Christ is the head of more than one body, one would also have to insist that Christ has more than one bride since the church is the bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:24-25,33). It is simply amazing, that those who support denominationalism recognize the need of Scripture to recognize Christ as the head of the church, and yet will contend for many brides and many bodies absent of any Biblical authority! We cannot have unity without having Biblical authority for what we say, do, and believe (1 Peter 4:11; Colossians 3:17; Matthew 28:18-20). God has spoken (Hebrews 1:1-2), and when we step outside of His authority and begin to "add to" and "take away from" God's Word it will always result in division and in that which God cannot bless (Revelation 22:18-19; Galatians 1:6-9; Matthew 15:13).

The early Christians, members of the church that belonged to Christ, were one body. Paul instructed that Christ is *"the head over all things to the church, which is his body"* (Ephesians 1:22-23), and that *"There is one body..."* (Ephesians 4:4)! There is no more than that *"one body"* that is approved by God. Those in that *"one body"* taught, believed, and practiced the same religion. There is no denomination that can claim that those Christians were a part of their sectarian group. They were not Catholic nor Protestant, but Christian (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16). They did not wear any human names and they did not follow human traditions and creeds (Matthew 15:9). They knew that there could be no compromise with error and they would not give place to it *"no, not for an hour"* (Galatians 2:5).

A Way, or Different Roads?

Many times denominationalism is presented in terms of all of us going to the same place, heaven, but we are just traveling different roads, or different denominations! Certainly, there are some places that can be reached by going any number of different ways. Is that true concerning heaven? The burden of proof rests upon those who contend that one can go to heaven any number of different ways. The Lord said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me"* (John 14:6). Jesus did not say that He is *"A way among many ways, and that all ways lead to heaven,"* and that man is left to choose which way he wants to go! We also know that Christ is not divided (1 Corinthians 1:10), and that *"strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be which find it"* (Matthew 7:14). Immediately we see that one insurmountable problem that the defender of denominationalism faces is Biblical support for their idea that there are many ways which lead to heaven, and that man can simply take his choice. Such an idea did not

come from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let's ask another question: "Does it make a difference what one believes and practices?" We are told by some that it does not make any difference, just as long as you are honest and sincere in what you believe and practice. When this view is put to the test, even the most sincere denominationalists will, in all honesty, have to shy away from it. Jacob honestly and sincerely thought that Joseph was dead, but it wasn't so (Genesis 37,45). Saul of Tarsus was honest and sincere in his persecution of the Lord by his persecution of the church (Acts 9:1-2; 22:1-5; 26:9-11; 23:1). In like manner, Buddhists, and Mohammedans, etc., are honest and sincere in their persecution of the Lord by their persecution of the church! Doesn't it matter that they reject Christ altogether? Thus, it must be admitted that honesty and sincerity alone doesn't account for sufficiency in any realm of life. While it is necessary to be honest and sincere, one must also be right before God. What one believes and practices does make a difference. Jesus states, *"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven"* (Matthew 7:21).

We are constantly being told by our denominational friends that we believe in the same God, we are following the same Bible, but we just do not see it (understand it) the same! However, Jesus said, *"If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine"* (John 7:17), and *"ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"* (John 8:32). Notice the unity which is to exist among believers in the appeal made by Paul,

Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there is no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment (1 Corinthians 1:10)

Let us also keep in mind that

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Based upon the fact that the Bible is God breathed: we can know the truth, the truth provides man with what is necessary for spiritual completeness, and it is possible for Christians to speak the same things, have the same mind and judgment, and there be no divisions among them! To say other than that in contention and defense of denominationalism would be to place the blame on God for the confusion and division which exists. Brethren and friends, God is not the author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33). Could the confusion and division which exist have anything to do with the fact that many view the scriptures through the blinders of denominational creeds, manuals, catechisms, disciplines, prayer books, confessionals, councils, clergymen, and etc.? Could it be because many are not willing to look at it at all, but would rather go by their own subjective feelings? Are there some who *"have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God"* (Romans 19:2-3)? Tragically, people allow their "denominational ties" and "felt needs" determine what they believe and practice to the extent that

when there is a conflict the Word of God is rejected!

What Is Needed?

There can be no doubt that denominationalism is a transgression of the will of God, and that's exactly how John defines sin in 1 John 3:4. The only remedy for this problem is to "*speak as the oracles of God*" (1 Peter 4:11). We are not talking about "agreeing to disagree." The goal is not to merely have "union." Our Lord prayed for "oneness" among believers, a "unity" based upon obedience to the Word of God (John 17:20-23). After all, "*Can two walk together, except they be agreed*" (Amos 3:3)?

What is needed is the divine solution to the problem. Romans 15:5 says, "*Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus.*" Notice, everything must be according to Christ! An all encompassing verse tells us, "*And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of (by the authority of, BP) the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him*" (Colossians 3:17). Thus, there must be Scripture for what we say, do, practice, and uphold in religious matters. May our question always be, "*What saith the scripture*" (Romans 4:3, 11:2; Galatians 4:30).

There Is No Fellowship with Denominations

Only when and if people will give up all authorities except Christ and "*Hear ye him*" (Matthew 17:5), then will the confusion and division of denominationalism cease. Only then will people be able to march under the banner of the cross, be united in the cause of Christ, and be lead to victory by Jesus "*the captain of their salvation*" (Hebrews 2:10).

However, we cannot fellowship denominations since they are not of God! We are instructed to "*have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them*" (Ephesians 5:11). Again, we are told

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. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds (2 John 9-11).

We should take note that the "*unfruitful works of darkness*" are off limits to the faithful child of God, and that we cannot bid "*God speed*" to those that "*abide not in the doctrine of Christ.*" Our involvement will be to reprove and expose the doctrines and commandments of men in their attempts to uphold and set forth denominationalism. Christ still says, "*He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad*" (Matthew 12:30).

PRAYER

Ron Cosby

*About the author...*

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“Pray without ceasing”; “continue in prayer”; “continuing instant in prayer”; “in everything by prayer, let your request be made known unto God”; “pray always, pray and not faint”; “men should pray everywhere”; “praying always, with all prayer and supplication.”

John boldly declares 1) God hears and 2) God grants us our petitions:

And this is the boldness which we have toward him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us: and if we know that he heareth us whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions which we have asked of him (1 John 5:14-15).

Young’s Literal Translation says,

And this is the boldness that we have toward Him, that if anything we may ask according to his will, He doth hear us, and if we have known that He doth hear us, whatever we may ask, we have known that we have the requests that we have requested from Him (1 John 5:14-15)

With this passage, God has dealt with the main issue concerning prayer. He will hear, and He will answer. These thoughts and other issues are the focus of our study on the subject of prayer.

How Do We Know That God Answers Prayer?

God said He would (1 John 5:14-15). God exclaims He has the ability to answer even before we ask. “[B]efore they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear” (Isaiah 65:24). We are told that God set in motion the answer to Habakkuk’s prayer over a century before he asked (Habakkuk 1:1-5; 2 Kings 20:17). Though some would say that God did not answer David when he prayed to build a house for God, God did exceedingly, abundantly above all that David requested. The church is God’s house that was built through David. God set in motion its construction centuries before David prayed. Before the request left the lips of the faithful, God answered. Contrast this divinely revealed information to the baseless concepts of the religious world. We are told that, we

know God answers prayer because we get what we ask for (Ted Cherry, Ladies in Mustang, OK, religious world). Neither receiving or failing to receive what we ask for is evidence or proof that God answers prayer.

Does God hear the prayer of sinners? Since God is omniscient, He, without doubt, *hears* the prayers of all men. However, when people ask this question, they are not wanting to know if God hears, but whether or not He will answer. Thus, the question actually is, “Does God *answer* everyone’s prayer?” Prayer is a privilege which is reserved only for the child of God. God hears the righteous. *“For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil”* (1 Peter 3:12). John gives us the conditions God requires for answered prayer. We must *“keep his commandments”* and *“do those things that are pleasing in his sight”* (1 John 3:22). A third condition for answered prayer is the necessity of asking according to the will of God. Hear John again,

And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him (1 John 5:14-15).

Neglect any one of these prerequisites (and others not mentioned) and God will not answer. Brethren, the sinner neglects all of them. Prayer is not a privilege for sinners. *“Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth”* (John 9:31). Some object, saying, “Jesus did not say this. The blind man said it and he is not inspired.” True, but the blind man was speaking truths revealed by inspired men, written in the Old Testament. Solomon, certainly inspired of God, said, *“He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination”* (Proverbs 28:9). Since the cross, until one is baptized into Christ, he is a servant of sin (Romans 6:16-18). Servants of sin are without the blessing of addressing the heavenly Father! Paul reiterates this when he says that *“all spiritual blessings are in Christ”* (Ephesians 1:3). The servant of sin is not in Christ; therefore, he cannot enjoy the spiritual blessing of calling upon the God of heaven in prayer. Furthermore, what would a non-Christian pray for? Shall he pray for a good night’s rest? How can he enjoy rest outside of the spiritual sphere of salvation? He cannot. Shall the sinner pray for forgiveness? Such can only be enjoyed in Christ (Ephesians 1:3). Shall he pray for guidance to heaven? God has already provided (Romans 8:34; Ephesians 3:1-13). Shall he pray for a pure heart? God says we purify our souls through obedience to the truth (1 Peter 1:22). Shall he pray that God send a preacher? God has already done so (Matthew 28:18-20). So we ask, *“What shall the non-Christian pray for?”*

How Does God Answer Prayer?

“I don’t know!” (Franklin Camp in a sermon delivered in Newton, KS). Some things belong to God (Deuteronomy 29:29). Multitudes restrict God’s power, teaching that the answering of prayer must come through a direct operation upon men; however, the Lord need not resort to the supernatural. He has the ability to work through natural means.

Through Prayer, We Have an Enabling Power

A variety of religious leaders teach this erroneous doctrine. One has said, “[T]hrough the agency of the Holy Spirit, [God] bestows enabling grace sufficient for all that is required of us” (Bounds, 61). Another says it thus,

The gift of the Spirit, promised by Christ (John 14:16ff), has raised prayer to its highest power by securing for it a divine cooperation (Romans 8:15, 26; Galatians 4:6). Thus Christian prayer in its full New Testament meaning is prayer addressed to God as Father, in the name of Christ as Mediator, and through the enabling grace of the indwelling Spirit. (Orr 8:719)

One adds, “This grace is furnished without measure, in answer to prayer. So that, while God commands, He, at the same time, stands pledged to give us all necessary strength of will and grace of soul to meet His demands.” If true, not one Christian would ever sin. (Bounds 61)

In the 1998 Lockwood - Deaver Debate on the operation of the Spirit in the lives of faithful children of God, Mac Deaver presented that God gives an enabling power through the Holy Spirit. He taught that the Christian cannot fulfill the fruit of the Spirit without this enabling grace. However, we note ...

One of the characteristics of the fruit of the Spirit is patience. If we can find one saint who manifested patience without having the personal indwelling of deity, Mac’s error is refuted. Job is one who maintained patience in the face of hardship. He is held up as the example of patience for the Christian; yet, according to Mac’s doctrine, he did not possess the Spirit (John 7:39). Since Job did not need the Spirit to enable him to attain the patience required of God, then neither do others.

One of the characteristics of the fruit of the Spirit is self control. This control extends into the area of marriage. God demands and fully expects both Christian and non-Christian to remain sexually faithful to their spouses. Now, if Mac is correct when he espouses that we cannot possess self control to the degree necessary to live godly without the personal indwelling of deity, then God has commanded man to do what He knew was morally impossible. (Orr 8:719)

We need to call your attention to two other issues about prayer raised in the article by James Orr quoted above. When the writer says that the gift of the Spirit has “raised prayer to its highest power,” he is implying that we now have something that God’s children of old did not have. This language indicates that the saints of old like Moses and Daniel *lacked* something in prayer. It indicates that the Father could not do in prayer what the Spirit now does. Another issue presented from his article is the use of Romans 8:26 as a proof text of the intercession of the Holy Spirit. Romans 8:33 clearly states that Jesus is the divine intercessor. Thus, having the third person of the Godhead do the same action as the second person of the Godhead, as the writer asserts, implies one or the other could not accomplish intercession alone. This dual divine intercession violates the law of parsimony. Actually, the intercessor of verse 26 is the human spirit (cf verses 18-26) and the

intercessor of verses 27 and 33 is Christ. Deity need not personally indwell to intercede.

May Women Pray?

Yes! Of course, women may pray. Women, in similar fashion as men, are encouraged and commanded to pray (1 Corinthians 11). Similarly, the question is asked, may women pray in the presence of men? Yes. A vast difference exists between a father listening to his daughter petition God at bedtime and a so-called female youth-minister-to-be leading a class of young men and women in a devotional prayer. Furthermore, God has not condemned the prayer of a wife for her husband or father or son. God has, however, forbidden women to lead men in prayer.

The allowance: The male is to lift up holy hands in all places (1 Timothy 2:11-12).

The prohibition: The female is forbidden to have authority over the man (1 Timothy 2:11-12).

The blessing enjoyed only by women: Men cannot bear children; women ought not lead men in prayer (1 Timothy 2:15).

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THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Jay Yeager

About the author...

Jay left Wheeling Pittsburgh Steel in 1986 to go into preaching on a full time basis. He preached in Overbrook, Kansas from 1986 to 1991 when he began his labors with the church in Springfield, Ohio. Jay is married to a wonderful wife and helpmate, Kathy. They have three faithful children, Brian, Aaron and Cassandra and three beautiful grandchildren, Trevor, Taylor and Trey.

Introduction

My sincere thanks to the elders, deacons, preacher and members of the church of Christ which meets at 39th street in Independence, Missouri for the invitation to speak on the subject of "The Work of the Holy Spirit."

Further, I would be amiss not to offer my deepest appreciation for the tremendous effort on the part of Jack Williams and other faithful members in making these lessons available on the Internet. It is my fervent hope that those of you who benefit from their labor will be encouraged to make plans to attend the lectureship offered each year by this faithful congregation of God's people.

Now, to our subject. I doubt that few would argue that the Holy Spirit is the least understood (and most abused) member of the Godhead. And while it is certainly true that error abounds regarding the person of the Holy Spirit and His manner of operation, this lesson is not intended to address all the error being taught (other than the fact that when truth is presented error is automatically exposed), but rather an honest study of the Holy Spirit and His work in light of what the Bible teaches.

To accomplish that goal, the following will serve as an outline for our study together of the Holy Spirit:

- I. Who Is the Holy Spirit?
- II. What Role Does the Holy Spirit Play in God's Plan of Redemption?
- III. How Does The Holy Spirit Accomplish His Work Today?

I. Who Is the Holy Spirit?

(Much can be accomplished with a Biblical answer to this question.)

- A) The Holy Spirit is a personage (person), as distinct as God the Father and God the Son. Further, the Holy Spirit is masculine; *"Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He will not speak of himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will shew you things to come"* (John 16:13). Notice how that over and over again the personal pronoun he is used.
- B) The Holy Spirit is Deity; *"But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but*

unto God" (Acts 5:3-4). When Ananias lied to the Holy Spirit he was guilty of lying unto God. The Holy Spirit is God. As God, The Holy Spirit possesses every attitude of Deity. The Psalmist, in a few words, captures so much; *"Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hast formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God"* (Psalms 90:2).

- C) There is only one Holy Spirit; *"There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling"* (Ephesians 4:4).
- D) We frequently refer to the Holy Spirit as the third member of the Godhead. We do so for two reasons: 1) There is a Godhead which consists of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Acts 17:29; Romans 1:20). 2) Whenever the three members of the Godhead are mentioned in a single verse, the Holy Spirit is always mentioned third. *"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and the Holy Spirit"* (Matthew 28:19). And while each member of the Godhead possesses an individual identity, there is a harmony of thought, intent, and purpose that creates a perfect unity. *"There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit: and there three are one"* (1 John 5:7).

Now, what have we noticed thus far? 1) The Holy Spirit is a distinct individual. 2) The Holy Spirit is masculine. 3) The Holy Spirit is Deity. 4) There is only one Holy Spirit. 5) The Holy Spirit is the third member of the Godhead.

II. What Role Does the Holy Spirit Play in God's Plan of Redemption?

The Holy Spirit revealed the will and plan of God for man. The Holy Spirit inspired select men in the Old Testament: *"Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy spirit"* (2 Peter 1:20-21). The Holy Spirit revealed, among other things, the coming of the Messiah. A promise that fired the flames of hope in every generation of God's people. The promises of the coming Saviour were not limited to any single book, but rather a central theme that united every book from Genesis to Malachi.

The Old Testament faithful were offered small pieces of information at a time. The prophet Isaiah would speak of it like this; *"But the word of the Lord was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, there a little..."* (Isaiah 28:13). But they were far from discouraged, the prophets would study their own writings; *"Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you. Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ, which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow"* (1 Peter 1:10-11).

Now, I would not leave the impression that the Holy Spirit's revelation concerning Christ were either few, or insignificant. Just as a sample of evidence given to verify His identity, I offer the following:

- A) Concerning His birth, Jesus would be born of a woman (Genesis 3:15; Galatians 4:4), a virgin (Isaiah 7:14; Luke 1:26-35), in the city of Bethlehem (Micah 5:2).
- B) Christ would come from the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10; Hebrews 7:14), from the

- lineage of David (2 Samuel 7:12-13; 1 Chronicles 17:11-13; Luke 1:30-33).
- C) His nature would be both Divine (Isaiah 6:1; John 12:36-41; Isaiah 9:6-7; Matthew 1:18), and human (Deuteronomy 18:15-18; John 1:14; Philippians 2:6-11).
 - D) The mission of Christ was to preach the gospel of peace to the lost house of Israel (Isaiah 61:1-2; Luke 4:18-19; Matthew 10:6). A message that was fully intended to include the Gentiles (Isaiah 42:6; 49:6-7; 62:2; John 12:51-52; Acts 13:46-47; Ephesians 2:11-16).
 - E) The death of Christ was foretold with such detail. He would be betrayed by a friend (Psalms 41:9) for thirty pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:12; Matthew 26:14-16). No bone of Jesus would be broken (Psalms 34:20; John 19:32-34), but His hands, feet and side would be pierced (Psalms 22:16; Zechariah 12:10). Jesus would be numbered with the transgressors, but He would offer no defense in dying for our sins (Isaiah 53:1-12; Luke 23:8-9; John 19:9-11). He would cry "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Psalms 22:1; Matthew 27:46). Habakkuk 1:13; 2 Corinthians 5:21 offers some insight into why.
Beloved, do you know who penned Psalms 16:10; 22:1; 18; Psalms 34:20; 41:9? A shepherd boy who became a king, a thousand years before the event, before crucifixion was ever practiced as a means of capital punishment. Why did the Holy Spirit speak these words by the mouth of David (2 Samuel 23:2; Acts 1:16)? I know why! So that you and I can know without a shadow of a doubt that Jesus Christ is the true Messiah!!!
 - F) The resurrection, the grave, could offer no defeat. Jesus would come forth triumphant over death (Psalms 16:10; Acts 2:27; Revelation 1:18). The significance of the resurrection cannot be overstated: 1) Jesus was declared to be the Son of God by the resurrection (Romans 1:4). 2) There is the assurance of a judgement day by the resurrection (Acts 17:30-31). 3) We are begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection (1 Peter 1:3). 4) Jesus was raised from the dead to sit on David's throne (Acts 2:30).
 - G) The kingdom of Christ; the holy Spirit revealed when the kingdom would be established (Daniel 2:36-45; Matthew 3:2; 4:17). The kingdom would not be a earthly or material kingdom, but a spiritual kingdom given to Christ when He ascended to the Father (Acts 1:9-11; Daniel 7:13-14). Jesus would sit on the throne of David at the right hand of the Father, in heave, until time was more (Psalms 89:35-37; 1 Corinthians 15:24-26).

The Holy Spirit inspired select men in the first century. Connect the following verses together:

- C *"But unto us God revealed them through the Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. for who among men knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man, which is in him? even so the things of God none knoweth, save the Spirit of God". ... "Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth; combining spiritual words with spiritual things" (1 Corinthians 2:10-13) [A.S.V. 1901].*
- C *"Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He will not speak of himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak and He*

will shew you things to come” (John 16:13).

- ℄ *“How by revelation He made know unto me the mystery; as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ” (Ephesians 3:3-4).*

Now, what do those versus collectively teach? 1) The Holy Spirit revealed the mind of God unto select men in the first century. 2) The Holy Spirit revealed every bit of truth that God wanted to reveal. 3) We can (and must if we hope to spend eternity in heaven) read and understand God’s revealed will for man.

May I stop and emphasize that point for a moment. while it is true that in Old Testament God made it clear that heaven’s revelation had not been completely revealed (Deuteronomy 18:15-18) and that the Old Testament was a temporary Law that would be removed and replaced (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:6-13). Not because the Law was imperfect, but because man was (Psalms 19:7; Hebrews 7:19). such is not the case in the New Testament. There is a finality connected to the New Testament that absolutely denies any type of alteration (Galatians 1:8-9; 2 John 9-11; Revelation 22:18-19). Beloved, the Bible is the final and complete revelation of God to man, and is fully sufficient to meet man’s every need.

- ℄ *“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).*

- ℄ *“According as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and Godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue” (2 Peter 1:3).*

How important is the Spirit’s revelation? Friends, without it we would be utterly lost, for the Bible addresses those things which are beyond our physical senses (II Corinthians 4:18). All that we know about God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the soul of a man, heaven, hell, Hades, salvation, and so on, we learn from the scriptures inspired by the Holy Spirit.

III. How Does the Holy Spirit Accomplish His Work Today?

The Holy Spirit does not directly inspire men today, though I assume all of us would recognize how needful that was in the first century, in absence of the written word (Mark 16:20). But that none could (if honest) fail to understand the Holy Spirit made it clear that direct inspiration would end with the completed written word (1 Corinthians 13:8-13; Ephesians 4:8-13).

Does the Holy Spirit impact our lives today? Absolutely! Not through inspired men, but through an inspired book. The Bible is a spirit-filled message. The scriptures learned and obeyed can bring is from the depths of despair to the heights of joy. The Holy Spirit convicts, converts and conforms only by means of the written word.

- A) The Holy Spirit convicts the lost of sin (Ecclesiastes 7:20; Romans 3:23), not to crush but to inform souls of their spiritual state, in sin and separated from God (Isaiah 59:1-2; Ephesians 2:1; Romans 6:23).
- B) The Holy Spirit converts, but He does not convert one person one way and another person a different way. What God requires of one He requires of all (Acts 10:34-35). The Holy Spirit converts by means of the gospel of Christ (2 Thessalonians 2:14). All

should recognize that obvious truth, for the Holy Spirit came to glorify the Son (John 16:14). He does so by pointing men to Jesus Christ as the Saviour of the world (1 John 4:14). More, the Spirit makes it clear that salvation is nowhere else (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). Jesus is the ultimate demonstration of God's love for the souls of men (Romans 5:6-8). The Holy Spirit provides the conditions of reconciliation (John 8:24; Luke 13:3; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; 8:12; 35-39; 18:8; Romans 6:3-5; 10:9-10) that will set men free from sin and death (John 8:32). How does the Holy Spirit convict and convert? Only through means of the written word (Romans 1:16; James 1:21; 1 Peter 1:22-23).

- C) The Holy Spirit conforms us to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29) by giving us a standard of morality to live by (Romans 12:1-2; Titus 2:12-14; 1 Peter 1:16). Thankfully you can still hear the word "NO" in the church (1 Timothy 3:15). He comforts us by revealing that failure to live sin free does not mean rejection. Forgiveness is ever available for a child of God (Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:7-10; 2:1-2). He strengthens by giving us the whole armour of God that we can stand against the foes of Christianity (Ephesians 6:10-17). The Spirit encourages every Christian to live confident of heaven (1 John 5:13), by providing the keys to successful Christianity (2 Peter 1:5-11). The Holy Spirit will lead us from here to eternity through the written word of God which is a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path (Psalms 119:105). A-men

MIRACLES

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About the author...

Robert and his wife Irene have 2 children and 4 grandchildren. In August of 2000 Robert began his 27th year of labor with the church in Ripley, Tennessee. He preaches in numerous gospel meetings and lectureships each year. He has written numerous books and tracts.

Introduction

True Bible miracles versus pseudo miracles of current charismatics will be the focal emphasis of this study. It will be a study between the real and counterfeit, between the true and false, between real miracles workers and pseudo claimants to such powers, wonders and signs today, between those who DID and those today who must just TALK and between God's approval of the real and His rejection of the pseudo, the fake, the pretense.

Biblical miracles, in both testaments, are readily accepted and defended. Modern pretenders and their pompous claims for current signs, wonders and mighty miracles are rejected in totality, PERIOD! This study is needed because of massive misconceptions relative to miracles which permeate the current religious climate.

Miracles Misunderstood

Many consider a baby's birth a miracle. Jesus' birth was miraculous as per Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1,2 and Luke 1,2. But the births of James, Joses, Judas, Simon, His brothers and His sisters to Joseph and Mary were non-miraculous. Budding trees and blooming flowers in the spring are not miracles. Last minute wins in sports are often called miraculous. Was it miraculous that the losing team lost a heart-breaker the final play of the game? A man walks away from a fiery automobile crash uninjured, unscathed. He and his family call it a miracle. But what about the family of five in the other car who were killed? Were these miraculous fatalities? Surely, something is wrong with our superficial assessments of the foregoing. I write this on July 3, 2000. There will be all kinds of fireworks tomorrow. They will be spectacular but not supernatural.

In 1970, my father suffered a serious heart attack. I flew from Memphis, Tennessee, to Lansing, Michigan, to be by his side for the critical period. As he began to make progress, his cardiologist told my mother, "It is a miracle your husband is still alive." She corrected him by saying, "We believe our prayers have been heard for him but it is NOT a miracle." She knew more about miracles than the attending physician did. He was still hospitalized, under oxygen, very weak and faced an extended convalescent period. He never fully recovered and died with congestive heart failure in 1971.

Several years ago, I visited an elderly Christian lady who was critically ill. Her family, members

of the church, told me it was a miracle she was still alive. Her son, a deacon and her grandson, her attending physician, were both long time members of the church. They affirmed the miraculous was indeed present. I preached her funeral later that very week! All the foregoing were not modern day miracles, regardless of claims to the contrary.

Miracles Defined

Biblical miracles were above and beyond natural law. They constituted God's stepping into the picture and performing with power and proficiency what natural law would not and could not produce. Without exception, they were always provisional or temporary. They were always performed by Deity directly or indirectly by heavenly appointed agents on earth such as prophets, apostles, or those upon whom apostolic hand had been imparted. Without exception, they were performed by God's clearly revealed authority. LYING signs, wonders and trumped-up miracles do not come under the scope of the foregoing declarations. See 2 Thessalonians 2:8,9 and Revelation 13:11-15. Look at the mass of trumped-up miracles claimed in the Roman Catholic beatification and canonization of saints.

Miracles Depicted

Creation in Genesis 1,2 was miraculous. God spoke and results were forthcoming promptly. The Psalmist captures the miracles of might during those six days (not long eons of time) by stating, *"By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth...For he spake and it was done; he commanded and it stood fast"* (Psalm 33:6,9). The parting of the Red Sea and the Jordan River under Moses, Joshua, Elijah and Elisha respectively, was miraculous. Some years back a man in Mississippi made headlines by announcing that he would walk the waters of Ross Barnett Reservoir, near Jackson, at a stated time. He wiggled out of performances by claiming he was shot in the leg by enemy assailants shortly before his water walk was to transpire! Surely, a water walker should be able to dodge bullets or quickly heal himself in time to make good a promise, a promise that fell to the ground, or into the water, void of fulfillment! I was living in Mississippi at the time and I exposed him in a paid article in a prominent Mississippi newspaper. Manna six days a week and water from riven rocks in the wilderness were supernatural. Lengthening the day for Joshua in a crucial battle was miraculous. A guide I once had in a Bible Land visit said he considered this one of the greatest of all Bible miracles. Naaman's cleansing was supernatural. So were resurrections by Elijah and Elisha in 1 Kings 17 and 2 Kings 4. Predictive prophecies of the Old Testament were miraculous. It is claimed there are some 333 just about the coming Christ.

The virgin conception and later His birth were miraculous occurrences. Such fulfilled for the FIRST and ONLY time Isaiah 7:14. Such was straight-line prophecy. His ministry was filled with worthy wonders, stupendous signs and mighty miracles. Nicodemus was right on target in declaring, *"...no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him"* (John 3:2).

The apostolic ministry was characterized by mighty miracles performed and by wonderful works wrought extending fullness of sustaining proof they were God's mouthpieces. Miracles were imperative in both the revelation of truth and its ONCE confirmed needs no continuing confirmation

as Pat Boone and other charismatic contenders presently plead.

The Miracles of Jesus in Particular

They eloquently and excellently exhibited His power in ACTION—not in just a TALK game. Modern pretenders TALK incessantly about miracles. They NEVER demonstrate. Talk is cheap; action would prove their verbal boasts!

His miracles exhibited power over disease, sickness, the elements, demons and death. He healed a leper and made Peter's mother-in-law well in Mark 1. He stilled a severe storm at sea in Matthew 8 and walked on that same sea later in Matthew 14, Mark 6 and John 6. He was NOT walking along the shore line as malicious modernism absurdly advocates. He made a lifelong man of blindness to see in John 9. He cast out a legion of demons in Matthew 8; Mark 5; and Luke 8. He raised from the dead Jairus' daughter in Mark 5, the widow's son of Nain in Luke 7 and Lazarus, dead for four days, in John 11. He raised Himself as per John 10:17,18. He possessed power to lay down His life; He possessed power to take it up again. This marked Him as a man of miracles--extraordinary miracles.

His miracles were real, publicly performed, could not be denied even by His adamant antagonists and were done under a vast variety of conditions and circumstance. These were not cures of stomach aches, headaches, backaches, leg cramps, or self-diagnosed cancers—the stock-in-trade palaver of charismatic charlatans today. His were real, bonafide miracles verifiable by the masses of men and women. They were done to confirm His Messiahship, prove God sent Him and served as enthusiastic endorsement of His mission in word and work.

Jesus performed miracles whether the person helped and healed had faith or not. At times, He required faith such as in Matthew 9:27-31 relative to a duet of blind men. Obviously, there could have been NO faith in the dead damsel in Mark 5, the dead son of Nain in Luke 7 or dead Lazarus of Bethany in John 11. Yet, this is the persistent ploy among current charismatics in trumped-up healing campaigns, "You do not have sufficient faith for me to heal you!" Yet the duped devotee has come to be healed! Why does not the religious racketeer instill miraculous faith first and then heal the sickness subsequently? Satan must be ALL SMILES relative to such sly shenanigans while Heaven FROWNS on such perversions of religious racketeers!

Modern Pretenders and Their Idle Claims

Charismatic claimants of miraculous powers have as their persistent ploy an endless game of talk, Talk, TALK; it is never demonstrate, Demonstrate, DEMONSTRATE! Exhibition is NEVER on their near or distant horizon. Claimed miracles are almost always in distant places—never on-the-spot occurrences. How utterly strange! Jesus and His apostles were on-the-spot miracle performers though he could heal at a distance as in John 4 and Luke 7.

Ben Franklin, former preacher of the gospel but later a traitor to truth, met the inimitable Guy N. Woods in a 1974 debate in Gadsden, Alabama. I attended every session, reviewed it for the *Gospel Advocate* and later read it when it appeared in book form. I still have this book in my library. Franklin claimed Holy Spirit baptism, said he could talk in tongues and testified of personally known miracles on the West Coast—even resurrections from the dead. When brother Woods requested names and phone numbers of such people, Franklin claimed some of them had died again! Brother

Woods, in essence, quipped, "It would be pretty difficult to contact them!" Flavil Nichols was there on crutches due to a recent leg injury. L. E. Wright was there with only one arm. Brother Woods challenged Franklin to heal both men. The debate could have and would have ended right there had he demonstrated! Brother Nichols returned home still on crutches; brother Wright returned home with only one arm. His refusal to demonstrate was deadly to his charismatic cause. He claimed to talk in tongued but did a miserable job in handling correct English! He even confessed that when he went into Mexico to preach he took a translator with him! Spanish was off limits to this tongue talker! The Gadsden debate was an overwhelming victory for truth, which was par for the course with brother Woods in all his polemic discussions. Truth was always safe in his able hands and error would not and could not stand in the company of his sharp debating skills.

Brother Perry Cotham met a Peter John in a 1989 debate in Grand Rapids, Michigan. All Peter John could do was talk; he could not perform miraculously; NONE of them can!

I once had a discussion with a fiery Pentecostal preacher in Louisiana. He claimed Holy Spirit baptism for himself, on-the-spot revelations directly from the Holy Spirit for our discussion and healing and resurrecting powers at his beckoning call. Yet he wore glasses, had a hearing aide and his mental powers were flimsy, fallible and faulty. All he could do was talk with grammatical blunders abounding. He could not demonstrate. NONE of them can—not that first one!

A man of my acquaintance in another state claimed the same miraculous powers as were afforded apostles in John 14-16. When he received a rather severe leg injury in a hunting accident, neither he nor any of his Pentecostal colleagues could heal him instantly. He finally got well, the same way we all do in such situations—non-miraculously and without any sort of supernatural power. This same man claimed Holy Spirit recall powers just as Christ promised the eleven in John 14:26. I tested him. I quoted several partial verses of statements Jesus made in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and requested he finish the omitted portions. He could not recall ANY of them! He did not know where to go among the eight-nine chapters of these books to read the remainder of the partially quoted verses. I finished each one for him and told him, "I can quote all these because I have memorized all of them. You cannot quote any of them though you can claim instant Holy Spirit recall of all Jesus said." His recalling powers were in limbo. In fact, such gave a new dimension to the term limbo!

Money-hungry and money-motivated Oral Roberts, in recent years, claimed to have seen a vision of a gigantic Christ. Roberts told his duped devotees in TV land that if sufficient money did not soon fill his near empty coffers, the Lord had promised or threatened to call him home. He offered NO objective proof for either of these. Incidentally, why did he have to build a big, expensive hospital in Tulsa, that was not needed by the medical community there, if he and his colleagues could heal minus such facilities? Jesus built no such at Capernaum; Peter built no such in Jerusalem; Paul built no such at Ephesus. They healed minus all such expensive facilities. They healed in wide open places minus doctors, nurses, surgeries, or medicine.

A so-called healing group once put up a tent near a large hospital in Mississippi. The professed healers did not empty the nearby hospital of patient one! They soon folded their temporary tent and fled the scene. The hospital remained in the healing business with a wise, workable combination—God's help and medical skills such as surgery, therapy, medicine, time, etc.

A Texas northern destroyed a healing tent ministry. Many were injured. The healer left town in high gear. Had he stayed, he could not have healed a tiny scratch on a little finger and he knew it better than any of this duped devotees.

A healer of the past, Jack Coe, claimed powers to heal polio. He later died of polio himself.

His healing cronies could not heal his polio, nor raise him from the dead after he died. He is still dead and will stay dead until resurrection morning dawns!

Current pretenders to miraculous powers contradict what other pretenders do and say. Old Testament prophets, Jesus Christ, New Testament apostles and those upon whom they laid hands, never contradicted each other in words or works! Why the difference? I know! So do you!

Primary Purposes of Miracles

Healing benefits of a physical nature were always secondary. Primarily, miracles were performed to reveal truth and to confirm it when once revealed. They testified as being from God and backed it up with bonafide miracles. We have neither revelatory nor confirmatory needs today!

Scripture Establishes Miracle Duration

Pauline passages in 1 Corinthians 13:8-13 and Ephesians 4:8-13 are crystal clear directives in this vastly important realm of knowledge. The miraculous *"in part"* would last till *"that which is perfect is come."* It is not till "HE who is perfect is come" as though it were a reference to Christ's second coming. "That which is perfect" is the perfect revelation, the fullness of truth, the completed Bible. When such materialized so majestically and marvelously, the miraculous, by divine design, faded the scene. Miraculous prophecies failed, i.e., were no longer given. Supernatural tongues ceased. Nobody, absolutely nobody, has had them for nineteen centuries now. The masses of men and women who claim such cannot even speak correct English, butchering it minus all grammatical mercy! Modern claimants to the miraculous are frequently among the most illiterate and ignorant of all religious people. *"Till we all come in (unto--ASV) the unity of the faith"* is another allusion to the arrival of that full system of truth once for all delivered to saints and hence the completed Bible (Ephesians 4:13; cf. Jude 3).

No Possible Way to Have Them Now

From Pentecost onward, miraculous powers were transmitted two ways--Holy Spirit baptism and apostolic imposition of hands. The twelve in Acts 2, Paul, this we know by implication in Acts 9 and Cornelius' household in Acts 10 were the FULL recipients of the former. NO person has received such since A.D. 41. Hence, no person today can lay claim upon such by a subjectively assumed recipiency of Holy Spirit baptism. NO one today has had apostolic hands imposed on him. Hence, miraculous powers are unavailable in that realm. Men, en masse, claim such; actual recipients of such in our day still stand at ZERO PERIOD!

Dangers of this Claimed Power Today

It feeds the greedy coffers of religious racketeers and charismatic charlatans with money galore. It deceives the naive. It makes a mockery of religion. It reflects on true religion. It causes indiscriminate beholders to label all preachers as covetous charlatans, as money hungry shysters. It diverts people away from gospel conversion and Scriptural sanctification. It weans people away

from the Bible and turns them into emotional wrecks. It encourages a reckless approach to the whole realm of biblical hermeneutics (the science of explaining the Bible and providing wholesome applications of the same). True miracles in Bible times never did any of these; pseudo or false miracles of today contribute to all the foregoing for a surety.

Conclusion

Modern claimants to such are a **SIGNAL DISGRACE** to god and a **DISSERVICE** to each person they deceive with their conniving bill of sales bought at the peril of souls—precious souls that need the truth of God.

Points to Remember

4. God does not have to perform miraculously in order to answer prayers.
5. Every claimant to modern miraculous powers should be pressed relentlessly to **DEMONSTRATE** his power—not just **TALK** of it!
6. Modern claimants to tongue speaking powers usually blunder greatly in the usage of their own native tongue to say nothing of the foreign tongues they claim to utter.
7. Conversion and sanctification are our major needs now—not modern day miracles.
8. Pentecostalism has been a blight on true religion since its untimely origin in the early part of the twentieth century.

HOW TO BE READY TO GIVE AN ANSWER

Jack H. Williams



About the author...

Jack was baptized into Christ in 1979. He entered the Brown Trail School of Preaching in 1980 and graduated in 1982. He began labors with the 39th Street church of Christ in July of 1982. He has directed the annual Mid-West Lectures since their beginning in 1983 and is active in International Bible Studies and the Mid-West School of Biblical Studies, all of which are works of the 39th Street church. He and his wife Lana have a son, Jarrod and a daughter, Mary. Jarrod and his wife Stacey have blessed Jack and Lana with a grandson, Connor.

Introduction

The Scriptures plainly teach that Christianity is a taught religion (Luke 8:11-15; Romans 1:16; 10:13-17) and that the responsibility for this teaching lies at the feet of every child of God (Matthew 28:18-20; Hebrews 5:12). As such it is essential that we as God's children be diligent in learning the "art" of giving an answer to others regarding spiritual matters. This lesson will seek to encourage and strengthen each of us as to how we can accomplish this most important task.

The Command Given

*For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil. And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; **But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:** Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. (1 Peter 3:10-16 — emp. JHW).*

As we look to this command (and it is a command!) we find that the readiness to give an answer is set in opposition to the alternatives: evil, guile, terror, troubled (10-14). In the face of certain persecution (cf. 2 Timothy 3:12) the apostle Peter gives assurance of the value and fruit of a life of being a follower of "that which is good" (vs 13). It is in this context of encouragement in the midst of persecution that God gives the great charge to — "be ready always to given an answer... ."

The Charge Explained

If we are to understand the “how” of being ready to give an answer, we must first of all understand the “what” of the charge. If we look to the word “answer” we find that it is a translation of the Greek word *apologia*. While this would cause us to think of the English word “apology,” we are not speaking of the idea of “back-peddling” which to some the word apology means — the concept of giving an excuse for something as if it were wrong. We speak rather of giving a “verbal defense, a speech in defense” (Vine 29) of godly living and hope that others see. The word is sometimes, as in the text of 1 Peter 3:15, translated as “answer” (Acts 25:16; 1 Corinthians 9:3; 2 Timothy 4:16), but other times with the more familiar phrase for us, “defense” (Acts 22:1; Philippians 1:7, 17). In 2 Corinthians 7:11 it is translated as “clearing” in reference to the godly sorrow that wrought repentance which allowed the Corinthians to “clear themselves.” Thus when Peter speaks of being ready to give an “answer,” he is telling us to stand ready in defense, to stand ready to clear ourselves. When we follow that which is good (vs 13) there will be questions that will be asked, charges that will be made, and we need to be ready to defend the life and hope that others see in us. This *does not* mean that we are to have an answer for any question of which others can conceive! Sometimes people are intent to dwell on “foolish and unlearned questions... that ... gender strifes” (2 Timothy 2:23). “*Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him*” (Proverbs 26:4). We need to realize also that there are some things God has not revealed to mankind (Deuteronomy 29:29), none of which pertain to eternal life (2 Peter 1:3).

The Charge Exemplified

Sometimes one of the easiest ways to understand a matter is to see it in action. In God’s Word we find numerous examples of those set for the defense, ready to give an answer. For example, what of:

- C **Noah** - In a world filled with wickedness so great that God determined to destroy the world (Genesis 6:5-7), Noah found grace in God’s eyes because he followed good, doing “all that God commanded him” (Genesis 6:22; 7:5). For over one hundred years, as he prepared the ark according to God’s commands, he was a “preacher of righteousness” (2 Peter 2:5)!
- C **Moses** - Having chosen to forsake the riches of Egypt in order to follow the righteousness of God (Hebrews 11:24-30), he was chosen of God to return and instill hope and faith in the persecuted children of God (Exodus 3-4).
- C **Joshua** - He began his work of “giving an answer” in Numbers 14 as he and Caleb stood against the multitudes, exhorting them to take the land which God had given them. After wandering with the children of God for 40 years, it was he who was chosen of God to lead the people as they took the land of Canaan. His crowning defense to the people is found in Joshua 24:1-15 as he proclaims his decision to serve God and exhorts others to do likewise.
- C **Ezra** - a “*ready scribe in the law of Moses*” (Ezra 7:6), was sent instill hope and zeal in the hearts of the people who had been in captivity for seventy years and to lead them in rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem. Thus we read of him that he “*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).

- C **Stephen** - When called upon to give a reason for his actions, Stephen spoke boldly in defense of his life and teaching — a defense that cost him his physical life, yet opened a view of heaven to him (Acts 7).
- C **Paul** - In the jailhouse (Acts 16:25ff), on Mars hill (Acts 17:22ff), on a staircase in Jerusalem (Acts 21:30ff), before the council (Acts 23:1ff), before Felix (Acts 24:1ff); before Festus (Acts 25:1ff), before king Agrippa (Acts 26:1ff), as a prisoner on a ship about to be destroyed by a storm (Acts 27:1ff) , in prison in Rome (Acts 28:16ff) — these are some of the instances in which the great apostle Paul zealously gave an answer for the hope he lived.

What God desires of us is that we dare to be such as these men were. The need and opportunity for such still abound!

How Can I Be Ready To Give An Answer?

We know the command. We know what it requires of us. We have seen it in action in the lives of godly men of old. But the question still must be asked, “How can *I* do this?” In order to answer this question we can look to some lessons from the lives of the exemplary men listed above.

- C **Noah** is said by the writer of Hebrews to have “moved with fear” (reverence, awe) and realized the value of his own family (Hebrews 11:7).
- C **Moses** is said to have made the choice of the things of God rather than the riches of the world (Hebrews 11:27).
- C **Joshua** realized the certainty of victory if God be with us (Numbers 14:6-10).
- C **Ezra** realized the necessity of learning and doing the will of God (Ezra 7:10).
- C **Stephen** had a compassion for the souls of others that lasted through his dying moments (Acts 7:60).
- C **Paul** had given himself totally to God (Galatians 2:20) and had an undying belief that if God said it, that settled it (Acts 27:25; 2 Timothy 1:12).

Reverence, realizing the value of the souls of all men, especially family, focusing on heaven rather than the earth, trusting God for victory, taking God at his word — all of these characteristics are “do-able” by each of us!

We can also learn much by an examination of the text of our passage. In it we find that if we are to be able to give an answer, we must...

- C **Be CONVERTED** — *“sanctify the Lord God in your hearts”*
We have far too many who “honk if they love Jesus” rather than setting up a throne for Him in their hearts! Only when we have true conversion, make Christ Lord in our life, will we be able to give an answer.
- C **STUDY** — *“be ready always”*
Paul admonishes us to study (2 Timothy 2:15). It is impossible to communicate to others that which we ourselves do not know (2 Timothy 2:2)! The Psalmist said that as we trust in the Word we *“shall have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me”* (Psalm 119:42). One old preacher, a scholar in the Word of God, was approached by a woman who said, “I would give

my life to be able to know the Word like you do!" The preacher simply replied, "Ma'am, that is just what I have done."

C Have BOLDNESS — *"to give an answer"*

We cannot be afraid to speak up! Our answer is to be God's truth spoken in the proper spirit (Ephesians 4:15; cf. 1 Peter 3:8-9). Such boldness comes from compassion for others (1 Peter 3:8), a compassion which makes the word "as a burning fire shut up in my bones" (Jeremiah 20:9). Until we have a consuming passion for the souls of men we will never have the needed boldness to give an answer.

C LIVE EXEMPLARY — *"to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you"*

Clearly no one will ask about that which they do not see! Remember that Peter was speaking to those who had chosen to follow the good way of God rather than the ways of the world (13-14; 16-17). One of the most tragic things in life is the hypocritical life of one who proclaims "do as I say, not as I do" (cf. Romans 2:1-3,21). Peter even emphasizes that one fit to give an answer has "a good conscience" that puts to shame false charges as he has a "good conversation in Christ" (1 Peter 3:16). Note that the one who answers is to be "in Christ!"

C Have PROPER ESTIMATION OF SELF AND GOD — *"with meekness and fear"*

Meekness is not, as some think, weakness. It is rather power under control, a willingness to be under and abiding by the will of God. Such an attitude naturally comes when we recognize God for who He is. The American Standard Version of the Bible translates 1 Peter 3:15 to read, *"sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord."* Recognition of the Lordship of Christ will compel us to have this proper estimation of self and God — *"meekness and fear."*

Conclusion

Why do so many fail to be *"be ready always to give an answer to every man that asket you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear"*?

C It is not because God has not commanded such

C It is not because God has not given examples we can mark and follow

C It is not because God has not given us an understandable Word

C It is not because God had not given us the needed and attainable personal characteristics

What is it then? Perhaps the answer is found in one word in the text of our lesson — "hope." It has always amazed me how many people DO NOT have hope. Hope is not a wish or whim, but is a confident expectation. One who has hope will proclaim as did the apostle Paul, "I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (2 Timothy 2:12). If we are in Christ and "walk in the light, as he is in the light" (1 John 1:7) we will have a confident expectation (hope) that will manifest itself in our daily lives. Others will see this hope and ask the reason of it. We will be ready, even zealous, in giving an answer to any man who asks. Are you ready?

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BIBLE VERSIONS

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*About the author...*

Robert and his wife Irene have 2 children and 4 grandchildren. In August of 2000 Robert began his 27th year of work with the church in Ripley, Tennessee. He preaches in numerous gospel meetings and lectureships each year. He has written numerous books and tracts.

Introduction

One of the most troublesome problems in religion today is that of a multitude of Bible Versions now available. It was around most all of last century and the new one sees no abatement in the mounting problems they pose to the integrity of God's Word. One of the greatest preachers of last century was Foy. E. Wallace, Jr. In earlier life he fought the errors of Protestant denominationalism, Roman Catholic, Calvinism, Premillennialism and infidelity. In the latter part of his illustrious life he fought the perversions of the new Bibles. Nearly thirty years ago he wrote a scholarly book in unmasking many of these perversions. Early in that book, *A Review of The New Versions*, he wrote, "It is my firm conviction that the greatest immediate danger confronting the churches of Christ is the general acceptance of the pseudo-versions of the Bible." (35) I often heard him say publicly that the new Bible would make different people of us. His words have been fulfilled again and again in recent years.

An Elder's Prayer

Nearly forty years ago, I was scheduled to preach in a gospel meeting in the capital city of a northern state. Before I arose to speak that Sunday morning, one of the elders of that congregation led the prayer. There was one petition of that prayer that has lingered with me all these many years. He petitioned the Father, "Lord, may we never tamper with thy word." This elder was a well-known attorney in that city and had argued cases before the Supreme Court of our nation. Frequently, he had aided his clients in drawing up their last wills or testaments. He knew how deeply they must be respected when the testators died and the wills were executed. He also knew of the far deeper import of the Lord's last will or testament being respected with no efforts to tamper with the Word of God by additions, deletions, substitutions, alterations and modifications. There is no greater crime than tampering with the Word of the Living God. It is done in wholesale fashion, and the tragedy of the matter is that too few care that this literary crime occurs repeatedly in our lax and loose time. Far too many of our own members have little or no convictions about perverted Bibles.

Some Appropriate Scriptures Treating this Momentous Matter

Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you...What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it...all the words that I command thee to speak unto them; diminish not a word...Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar...Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition...Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and may such like things do ye...If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken ...For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ...But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commanding ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God...I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel, Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed...For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book (Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Jer. 26:2; Prov. 30:6; Mark 7:9,13, John 10:35; 2 Cor. 2:17; 4:2; Gal. 1:6-9; Rev. 22:18-19).

These crystal clear and potently plain passages in the aggregate warn man NEVER to tamper with the word of the Lord. Man does this at the peril of his own soul and every soul he influences by his tampering and perverting. To do such is not the way to the New Jerusalem on high at last.

Categories of People Relative to Bible Versions

(1) There are those who do not care one way or the other. They do not care whether we have many versions, just a few or none at all. They are not going to read and study ANY of them period! The word of the Lord means nothing to such people.

(2) There is another class ready to stamp ardent approval on each new one that leaves the printing press regardless of how perverted it may be. Be reminded of how many gave tacit approval to *Good News For Modern Man* when it came out in 1966. Look how quickly *The Living Bible Paraphrased* caught on during the 1970's. *Reader's Digest Bible* in 1982 did not cause much of a ripple of dissent at all though it left out about 40% of the Bible or right at 300,000 words. In recent

years the *NIV* (*New International Version*) has really caught on and yet it is “shot through with error” as the late and lamented Guy N. Woods told me personally shortly after its devilish debut. With such people, Bibles cannot get too far out for them and their instant endorsement of the same.

(3) There is another class which says we should educate people relative to the strengths and weaknesses of the new Bible and then allow them to make up their own minds. Touching which one, or ones, they will purchase and peruse. This is stupid. No one has the time to abstract all such strengths and weaknesses, and even if he did, he would never have sufficient time to deliver such information to an audience of people. Why waste valuable time in such when we need to be spending all our time studying and preaching the message from a reliable Bible—one that is not filled full and brimming over with fatal error as so many are?

(4) There is another class which believes in warning people of perverted Bibles and encouraging them to buy and study from a good, sound and solid translation. This is the class in which I have placed myself all my preaching life, and see no need to vacate it for one of the earlier mentioned classes.

Why Versions Are Needed

The reason is a simple one—we do not speak the same language. The Old Testament was penned in Hebrew and small portions in Arabic. The New Testament was penned in the Greek language. These are not the languages in which you and I were born and reared. We speak English; others speak French, Spanish, Russian, Japanese, Chinese, etc. Some three centuries prior to the coming of Christianity to the earth there was a Greek translation made from the original Hebrew Scriptures of the Old Testament. It is known as the Septuagint. The Sacred Three never intended for their Word to remain in one language exclusive of all others. C. H. Dodd once said that the job of the Bible translator is an impossible one. This is a serious reflection on God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. They gave their Word in such fashion that it could be translated from the originals into other languages and, when it is translated accurately, it DOES NOT lose its inspiration. New Testament personalities quoted from the Septuagint and declared that they were quoting the Word of God, yet from a translation. In all probability, the Eunuch in Acts 8 was reading from this Greek Version and Philip began “*at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus*” (Acts 8:35). Soon after the New Testament was completed it began to be translated into the Syriac, the Coptic, the Latin and other languages. We need versions in order to have the word of God—not pseudo versions as brother Wallace warned people in his own inimitable way.

Three Essentials of a Good Version

(1) A version must be accurate. Translation the Bible is not the time or the place for men to practice laxness and looseness. The version needs to reflect in the receiving language what is found in the original. This is NO time for additions, subtractions, alterations, modifications, substitutions, etc. Yet, in countless cases, this is precisely what the new Bibles have done. They have turned out products called the Bible that are perverted and filled to the brim with fatal or lethal errors. Some of the errors are more poisonous than others but no error is with justification. God’s Book of truth should not be tintured with error and falsehood. Far too many of the new Bibles are and careless religionists endorse them and use them as their study Bibles. I find this to be inexcusable, minus any justification.

(2) A version must be readable. I am told that the average word in the beloved KJV is composed of just five letters. Couched in the lovely language of simplicity this blessed and beautiful version has led more English speaking people into the redemptive riches of Christianity than ALL other English versions combined. Why some egotistical intellectuals have turned on it with such venom is hard to understand since many of them were led to gospel obedience and early Christian development by its treasured contents. They have turned to bite the hand that formerly fed them!

(3) A version must be reverent. We are not dealing with comic books; we are dealing with the Word of the Living God and His only begotten Son inspired by the Spirit of Truth. Some are saying today that they want a Bible that reads just like this morning's newspaper. I, for one, do not! There is possibly nothing of lesser value in your home than a newspaper that is one day old. This is a poor approach to the process of choosing a good, solid and sound Bible for perusal.

A New Breed of Translators

When the *RSV (Revised Standard Version)* came out with their New Testament in 1946 and both testaments in 1952 they let it be known that they were not interested in a literal, word-for word translational approach inasmuch as is possible. Their perverted product demonstrates that they lived up to their stated philosophy! J. B. Phillips did not think the New Testament writers realized they were writing Scripture. He did not think Paul was interested in maintaining consistency between earlier and later writings. He thought Paul wrote with too much haste and urgency to his wayward Christian friends to be concerned with dotting I's and crossing T's. C. H. Dodd thought the task of the Bible translator was an impossible one. Those who put out the *Reader's Digest Bible* nearly 20 years ago thought they had the right to take Jehoiakim penknives and cut out about 300,000 words—about half of the Old Testament and one-fourth of the New Testament. One woman disliked Mark 16:16 so much that she took her scissors and cut it out. This new Bible took scissors and cut out hundreds of thousands of verses. They deleted in wholesome fashion and then teaching and the whole Bible teaches. Therefore, they had majored in doctrinal destruction. The warnings of Deuteronomy 4:2; 21:32 and Revelation 22:18, 19 meant a great BIG NOTHING to these mutilators of Holy Scripture. Many of the men turning out the new Bibles of our day are far more interested in getting their pet religious doctrines into their perverted products than in giving us in English what the sacred scribes penned in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek in Old and New Testament times.

Some Perversions of the Modern Versions

The *RSV* removed virgin from Isaiah 7:14 and injected young women instead thus getting it out of all harmony with Matthew 1:22, 23 wherein they left in virgin. Even earlier the *RSV* had refused to call the Second Person God, yet retain God in the New Testament quotation of this passage (Psalm 45:6; Hebrews 1:7, 8). The *RSV* has Genesis 12:3 and Galatians 3:8 out of harmonious gear with each other. But modernists put out the *RSV* and keeping the Old and New Testaments in harmony with each other was of no great importance to such fellows. Many of the new Bibles will have Christ in Matthew 5:17 to deny that He planned to abolish the Old Testament law and then have Paul in Ephesians 2:15 affirm that He did abolish it. The fault does not lie with Christ and Paul; it lies with inept translators who should have been occupying their time with other activities than Bible

translational work. Bratcher's *TEV* (*Today's English Version*) or *GOOD News For Modern Man* has faith only passages in Romans and Galatians and then contradicts his own position when he got to James 2:24. If right in his Roman and Galatian renderings, he is wrong in James. If right in James, he is wrong in Romans and Galatians and what a precarious position in which a Bible translator finds himself! The *NEB* and the *TEV* both change the time of the Lord's Supper observance to Saturday in Acts 20:7. The *NEB*, *New English Bible*, has Peter as the rock on which the church was to be built in Matthew 16:18. The *NEB* is filled with charismatic terms in 1 Corinthians 14. *Beck's Bible* has *play music* in Ephesians 5:19; *The Amplified Bible* adds instruments along with voices in this same rendering—Ephesians 5:19. Taylor's *Living Bible Paraphrased* is rampant with premillennialism and Calvinism and even resorts to vulgar language. The *NIV*, the newest darling among new Bible users, is "shot through with error" as the late, and lamented, Guy N. Woods told me during the 1970's when it first came forth from the printing press. Calvinism is advanced in Psalm 51:5 and in the sinful nature renderings in Romans 7, 8 and the book of Galatians. It really messes up Acts 2:27, 31 pertaining to Jesus between His death and His resurrection. The gospel plan of salvation is left in shambles in Ephesians 1:13; Romans 10:10 and Galatians 3:27. The *NIV* has people included in Christ at the point of confession and then baptized INTO Christ. I guess after being included in Christ at the point of hearing, they to remove from Him before the formation of faith in order that they might be justified at the point of faith. Between faith and confession they would have to remove themselves again in order that they might be saved at the point of confession. Between confession and baptism they would have to get out of Him again in order that they might be baptized INTO Him at the time of this water ordinance. Nearly all the modern Bibles tamper and tamper greatly with monogenes, only begotten, refusing to use what the older translations have been doing for hundreds years. The *New Revised Standard Version* tried to please the Women's Movement by removing many male terms to which they objected in the older versions.

Why Stay With The Older Versions Such as The KJV?

The KJV is accurate; it is readable and understandable as touching our duties of obeying the gospel, worshiping and serving God and preparing to meet Him in eternity. It is reverent. Its language belonged to the Golden Period when English reached its apex. We need to avoid the perverted Bibles because they will make new and different people of us and have already done so in many instances. They abet nearly every fatal error that is popular in religion today. Why choose a Bible that is going to fill your soul with the venom of religious falsehood?

Conclusion

There is NOTHING I need to know, believe, obey and live out but what I can find it in the KJV or the ASV of 1901. In more than fifty years of preaching I have not changed Bibles and have not changed what is in the Bible. I still do my study, memory work, preaching, teaching, home Bible studies and writing from the KJV. I have no plans to change from this as much as one iota.

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THE WORK OF THE CHURCH

Perry B. Cotham



About the author...

Perry Cotham was born to Christian parents January 5, 1912. He was baptized at an early age began preaching soon after in 1929 at the age of 17. He entered Freed-Hardeman College (then a junior college) in September, 1929 and graduated in June, 1931. He then entered college at his hometown of Murray, Kentucky and graduated from Murray State University in June of 1934. While attending college he preached for several of the area churches and conducted meetings.

October 1934 Perry began full time local work with the church in Shawnee, Oklahoma. He had a prosperous work, with a new congregation being established. While there he did much radio preaching and conducted meetings in the area. This he did in other places later in local work.

Perry was married to Teresa Overby (the daughter of a well known gospel preacher) in Muskogee, Oklahoma on June 25, 1936. The Overby family was formerly from Murray. (Teresa passed away January 7, 1998). Brother Cotham has two sons and one daughter, eight grandchildren and four great grandchildren.

After moving from Shawnee, Perry did local work in Oklahoma City and Wewoka, Oklahoma, Paris, Texas, Nashville, Tennessee, Duncan, Oklahoma and Grand Prairie and Big Spring, Texas, in that order. In 1972 he and his wife moved back to Grand Prairie so he could be engaged in full time, word-wide evangelistic work. Perry has preached in all of the fifty states of America and in all the inhabited continents of the world, including about 70 nations. He has held several debates, two of which are in print. He has written sixteen gospel tracts which have been widely distributed throughout the world. He has also helped to buy and distribute thousands of Bibles in different dialects, besides distributing his debate books on the Holy Spirit and miracles today. Perry continues to make his home in Grand Prairie and to do much preaching. He at times assists Brown Trail School of Preaching in teaching some special classes, but his main work is to preach and distribute tracts and Bibles in all parts of the world. Many thousands have been baptized during his many years of ministry.

The Lord's church is the greatest institution on earth today, and the Holy Scriptures plainly declare there is a *work* for the church to do. The apostle Paul, writing to the young evangelist Titus, who was on the island of Crete, to instruct him of his duties as a preacher of the gospel, spoke of Christ *"who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people [a people for his own possession, ASV], zealous of good works"* (Titus 2:14, emp. supplied). Hence, Christians are Christ's own possession; they belong to Him; they form His spiritual body, which is the church, and over which He is the only head (Ephesians 1:22-23). They are to be zealous of good works. They are *"to maintain good works"* for *"necessary uses"* (Titus 3:8,14).

Furthermore, Peter said the children of God are a purchased people and are to *"show forth the praises [excellencies, ASV] of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light"* (1 Peter 2:9). Thus, the church of the Lord is that body of saved people, who have been added by the Lord to His church (Acts 2:47), and they are to do the works of God. These works are good works because they bring good to mankind. The things done by Christians, from the right motive, as authorized by the Lord, will help others. This comes as a necessary result of Christians having been redeemed. Their influence on mankind is great. It means the eternal salvation of souls.

So when people ask: "What is the work of the church; what purpose does it serve in the world?" we are happy to give an answer, as Peter asked us to do (1 Peter 3:15), to this all-important question. Many do not really know either what the church of Christ is or of the work of the church here

on earth. The church—Christians—are to “*shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life*” (Philippians 2:15-16), in the midst of a dark and sinful world (cf. Acts 26:18; 1 John 5:16). Christ’s disciples, in living the Christian life, show forth the virtues (by word and by good deeds) of the glory of the Lord.

In the language of the New Testament that Christians are the Lord’s choice, care, and delight, there is perhaps an illusion to the Hebrew people of the Old Testament period as their being the chosen people of God. Moses said to his people: “*For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth*” (Deuteronomy 7:6; cf. Exodus 19:5).

Thus, each congregation of Christians is an independent group of believers. With Christ as its head, they work and worship together in the church under the oversight of elders (Acts 14:23; 20:28). Each congregation is composed of baptized believers who are commanded to do the work of the church in the world no matter whether the congregation be large or small in number of its members (Acts 2:37-38, 41-42, 47).

THE WORK OF INDEPENDENT CHURCHES

The mission of the church is to “do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31; Ephesians 5:25-27). The plan to accomplish this mission that the Lord has given to the church is five-fold: (1) *evangelism*, (2) *benevolence*, (3) *edification*, (4) *worship*, and (5) *right living*. In summary, the work of the church is to teach the gospel of Christ and live the Christian life that souls may be saved at last in heaven.

Evangelism

Christ charged His disciples to go into all the world and “*preach the gospel to every creature,*” to “*teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*” (Mark 16:15; Matthew 28:18-20). We call this evangelism. The church is declared by Paul to be “*the pillar and ground of the truth*” (1 Timothy 3:15).

If the pure gospel of Christ is preached to the world, unmixed with the doctrines of men, the Lord’s faithful disciples must do it. The pagan and idolatrous world will not do it; religious cults and man-made denominations will not do it (although they may claim to do it). Religious sects (denominations) teach a perverted gospel (cf. Galatians 1:6-9). The truth of God which has been divinely given and recorded has been entrusted to the church. The church is to teach it, to defend it, and to proclaim it in every right way possible from age to age to the end of time, just as God gave it. The Bible has not changed (cf. 1 Timothy 6:20-21).

Every congregation should, therefore, feel its responsibility in this work with deep conviction. The church is the support of the truth just like a pillar is to a building. The truth is upheld in the world by the church. The church is the ground of the truth; the truth rests on the church just like a house does on its foundation. The church is to proclaim this truth to the whole world. The gospel “*is the power of God unto salvation*” (Romans 1:16). The world needs to hear the gospel, the good news, because “*all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*” (Romans 3:23).

Paul’s expression that the church is “*the pillar and ground of the truth*” does not mean,

however, that the authority of the Scriptures depends upon the church, as some teach. But, nevertheless, Christians should be careful to keep and preserve the truth. *“Buy the truth and sell it not”* (Proverbs 23:23) means do not part with the truth under any consideration. Christians must proclaim the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, and likewise train *“faithful men”* to teach this truth to future generations (2 Timothy 2:2).

The world now has over six billion people. The vast majority of them have never once heard the name of Christ. There are untold millions who are yet untold. What are we doing to reach the lost before time runs out for them—and for us? The early disciples of Christ were faithful to the charge that the Lord gave, for within about thirty-five years the gospel had been *“preached to every creature which is under heaven”* (Colossians 1:23).

Although this great work of evangelism rests upon all the churches of Christ in the world, this does not imply that all the churches are faithfully doing it. Many congregations are not using their money as they should to do this work, and many individuals are not actively engaged in trying to teach others (Acts 8:4-5). Too, there seems to have been a change within the last few years of works being done not authorized in God’s Word. The church is not authorized to provide physical recreation, entertainment, or pleasure for its members or for other people. This work belongs to the families and institutions of the world. However, not wrong within themselves, this is not the work of the church. The word of God is to be preached to the whole world, in all of its purity, for the salvation of souls (James 1:18). The power to convert and to edify the saints is not in entertainment and “gimmicks.” Why should a church spend a huge amount of money to build a large gymnasium while there are thousands dying every day in this world without the knowledge of the Savior who died for them? It is the whole duty of the whole church to preach the whole gospel to the whole world (cf. Acts 8:4,12; 11:14; 7; 3 John 5-8).

One elder expressed his concern over the entertainment craze that seems to be sweeping among some congregations in these words:

When the church goes into the entertainment business, it is a sign that spirituality is very low. Some congregations have eased over into the softball business, the basketball business, the entertainment business, and other such like things, thinking this is the work God has assigned them to do. We all need some entertainment, but it is the duty of the church to stick to spiritual affairs and not to entertainment. The church is the pillar and support of the truth and not entertainment (Turner 4).

Entertainment, however, and getting the crowds, seem to be the popular thing to do today among the large denominational “megachurches” in America. But gospel preachers have often stressed the point that if we are not preaching the gospel and converting souls to Christ, then we are missing the work of the preacher; that our primary goal is to make disciples and change people; that we change the culture one heart and one mind at a time, and that this can only be done by the power of the word of God, preached and taught *“in love”* (Ephesians 4:15).

The Christian Dispensation began on the day of Pentecost following the resurrection and ascension of Christ (Acts 2). It is world-wide in scope and age-lasting in duration. However; there are two parts to the spreading of the gospel: the going and the sending. Some go and preach, and others help them go and spread the word. God expects Christians to give their earthly treasures to enrich heaven with the souls of men. One soul saved is worth more than the whole world (Matthew 16:26).

I thank God that more people are now going to more places than in all of my eighty-eight years

on earth. My plea is: let preachers go, and let churches send! Let us do all that we can! *“Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end”* (Ephesians 3:20-21; cf. Philippians 4:16).

Benevolence

Every churches commanded to help care for those in need. The church in Jerusalem helped provide for the widows. Seven men were selected to “serve tables” (Acts 6:1-4). Later, Paul in his missionary travels urged the churches to help those in need. In the Roman letter he stated: *“For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem”* (Romans 15:26). He also said that Christians are to give to the *“necessity of saints”* (Romans 12:13).

Concerning this collection being made for the poor, Paul wrote in his first letter to the church at Corinth: *“Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week (every week, NASB; every Sunday, McCord; every week, Macknight) let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come”* (1 Corinthians 16:1-2). This money was being given by Gentile Christians for the relief of the poor Jewish Christians of Palestine who were in great distress. (See 2 Corinthians 8-9 for Paul’s teaching on the need of and the blessings of liberal giving.)

Of course, brethren must use extreme wisdom in determining those who are truly worthy of help. There are those who will *“provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house”* (1 Timothy 5:8). Laziness is condemned in the Scriptures (1 Thessalonians 4:11; Ephesians 4:28). But helping those in need at times can lead to the salvation of souls and the strengthening of Christians. The Lord’s Parable of the Good Samaritan has led many to have a heart of love and compassion to those in need (Luke 10:25-37). This is certainly what the Lord wants His church to do (Matthew 25:31-46). We are to visit the sick, and *“weep with them that weep”* (Romans 12:15). We are to show love and kindness unto others (Matthew 5:7; James 2:13).

Edification

That it is the duty of the church to provide for the edification of all its members is evident from several passages of Scripture. Paul admonished the Christians at Rome: *“Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another”* (Romans 14:19); *“Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification”* (Romans 15:2; cf. 1 Corinthians 14:3; Ephesians 4:16).

To *edify* means to build, to build up, to confirm, as to building a house on a good foundation. In a general sense, when applied to the church, it includes everything which in any way serves to enlighten and improve spiritually the members that compose the temple (Ephesians 2:20), the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:20), for the eternal salvation of their souls. The church is to provide such help which will benefit them in their Christian life. This will include association, advice and counsel, both publicly and privately, as needed—all for the edification of every child of God (cf. Galatians 6:1-2;

James 5:19-20). For such edification surely each member in every congregation needs to be regularly and systematically instructed in the Holy Scriptures. Without this there can be no building up of the body of Christ. The word of God is the food for the soul. Jesus stated: *"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God"* (Matthew 4:4). Paul told the elders of the church at Ephesus that God's word *"is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified"* (Acts 20:32). Thus, the early Christians, as Luke records, *"continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine [or, teaching, ASV]"* (Acts 2:42; cf. 2 Peter 3:18; Jude 17).

Peter urged young converts *"as newborn babes, to earnestly desire the sincere [spiritual, ASV] milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby"* (1 Peter 2:2). The word of God, however, will not nourish the soul if it is adulterated with various human doctrines of men. Hence, one needs to be fed on the pure word of God, in both private study and in public teaching, for proper edification. Peter told the Christians in the previous chapter that they had been *"born again"* by the word of God (1 Peter 1:23-25), and now he tells them that the word is also able to provide for them food by which they can grow to spiritual maturity. The word, therefore, is both that which spiritual life is produced and the food by which it is nourished.

Gospel preaching is necessary for religious edification. But this is not all that is necessary to this end. Unless the members of the church are induced to study the Scriptures for themselves, the most eloquent preaching from the pulpit, or teaching in the class room, will accomplish very little. Each member should diligently and regularly study the Bible for himself (cf. Psalms 1:2; 119:11, 28, 47, 97, 105; 73:24; 2 Timothy 2:15). Then after learning God's will, the members should be like Zacharias and Elizabeth, *"walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless"* (Luke 1:6). Christ must be seen in them (1 Peter 2:21-22).

In edifying a congregation every one of its members should be actively engaged in some way in doing good. It is a mistake to suppose that the preacher, along with the elders and deacons, are to do all the work themselves. Most every member can, and should, do something. God wants all of His children to grow, and to remain faithful to the end of life's journey (Revelation 2:10). Proper exercise is necessary for growth. Spiritual growth cannot come without the proper food and exercise.

Worship

It is likewise the duty of the church to provide places and times for public worship for the spiritual growth of the church. The early Christians, under the direct guidance of the inspired apostles, met *"upon the first day of the week...to break bread"* (Acts 20:7). This example of the church at Troas meeting to worship on *"the Lord's day"* (Revelation 1:10) is to be followed by all congregations everywhere. This, too, is for the ultimate salvation of souls in heaven.

Members should attend these worship periods for their own spiritual good and to also set a proper example before other members and the people in the community. To the Hebrew Christians the writer admonished them in these words about their forsaking the assembly: *"And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching"* (Hebrews 10:24-25). Although it was a time of persecution for many disciples, the Lord designed these services to be for the good of all the members. No wonder, then, that the

writer exhorted them not to *forsake* the meeting with their brethren for public worship.

On “the first day of the week” Christ arose from the dead and thus *“brought life and immortality to light through the gospel”* (2 Timothy 1:10). On this great event are suspended man’s hopes of happiness for time and for eternity (1 Corinthians 15:12-28). On the “Lord’s day” the “Lord’s people” assemble and eat the “Lord’s Supper” (1 Corinthians 11:23-29). They also engage in other acts of worship as singing of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (Colossians 3:16), praying (Acts 2:42), giving of their material wealth (1 Corinthians 16:1-2), and preaching God’s truths (Acts 2:42; 20:7). The early Christians not only assembled together on each first day of the week but they also celebrated the Lord’s Supper on every first day of the week and engaged in these other acts of worship.

It is the duty of every Christian, therefore, to assemble with the saints to worship God *“in spirit and in truth”* (John 4:24). For one to fail to do this for any selfish purpose, when he has it within his power to thus obey the Lord, is sinful (Hebrews 10:26).

Christianity is a *spiritual* system. One of the objects for which the Corinthians came together was to eat the Lord’s Supper, but, nevertheless, it seems that they had so far perverted the original design of this institution that their manner of eating was virtually not to eat it at all. So Paul said to them: *“When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord’s supper* (it is not possible to eat the Lord’s supper, ASV)” (1 Corinthians 11:20). It should be done in a reverent way.

Formalism today can easily become one of our besetting sins. Thus at all times our worship to God, if it is to benefit our souls, must be in reverence, with godly fear and awe. *“God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him”* (Psalm 89:7). Paul told the Corinthians that their worship service should *“be done decently and in order”* (1 Corinthians 14:40). This rule is still applicable in guiding us in regard to our worship of God. May the Lord help us to never be guilty of profaning the Lord’s Supper or neglecting to worship as prescribed by Him and cause us to lose our souls in eternity (cf. Hebrews 12:28-29).

Moreover, faithful churches of Christ reject the use of mechanical instruments of music in their worship because God’s law of exclusion excludes their use. Singing is authorized (Ephesians 5:18-19). Hence, instrumental music is sinful in worship for the same reason that it was sinful for Nadab and Abihu to offer *“strange fire before the Lord”* He had not commanded them (Leviticus 10:1-2).

Right Living

Finally, for this present study, it is the work of the church to provide teaching and encouragement to all members to live good, upright, righteous lives all of the time, and thereby glorify God. We must always keep in mind that the work of the church is to save souls. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said to His disciples, *“Ye are the salt of the earth... Ye are the light of the world”* (Matthew 5:13-14).

Writing from his prison cell in Rome, Paul admonished the Philippians: *“only let your conversation [your manner of life, ASV] be as it becometh the gospel of Christ”* (Philippians 1:27). That is, live as good citizens of the Lord’s kingdom, and set a good example before others. Peter, in his first epistle, urged Christians to live a good life: *“As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conservation (living, ASV); because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am*

holy" (1 Peter 1:14-16; cf. Leviticus 11:44). Then in his second letter he wrote admonishing them to add to their faith virtue, knowledge, temperance [*self-control*, ASV], patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity [*love*, ASV] (2 Peter 1:5-7). These good qualities were necessary then, and now, for faithful children of God to be granted an entrance into "everlasting kingdom" of our Lord, heaven (vs. 8-11), and are taught in the New Testament from the beginning of Acts to the end of Revelation. However, let us note briefly a few things about each one of these seven so-called "Christian graces":

1. *Virtue*. This means heroism, courage, manliness, moral excellence.
2. *Knowledge*. This refers to the knowledge of God's Word. Hosea told the Israelites they were "destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6). The Lord has given to us in His Word "all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3). The great need in the church today is Bible training.
3. *Temperance*. Solomon wrote: "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city" (Proverbs 16:32). To rule one's passions is greater than being able to conquer a city (cf. Ephesians 4:25-32; Colossians 3: 12-15).
4. *Patience*. This means endurance, standing up under trials. If trials are properly endured, they can develop stronger Christians.
"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation [i.e., trials, hardships]: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him" (James 1:12; cf. Revelation 21:7).
"Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy" (James 5:11; cf. Job 23:10; 13:15).
5. *Godliness*. This refers to piety, with love, reverence, and gratitude to God, and a desire to be godlike.
6. *Brotherly kindness*. The Lord's church is a family, and all of its members are related to each other as brothers and sisters in Christ and thus should cherish each other in tender love and affection (cf. Romans 8:16-17; 12:10, 17-1; John 13:34-35; 1 John 3:11-18; 4:7, 11, 20-21; Hebrews 13:1-2).
7. *Charity*. This means love for all men. A Christian wants to do good to all men as he has the opportunity and the ability (cf. Matt. 5:43-48). Love is the crown and jewel of all graces (1 Corinthians 13:13; Colossians 3:14).

Christians are to give "*all diligence*" to add these graces to their lives knowing that God helps those who help themselves. Paul said to the Philippians: "... *work out your own salvation with fear and trembling*" (Philippians 2:12)

Conclusion

What a grand and glorious work the Lord has given for His church on earth to do—evangelism, benevolence, edification, worship, and right living! Christianity, as revealed in the Scriptures, is the only divine religion, and it offers to the world the only hope of eternal life to all who will obey the Lord

(Hebrews 5:9; Revelation 22:14). May the Lord help us to so live that one day we may, by the grace of God, walk the golden streets of the New Jerusalem. This our plea to the world. How beautiful heaven must be! Let us *do*, therefore, the Lord's works!

Christ has no hands but our hands
 To do His work today;
He has no feet but our feet
 To lead men in His way;
He has no tongue but our tongues
 To tell men how He died;
He has no help but our help
 To bring them to His side.
 Author unknown

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THE AUTHORITY OF ELDERS

David Long

About the author...

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Jesus said that He would build His church (Matthew 16:18). In Acts 2 we find that He did exactly that. Jesus is the Head of the church (Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18). Jesus is the chief Shepherd of the church (1 Peter 5:4). But under the chief Shepherd are shepherds of each local congregation. The Bible teaches that each local congregation of the Lord's church is to be overseen by qualified men called elders, bishops, pastors, shepherds, or presbyters. Where there were qualified men, elders were appointed. The Bible says, "*And when they had ordained them elders in every church...*" (Acts 14:23). Paul told Titus, "*For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee*" (Titus 1:5). The subject for this study is the authority of the elders. Do they possess authority? The answer is yes. But let it be understood that the authority of the elders rests in the eldership as a whole, not in one individual. There is no one-man rule in a local congregation and each elder is subject to the eldership. Let it also be understood that the authority of the elders is limited to one congregation. While there are to be elders in every congregation, they have the oversight of the "*flock which is among you*" (1 Peter 5:3). The elders of congregation "A" do not oversee congregation "B" or any other congregation but congregation "A" only. The Bible teaches that there is no larger organization of the church than the local church, and elders have the oversight of the local church, and their authority is limited to it only. Now let's look at New Testament terms which show elders do possess authority. The Greek word *EPISCOPOS* is used in Acts 20:28. It is the word "bishop" or "overseer." It means "an overseer, a man charged with the duty of seeing that things to be done by others are done rightly, any curator, guardian or superintendent" (Thayer 243). Also in Acts 20:28 the word *POIMAINO* is used. It is the phrase "to feed." Peter used this word in 1 Peter 5:2 when he told his fellow elders of the various congregations in the five provinces of Asia Minor to "*Feed the flock of God which is among you.*" It means "to feed, to tend a flock, keep sheep, to rule, govern" (Thayer 527). It comes from the word *POIMEN* which means, "a herdsman, esp. a shepherd; metaph. the presiding officer, manager, director, of any assembly" (Thayer 527). Brother Robert R. Taylor, Jr. in his book *The Elder and His Work* says concerning this word,

Quite literally the word means to shepherd the flock. Does anyone think the Palestinian shepherd was void of all authority in the daily shepherding of his sheep? Was he minus authority in seeking out grass and water for their daily sustenance? Was he void of authority in protecting them from preying animals and from robbers? (175).

PROISTEMI is used in 1 Timothy 3:4, 5, 12; 5:17; Romans 12:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:12. It means "to be over, to superintend, preside over" (Thayer, 539). *HEGEOMAI* is used in Hebrews 13:7, 17. It is

the word “rule” and it means “to lead, to go before, to be a leader, to rule, command, to have authority over” (Thayer 276). Also in Hebrews 13:17 the word *PEITHO* is used. It is the word “obey” and it means “to listen to, obey, yield to, comply with” (Thayer 497). Also in Hebrews 13:17 the word *HUPEIKO* is used. It is the word “submit” and it means “to resist no longer, but to give way, yield; metaph. to yield to authority and admonition, to submit” (Thayer 638). There are other terms but these should be sufficient to prove that elders do have authority. But what is the nature of their authority? Elders do not have authority to change God’s laws. They cannot add to or take away (Revelation 22:18-19). They are to see that God’s law is carried out. Brother Robert Taylor Jr. put it best when he wrote,

It is not legislative authority in the realm of doctrine, but it is authority to see to it that the legislation of the Lord as set forth in the Sacred Scriptures is respected. It is surely in the manifestation of authority in the realm of human judgment or expediency, in the area of the generics of the gospel and their decent and orderly execution. (175-76).

Brother Roy Deaver wrote,

Every obligation involves an element of expediency, human judgment. Relative to the expediency involved in a congregation’s obligations, elders have the authority. God established the obligation. The obligation has an element of expediency. Within this area of expediency, in carrying out God’s will as it relates to the congregation, elders have the authority. (255)

But what about 1 Peter 5:3 where the Bible says concerning elders, “*Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock*”? Doesn’t this verse teach against elders having authority? No, it teaches against the abuse of authority. Brother Guy N. Woods wrote,

The words, “lording it over” (ASV) translate a Greek word which means to rule highhandedly and autocratically and from an arrogant and domineering spirit. Men in positions of power are often tempted to do this, an example of which will be seen in 3 John 3. (155)

There are those who teach from 1 Peter 5:3 that elders have authority but it is by example only. Of course to teach such an idea is to ignore all the terms that we have talked about in this article. If their authority is in their example only then I don’t see how they have any authority. That doesn’t make any sense in light of all the terms that refer to their authority. There are those within the body of Christ who are rebels when it comes to the authority of the elders. The Bible teaches that “*rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity*” (1 Samuel 15:23). God does not take rebellion lightly. Rebellion is disrespect and disregard of authority. To rebel against those whom God has delegated authority is to rebel against God. In Numbers sixteen we have some people who challenged the authority of Moses and Aaron. That challenge was considered a challenge against the authority of God because God had appointed them as leaders. It is no less true today concerning the elders. Elders have the delegated authority from the word of God to “*Feed the flock of God which is among*

you, taking the oversight...” (1 Peter 5:2). To rebel against them as long as they are doing God’s will is to rebel against God. I have heard of members who leave and go some where’s else because they did not like a decision the elders made regarding something that was not a matter of faith. Isn’t there something wrong with that? Do we think that the church is to be governed democratically? When members of the local congregation properly submit themselves to Christ, they will realize that the church is not a democracy, and they will support the eldership in all that they scripturally do, realizing that these men have been given a serious charge. The Bible says, “*Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you*” (Hebrews 13:17).

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MECHANICAL INSTRUMENTS OF MUSIC

Terry Mabery

About the author...

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Introduction

A century ago, in the United States, there was a great problem in the church which had been stirring for several decades. That problem eventually led to a division which brought about the denominations called the Christian Church and the Disciples of Christ. That monster continues to raise its ugly head today. The controversy that caused that division centered around the music of the church — whether a capella singing in the worship of God is a matter of tradition and opinion, or of doctrine.

The controversy over the use of mechanical instruments of music in the worship of the church was not, however, a new one that arose in the United States in the late 19th century. There is no evidence of the use of such instruments in the early church. However, as the church fell into apostasy, according to F. W. Mattox, "By the fifth century some mechanical music began to be introduced. Organs were not used until the eighth century" (156). In the apostate Roman church, the use of mechanical instruments was not officially sanctioned until Pope Vitalian in the seventh century, and it was not immediately received with universal favor. It was even abolished, for a time, by Pope Gregory in 1074 (Brumback 75-76).

Since this has been a controversy for centuries, and is an on going controversy, it is necessary that all Christians be prepared to give an answer regarding this matter (1 Peter 3:15).

A Matter of Authority

In all things there is a need for guidance, direction, and authority. Can you imagine the chaos that would be in this world if there were no authority, no laws? I cannot imagine what the major intersections of downtown Kansas City would be like if that were the case.

So it is with religion. The chaos in religion today because of denominations and world religions comes as a result of not recognizing authority. There is a need for authority in religion just as there is in all things. In Christianity, there must be authority for all teaching, practices, and worship.

The possible sources of authority is revealed by Jesus when he was questioned by the chief priests and the elders in the temple regarding His teaching. When asked by what authority He taught, He turned the question back to them when He asked, *“The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven or from men?”* (Matthew 21:25)? Jesus thus revealed that authority for any matter comes either from God or from man. If it is of man, that authority has either been usurped by man or given him by God. Truly, all authority rests in Christ (Matthew 28:18). Paul wrote, *“And whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him”* (Colossians 3:17). To do something in the name of another clearly means to do so by that one’s power, or authority (Acts 4:7). Therefore, when man authorizes that which has not come from God, he is in error and sins against God. Man is not to add to what God has authorized, nor take away from it (Deuteronomy 4:2; Revelation 22:18-19). Man is not to go beyond what God has written (1 Corinthians 4:6) He is to continue in the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9). He is to walk by faith (2 Corinthians 5:7), that system of faith given in Christ (Jude 3).

With regard to worship, one is to worship not only in spirit, but in truth (John 4:23-24). To do so is to worship according to the word of God (John 17:17), or in other words, by that which God authorizes.

With regard to music in the worship of the church, God says we are to have it. Singing, a form of music, is authorized by the word of God. After instituting the Lord’s Supper, Jesus and the apostles sang as they went out unto the mount of Olives (Matthew 26:30). In the context considering the assembly of the saints at Corinth, Paul wrote, *“What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also”* (1 Corinthians 14:15). Paul also wrote that we are to speak, teach, and admonish one another by singing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 2:16). This is ample evidence that singing is authorized as an act of worship to God.

The purpose of this lesson, however, is not to consider singing, but the use of mechanical instruments of music in praising and worshiping God. In doing so, an attempt will be made to examine and refute some of the arguments made by those who want to authorize the use of mechanical instruments of music.

The No Authorization Needed Argument

Given O. Blakely, in his debate with Alan Highers, said, “I question that there is such a thing as <authorized worship>” (40). He added, “As we think about the knowledge of God, remember we have affirmed throughout this debate that the worship of God cannot be regulated” (150).

I contend, however, that there is such a thing as authorized worship and that worship of God is regulated by God Himself. Jesus, in His dialogue with the Samaritan woman at the well, said, *“But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for such doth the Father seek to be his worshippers. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth”* (John 4:23-24). Mr. Blakely said, regarding this, “That text, verse 24, can mean one of two things...a great number of people...are of the persuasion that it means God has a legal requirement that men worship him in spirit and Truth. That is not my position” (216-17). Regardless of Mr. Blakely’s position, we must ask, “What is the position of God?” Jehovah is the God of truth (Psalm 31:5). He keeps truth forever (Psalm 146:5-6). He wants man to worship in truth

(John 4:23). His word is truth (John 17:17). Therefore, man, to worship as God has ordained and regulated, “**must** worship him in...truth” (John 4:24 — emphasis TLM), which is according to His word (John 17:17). The term, “must,” from the Greek, “dei,” means, according to Thayer, “it is necessary, there is need of, it behooves, is right and proper” (126). Therefore, that **must**, that **necessity**, indicates regulation which is according to truth, or to God’s word.

It should be understood that we are under law. The apostle Paul, in his writings, refers to the law of faith (Romans 3:27), the law of the Spirit (Romans 8:2), and the law to Christ (Galatians 6:2). James, in his epistle, writes of the law of liberty (James 1:25, 2:12) and the royal law (James 2:8). That law, of course, is that which is written in God’s word, His truth.

One of the problems of today is that we have entered into the entertainment arena. It is thought that if it makes me feel good, if I like it, it is all right with God. That is the only authorization one needs — the feel good authorization.

A former campus minister from Mississippi, Ray Notgrass, has observed...”What must be guarded against is (1) thinking that we are drawn closer to God when, in fact, we are disobeying him...; and (2) being emotionally uplifted by music...and actually being drawn closer to that than to God under the allusion that, if it makes me feel better, it must be God-approved” (Freed-Hardeman Forum 19).

Yet, as we have seen above, regardless of one’s feelings or opinions, one must worship as authorized by God’s word.

The Old Testament Argument

Given O. Blakely affirmed that “The employment of instruments of music in singing of praise does not transgress the law of God...” (17). The specific law that he referred to, however, was the Law of Moses. He said, “the law was the nature of God compressed into ten succinct statements, and written with his finger upon tablets of stone” (150). Others have, also, looked to the Old Testament for authorization to use mechanical instruments of music in worship to God. Passages can be cited where timbrels were used in connection with singing to the Lord. The psalms frequently refer to harps, timbrels, psaltery, and other instruments in connection with praise to God and singing praises. It is even found that mechanical instruments of music were incorporated into the religious services in the temple, as initiated by David. Yet, Amos spoke of the presumptuous act of David when he declared, “*Woe unto them...that sing idle songs to the sound of the viol; that invent for themselves instruments of music, like David*” (Amos 6:1-5).

However, regardless of how many citations from the Old Testament can be made and regardless of what authorization is found in the Old Testament, that has no bearing on New Testament Christians today. We are no longer under the authority of the Old Testament. Paul made it clear that the Law of Moses was to be in effect until the seed, which is Christ, should come (Galatians 3:16-19). In His death upon the cross, Christ abolished that law (Ephesians 2:14-16), nailing it to the cross (Colossians 2:14).

Whatsoever we do in worship is to be in the name of, by the authority of, Christ — not Moses, not the patriarchs (Colossians 3:17). Otherwise, we would have authority for the burning of incense and offering burnt offerings in worship to God. Why do we not do these today? Because they are not

authorized by Christ and His law. Mechanical instruments of music should not be used for the same reason.

The Not Specifically Condemned Argument

Many have said that the mechanical instrument is acceptable to God because it is not specifically condemned. It is true that it is not specifically condemned. Yet, if it was required that God specifically mention everything *not* acceptable to Him, the earth could not hold the volumes of books that would be necessitated.

This is such a shallow argument that even the smallest child understands otherwise. Gather together any group of children and have them play the game, *Simon Says*. They understand that they are to do only what Simon says in order to stay in the game. Send a child to the store for milk, and he knows immediately that he is to return with milk and milk only. If specific directions are given to go to the neighborhood store down the street, he immediately understands that he is not to go all the way across town to purchase the milk. If the child returns with no milk, or with milk and ice cream, he knows he has disobeyed. Why is it so difficult to apply that same principle, that is so readily understood by children, to religion and to worship in particular. As has been pointed out already, God has authorized singing in New Testament worship. If that is eliminated, we sin. If anything unauthorized is added, we sin.

This principle was illustrated quite well with the story of Nadab and Abihu, as found in Leviticus 10:1-2. They were authorized to burn incense in worship (Exodus 30:7). When burning incense, coals of fire from off the altar were to be used (Leviticus 16:12; Numbers 16:46). They were specifically instructed *not* to use *strange incense* (Exodus 30:9), but no similar instruction is found regarding the fire. One might understand their hesitancy of approaching the altar to get coals to use for the burning of incense because of what had just happened prior to this incident (Leviticus 9:24cf). However, that was no excuse. We read that they offered strange fire “*which he had not commanded them*” (Leviticus 10:1 — emphasis TLM), and they were punished for doing so. God had given a specific command regarding the fire to be used, coals from the altar. He did not have to say not to use any other fire.

This principle is so easily understood. Why, then, do people want to argue otherwise when it comes to music in the church? God has authorized singing. No other music has been authorized. Mechanical instruments of music have not been authorized. God did not have to say, “Do not use any other music in worship to Me.” He did not have to say, “Do not use mechanical instruments of music in worship to Me.”

The Psallo Argument

Some say that the instrument is inherent in the term “make melody” translated from the Greek, *psallo* (Ephesians 5:19). According to *Webster’s Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary*, to be inherent means, “involved in the constitution or essential character of something” (435). If the instrument, then, is inherent in the term, *psallo*, it is an essential — it cannot be removed or changed.

Let us observe Ephesians 5:18-21. In this passage there is a positive command, “*be filled with the Spirit*” (Ephesians 5:18). Following the command there are five present participles. This

indicates the action which is to accompany or to result from the command. These present participles are “speaking,” “singing,” “making melody,” “giving thanks,” and “subjecting.” Roy Deaver notes that “singing” and “making melody” are connected by the conjunction, “and.” This indicates the essentiality of each. Therefore, if mechanical instruments are inherent in *psallo*, it is not just authorized, but **mandatory** (*The Psallo*...18). In other words, it would be compulsory for everyone to both sing and play a mechanical instrument. There would be no choice. Can you imagine what a mess that would be? There is not one instrument that I could even begin to play.

However, it is not inherent. According to Vines, *psallo* means “primarily to twitch, twang, then, to play a stringed instrument with the fingers, and hence, in the Sept., to sing with a harp, sing psalms, denotes, in the N.T., to sing a hymn, sing praise” (Volume III:58). Thayer defines *psallo* as being from the root word which means to

rub, wipe; to handle, touch,...a. to pluck off, pull out...b. to touch or strike the chord, to twang the strings of a musical instrument so that they gently vibrate; to play on a stringed instrument, to play the harp...to sing to the music of the harp; in the N.T. to sing a hymn, to celebrate the praises of God in song... (675).

It can be seen, then, that, as with many words, there was a progression of meaning over the centuries. Originally, it meant merely to pluck, such as a hair, bowstring or carpenter’s line. It came to be used to touch the chords of a musical instrument. Yet, by the time of Jesus and the apostles, it had come to mean to touch the chords of the human heart in song. Thus, in Ephesians 5:18-19, the positive command to “*be filled with the Spirit*” followed by the present participle “*making melody*” actually **demands** an instrument — that something be touched. We are to sing and make melody **with the heart**. The heart is the instrument, used figuratively. David Lipe indicated that the translation of the Hebrew word *zamar* by the Greek word *psallo* in the Septuagint version is always followed by the preposition and the name of the instrument (Freed Hardeman Forum:80). He cites Psalm 98:5 and Psalm 149:3 as examples. He went on to say, “In Ephesians 5:19, the instrument on which the melody is made is the heart” (Freed-Hardeman Forum 81). Roy Deaver points out that some insist “singing” and “making melody” are distinct, with making melody being accompanied with the heart. However, as was pointed out in the introduction, the early church did not understand it as so (*The Singing*...16).

Deaver continues by pointing out that “with your heart” is in the instrumental case. Thus, the heart is the means or instrument by which the “making melody” takes place. The “making melody” is not distinct, complete within itself, separate from the heart (*The singing*...16).

One can, therefore, see, that the mechanical instrument is not intrinsic to the term *psallo*. The term does, however, demand that something be plucked or touched. That instrument to be plucked is not a mechanical instrument, but it is the heart, used in a figurative sense.

The Found in Heaven Argument

There are those who, not being able to find authorization in the literal commands of the New Testament for mechanical instruments of music in worship, turn to the highly figurative writing of John’s Revelation. John recorded that there were those in heaven that had harps (Revelation 5:8). There was, also, an angel with a trumpet (Revelation 9:14). Therefore, it is concluded that mechanical

instruments of music are authorized in New Testament worship.

This is an extremely weak argument, and there are several matters that should be kept in mind. First, Revelation does not deal in any way with the worship of Christians here on this earth. Therefore, even if those in heaven literally use mechanical instruments of music, that does not authorize one to do so in worship to God on earth. Second, there are many things found mentioned by John as being in heaven that are not included in the worship of Christians, such as the burning of incense and the wearing of white robes. If mechanical instruments are so authorized, why are not these and other matters so authorized. Third, Revelation is quite figurative. Others, such as premillennialists, have taken such figurative language literally in order to make false assumptions. It is quite dangerous and questionable to take from such a figurative document and assume something is literal without some other basis for doing so. Actually, one should question the idea that there are or will be literal mechanical instruments in heaven, just as one would question the literal picture John gives of streets of gold and gates of pearl. Did not Paul indicate that corruption does not inherit incorruption (1 Corinthians 15:50)? Can there be anything in heaven, literally, that is corruptible? I believe the implication is that there will be nothing in heaven of a corruptible nature. That includes mechanical instruments of music, or any other literal mechanical device.

The Aid Argument

Finally, there are those who argue that the instrument is merely an aid, as are public address systems and tuning forks. The instrument, they would argue, merely aids in the singing of songs of praise. An aid “provides with what is useful or necessary in achieving an end; gives assistance” (*Webster’s* 19). As an aid, therefore, the instrument would be an expedient. It would be something necessary or helpful in achieving the end of singing. Is that what the instrument does when incorporated into worship?

Does the instrument provide what is necessary to achieve the end of singing? Can one not sing without an instrument? I dare say if one would ask any famous opera vocalist if he/she can sing *without* the use of an instrument, the answer would be, “Yes.” The instrument is not necessary to achieve the singing of praises in worship.

Does, then, the instrument merely assist in the singing? Again, I dare say if one would ask any musician of some famous orchestra if he/she merely provided assistance to a vocalist, the answer would be, “No.” The use of an instrument provides a *different kind* of music.

Conclusion

As stated before, the real issue is that of authority. The use of a mechanical instrument of music in worship to God is merely evidence of the problem. Do we allow anything? Is worship regulated? Is there a need for authority in worship?

As has been seen, we are under law. We do need authority in all that we do, including worship. Singing is authorized as an act of worship. Yet, there is no authority to play a mechanical instrument of music in worship to God.

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THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

Bill Goring

About the author...

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Some of us put so much emphasis on the death of Christ that we neglect His resurrection. Without the resurrection of Christ, the gospel is nothing. Without the resurrection of Christ there would be no need for the church. Without the resurrection of Christ, we would never be able to spend eternity with God. But I'm here today to tell you that Jesus Christ lived, died and was resurrected from the dead by the power of God, and is now sitting at the right hand of the Father!

The Significance of the Resurrection of Christ

I am going to touch on a few points of this great theme. This is a simple, straightforward message. What does it mean for us? Everything! Several texts prove this point, but none so eloquently as 1 Corinthians 15:20-26:

But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the first-fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.

If Christ has not risen from the dead, the long course of God's redemptive acts to save His people ends in a dead-end street, in a tomb. If the resurrection of Christ is not reality, then we have no assurance that God is the *living* God, for death has the last word. Faith is futile because the object of that faith has not vindicated Himself as the Lord of life. Christian faith is then incarcerated in the tomb along with the final and highest self-revelation of God in Christ—if Christ is indeed dead. But if Christ is raised from the dead, then God is over all things, even death.

The Resurrection of Jesus as Fulfillment of Jesus' Predictions and of Scripture

(cf. Matthew 17:9; Luke 24:46; John 2:22; 20:9; 1 Corinthians 15:4)

Again, several texts point in this direction. Note one in particular, John 2:22;

“When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said.”

After many hours of studying this subject, I have come to the conclusion that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is either one of the most wicked, vicious, heartless hoaxes ever conceived, or it is the most remarkable fact of history.

Some of the Facts Relevant to the Resurrection

Jesus of Nazareth, a Jewish prophet who claimed to be the Christ prophesied in the Jewish Scriptures, was arrested, was judged a political criminal, and was crucified. Three days after His death and burial, some women who went to His tomb found the body gone. In subsequent weeks, His disciples claimed that God had raised Him from the dead and that He appeared to them various times before ascending into heaven. From that foundation, Christianity spread throughout the Roman Empire and has continued to exert great influence down through the centuries.

Living Witnesses Testified of the Resurrection of Jesus

The New Testament accounts of the resurrection were being circulated within the lifetimes of men and women alive at the time of the resurrection. Those people could certainly have confirmed or denied the accuracy of such accounts.

The writers of the four accounts of the gospel either had themselves been witnesses or else were relating the accounts of eyewitnesses of the actual events. In advocating their case for the gospel, a word that means “good news,” the apostles appealed (even when confronting their most severe opponents) to common knowledge concerning the facts of the resurrection.

Background of the Resurrection of Jesus

The New Testament witnesses were fully aware of the background against which the resurrection took place. According to Josh McDowell, the body of Jesus, in accordance with Jewish burial custom, was wrapped in a linen cloth. About 100 pounds of aromatic spices, mixed together to form a gummy substance, were applied to the wrappings of cloth about the body. After the body was placed in a solid rock tomb, an extremely large stone was rolled against the entrance of the tomb. Large stones weighing approximately two tons were normally rolled (by means of levers) against a tomb entrance. A Roman guard of strictly disciplined fighting men was stationed to guard the tomb. This guard affixed on the tomb the Roman seal, which was meant to prevent any attempt at vandalizing the sepulcher. Anyone trying to move the stone from the tomb’s entrance would have broken the seal and thus incurred the wrath of Roman law (89).

But three days later the tomb was empty. The followers of Jesus said He had risen from the dead. They reported that He appeared to them during a period of 40 days, showing Himself to them by many infallible proofs. Paul the apostle recounted that Jesus appeared to more than 500 of His followers at one time, the majority of whom were still alive and who could confirm what Paul wrote (1

Corinthians 15:6). So many security precautions were taken with the trial, crucifixion, burial, entombment, sealing, and guarding of Christ's tomb that it becomes very difficult for critics to defend their position that Christ did not rise from the dead. Consider these facts:

C **Fact #1: Broken Roman Seal**

The first obvious fact was the breaking of the seal that stood for the power and authority of the Roman Empire. The consequences of breaking the seal were extremely severe. The Roman authorities would have been called into action to find the man or men who were responsible. If apprehended, it meant automatic execution by crucifixion upside down. People feared the breaking of the seal (McDowell 89-90)

C **Fact #2: Empty Tomb**

Another obvious fact after the resurrection was the empty tomb. The disciples of Christ did not go off to Athens or Rome to preach that Christ was raised from the dead. Rather, they went right back to the city of Jerusalem, where, if what they were teaching was false, the falsity would be evident. The empty tomb was too notorious to be denied. The resurrection could not have been maintained in Jerusalem for a single day or hour, if the emptiness of the tomb had not been established as a fact for all concerned.

C **Fact #3: Large Stone Moved**

On that Sunday morning the first thing that impressed the people who approached the tomb was the unusual position of the one and a half to two ton stone that had been lodged in front of the doorway. All the Gospel writers mention it. Those who observed the stone after the resurrection describe its position as having been rolled completely away from the entrance of the tomb (See Matthew 28:2, Mark 16:4, Luke 24:2, John 20:1). Now, I ask you, if the disciples had wanted to come in, tiptoe around the sleeping guards, and then roll the stone over and steal Jesus' body, how could they have done that without the guards' awareness?

C **Fact #4: Roman Guard Goes AWOL**

Matthew 28:11-15 says that the Roman guards, upon realizing the body was gone, ran to tell the chief priests what had happened. The Priests then offered them money to lie and say that Jesus' disciples had stolen the body. They said they would "secure" their lives if they lied. These Roman guards fled their post. They left their place of responsibility. How could their attrition be explained, when Roman military discipline was so exceptional? According to secular history this was one of the offenses that required the death penalty. The fear of their superiors' wrath and the possibility of death meant that they paid close attention to the minutest details of their jobs. One way a guard was put to death was by being stripped of his clothes and then burned alive in a fire started with his garments. If it was not apparent which soldier had failed in his duty, then lots were drawn to see which one would be punished with death for the guard unit's failure. Certainly the entire unit would not have fallen asleep with that kind of threat over their heads (Tucker 342)

C **Fact #5: Grave Clothes Tell a Tale**

In a literal sense, against all statements to the contrary, the tomb was not totally

empty—because of an amazing phenomenon. John, a disciple of Jesus, looked over to the place where the body of Jesus had lain, and there were the grave clothes, in the form of the body, slightly caved in and empty. That's enough to make a believer out of anybody. John never did get over it. The first thing that stuck in the minds of the disciples was not the empty tomb, but rather the empty grave clothes—undisturbed in form and position (John 20:2-8).

C **Fact #6: Jesus' Appearances Confirmed**

Christ appeared alive on several occasions after His resurrection. When studying an event in history, it is important to know whether enough people who were participants or eyewitnesses to the event were alive when the facts about the event were published. To know this is obviously helpful in determining the accuracy of the published report. If the number of eyewitnesses is substantial, the event can be regarded as fairly well established. For instance, if we all witness a murder, and a later police report turns out to be a fabrication of lies, we as eyewitnesses can refute it.

Over 500 Witnesses Confirm the Resurrection of Jesus

Several very important factors are often overlooked when considering Christ's post-resurrection appearances to individuals. The first is the large number of witnesses of Christ after that resurrection morning. One of the earliest records of Christ's appearing after the resurrection is by Paul. The apostle appealed to his audience's knowledge of the fact that Christ had been seen by more than 500 people at one time. Paul reminded them that the majority of those people were still alive and could be questioned (1 Corinthians 15:6). Let's take the more than 500 witnesses who saw Jesus alive after His death and burial, and place them in a courtroom. Do you realize that if each of those 500 people were to testify for only six minutes, including cross-examination, you would have an amazing 50 hours of firsthand testimony? Add to this the testimony of many other eyewitnesses and you would well have the largest and most lopsided trial in history.

Hostile Witnesses Confirm the Resurrection of Jesus

Another factor crucial to interpreting Christ's appearances is that He also appeared to those who were hostile or unconvinced. I have read or heard people comment that Jesus was seen alive after His death and burial only by His friends and followers. Using that argument, they attempt to water down the overwhelming impact of the multiple eyewitness accounts. But that line of reasoning is so pathetic it hardly deserves comment. No author or informed individual would regard Saul of Tarsus as being a follower of Christ. The facts show the exact opposite. Saul despised Christ and persecuted Christ's followers. It was a life-shattering experience when Christ appeared to him (Acts chapter 9). Although he was at the time not a disciple, he later became the apostle Paul, one of the greatest witnesses for the truth of the resurrection.

Theories

The following are some theories which some skeptics have promoted in an attempt to deny the resurrection of Christ.

C The Wrong Tomb?

This theory assumes that the women who reported that the body was missing had mistakenly gone to the wrong tomb. If so, then the disciples who went to check up on the women's statement must have also gone to the wrong tomb (John 20:3). We may be certain, however, that Jewish authorities, who asked for a Roman guard to be stationed at the tomb to prevent Jesus' body from being stolen, would not have been mistaken about the location. Nor would the Roman guards, for they were there! "If the resurrection claim was merely because of a geographical mistake, the Jewish authorities would have lost no time in producing the body from the proper tomb, thus effectively quenching for all time any rumor of a resurrection" (Geisler 74,75)

C Hallucinations?

Another attempted explanation claims that the appearances of Jesus after the resurrection were either illusions or hallucinations. Unsupported by the psychological principles governing the appearances of hallucinations, this theory also does not coincide with the historical situation. Again, where was the actual body, and why wasn't it produced (McDowell 82,83)

C Did Jesus Swoon?

"Another theory several centuries ago, is often quoted today. This is the swoon theory, which says that Jesus didn't die; he merely fainted from exhaustion and loss of blood. Everyone thought Him dead, but later He resuscitated and the disciples thought it to be a resurrection. It is impossible that a being who had been stolen half-dead out of the sepulchre, who crept about weak and ill, wanting medical treatment, who required bandaging, strengthening and who still at last yielded to His sufferings, could have given to the disciples the impression that He was a Conqueror over death and the grave, the Prince of Life" (McDowell 76-78).

C The Body Stolen?

Then consider the theory that the body was stolen by the disciples while the guards slept. The depression and cowardice of the disciples provide a hard-hitting argument against their suddenly becoming so brave and daring as to face a detachment of soldiers at the tomb and steal the body. They were in no mood to attempt anything like that.

The theory that the Jewish or Roman authorities moved Christ's body is no more reasonable an explanation for the empty tomb than theft by the disciples. If the authorities had the body in their possession or knew where it was, why, when the disciples were preaching the resurrection in Jerusalem, didn't they explain: 'Wait! We moved the body, see, He didn't rise from the grave'? And if such a rebuttal failed, why didn't they explain exactly where Jesus' body lay? If this failed, why didn't they recover the corpse, put it on a cart, and wheel it through the center of Jerusalem? Such an action would have destroyed Christianity—not in the cradle, but in the womb! (McDowell 75,75)

Real Proof: the Disciples' Lives

The most telling testimony of all must be the lives of those early Christians. We must ask ourselves: What caused them to go everywhere telling the message of the risen Christ? Had there been any visible benefits given to them for their efforts—prestige, wealth, increased social status or material benefits—we might logically attempt to account for their actions, for their whole-hearted and total allegiance to this “risen Christ.” As a reward for their efforts, however, those early Christians were beaten, stoned to death, thrown to the lions, tortured and crucified. Every conceivable method was used to stop them from talking. Yet, they laid down their lives as the ultimate proof of their complete confidence in the truth of their message.

Conclusion

On the basis of all the evidence for Christ’s resurrection, and considering the fact that Jesus offers forgiveness of sin and an eternal relationship with God, who would be so foolhardy as to reject Him? Christ has risen. He is alive!

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THE RESURRECTION

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Introduction

The Bible admonishes us in 1 Peter 3:15 *“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.”* In this study we will seek to set forth before every man the reason for the hope which lies within us about the resurrection. After all, the resurrection lies at the very heart of christianity (1 Corinthians 15:3-8). For if there is no resurrection we may as well enjoy the hear and now because tomorrow we die (1 Corinthians 15:29-32). If there is no resurrection, there is no point to christianity and *“...we are of all men most miserable”* (1 Corinthians 15:19). Therefore, it is impossible for us to be able to answer every man concerning the hope that lies within us about the resurrection.

Skepticism

There have always been those who've scoffed at the resurrection of the dead. In the days of our Lord there was the sect of the Sadducees (Matthew 22:23). They didn't believe in the resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit (Acts 23:6-8). It was no different in the days of the Apostles, when Paul spoke of the resurrection to the Athenians on Mars Hill the scriptures say *“...some mocked...”* (Acts 17:32). Nor was the church immune to these skeptics. Paul in writing to Timothy, told him of Hymenaeus and Philetus who taught that the resurrection was past already and thus overthrew the faith of some (2 Timothy 2:16-18). This erroneous belief may have had something to do with the events which transpired after the crucifixion. After Jesus was resurrected many of the saints which slept came out of their graves and went into the holy city and appeared unto many (Matthew 27:50-53). Let us remind you again that they were resurrected after Jesus had been resurrected (53). He was the first to rise from the dead never to die again (Colossians 1:18). Others were resurrected from the grave but only to die again. He was the first to triumph over death and the grave (Revelation 1:18). And as such He will some day deliver those who obey Him (Hebrews 2:14-15 and 1 Corinthians 15:54-58). Then there were those at Corinth who taught that there is no resurrection of the dead (1 Corinthians 15:12-18).

Indeed, the world has always had it's skeptics when it comes to the doctrine about the resurrection.

There Will Be a Resurrection

Job once said, *“If a man die, shall he live again...”* (Job 14:14). The answer to this statement is, of course, a resounding, YES! There will be a resurrection of the dead. How can we be so sure

that the dead will rise again? What proof is there to this end? There are many recorded cases where people have died and rose again. Let's note a few of them.

- C In John 11:43-44 we read how Jesus raised Lazarus from the grave.
- C In Luke 8:51-56 Jesus raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead.
- C Peter raised Tabitha (Dorcas) from the dead in Acts 9:36-41.
- C And, in Acts 20:9-10, Paul restored life to Eutychus after he fell down from the third story window and was taken up dead.

Remember, all of these people would die again. Jesus was the first to rise never to die again. While all of these accounts about those who have been resurrected from the dead are interesting and amazing, there is no story more compelling than the resurrection of the Lord Himself (Luke 24:1-9). His resurrection alone should be testimony enough to the resurrection of the dead. After all, if He died and rose again surely we will too. And not only us but all who have died in Him (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

Not only is there going to be a resurrection of the dead but it will be both of the just and unjust (Acts 24:14-15). The one will be resurrected to eternal life and the other to eternal condemnation (John 5:28-29). One will experience eternal bliss in heaven (Revelation 21:1-5) and the other eternal torment in a Devil's hell (Mark 9:43-48, Matthew 25:30, and Revelation 20:10). While the scriptures seem to indicate that there will be different degrees of reward and punishment in the resurrection (Luke 12:47-48 and Jude 9), let me assure you that the best seat in hell will be unbearable torment and the worst seat in heaven will still be eternal joy. The tongue of the orator cannot tell, nor can the pen of the writer describe, nor can the brush of the painter portray the beauty of heaven or the horror of hell. If they could, I'm sure that all mankind would amend his ways.

Questions Surrounding the Resurrection

There are many questions surrounding the resurrection of the dead. Some of these can be answered and some cannot. While God supplies us with all the answers to things which pertain to life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3), there are some things which we do not need to know in order to be saved. God does not always tell us all we desire to know about these things (Deuteronomy 29:29). I believe this to be the case concerning the resurrection of the dead. Some at Corinth, like many of today, wanted to know *"...how are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come"* (1 Corinthians 15:35)? Paul answers by explaining that there is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body, and that they are different from each other (1 Corinthians 15:36-44). Note that Paul never does tell us what the spiritual body will look like. Perhaps this is because it is not something we need to know. John seemed to agree with this when he said, *"...it doth not yet appear what we shall be..."* (1 John 3:2). If Paul and John, two inspired writers of God, couldn't tell us what the spiritual body will be like then how could anyone today make that boast?

However, there are some things about the resurrection that we can know.

- C There seems to be some type of recognition in the spirit world (Luke 16:22-24).
- C There is no need for sexual gender for there is no marriage or giving in marriage (Galatians 3:26-29 and Matthew 22:29-30).

- C A spirit does not consist of flesh and blood (1 Corinthians 15:49-52). Nor does it have bones (Luke 24:39).
- C But a spirit is eternal and incorruptible as is God (1 Timothy 1:17 and 1 Peter 3:4). The word used to describe God in the first text (immortal) and the one used to describe the hidden part of man in the second text (not corruptible) is the same Greek word. Thus, the scriptures teach that there is a part of man that is as immortal as God. There may have been a time when we did not exist but there will never be a time when we do not exist. We are one breath, one step away from immortality.

Conclusion

I'm sure we have not answered all the questions about the resurrection of the dead nor have we said all that could or should be said about the resurrection of the dead. We only hope enough has been said to explain to every man a reason of the hope that is in us about the resurrection. Because, there is going to be a resurrection of the dead. Both of the just and unjust. And, however we have lived here on earth will determine where we will live after the resurrection, in a Devil's hell or in heaven with God.

THE JUDGMENT

Toney L. Smith



About the author...

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Introduction

When man begins to contemplate eternity, very often he will take a position that is comfortable to his lifestyle or to his religious conviction. The Jehovah's Witness' doctrine states:

The doctrine of a burning hell where the wicked are tortured eternally after death cannot be true, mainly for four reasons. (1) Because it is wholly unscriptural; (2) Because it is unreasonable; (3) Because it is contrary to God's love; and (4) Because it is repugnant to justice. (Martin 48)

As comforting as this may sound, it certainly is not the answer, which is to be found in the Bible. In fact just the opposite is taught in the word of God. Notice the reply that Felix gave to Paul; *"And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee"* (Acts 24:25). If judgment is unscriptural, unreasonable, contrary to God's love and repugnant to justice, why did Felix tremble? The fact of the matter is that he understood that there is to be a judgment day! There will be a day in which all men will be brought into account for all they have said and done (Revelation 20:12-13).

After death what does man's future hold? Is it total annihilation? Man has a deep desire for happiness and an equal dread of misery and punishment. Therefore, he tries to cover over anything that is unpleasant and contrary to what he would like to do. However, in His infinite wisdom and power, God purposed not to permit anyone who would reject His love and grace to escape the unpleasantness of eternal punishment. There is a place which is *"prepared for the devil and his angels"* (Matthew 25:41). On the other hand, there is an eternal destiny for those who will accept the grace and goodness of God. Christ affirmed that there is to be a wonderful abode for the faithful. He said in John 14:3: *"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."* Only those who choose heaven over hell can enter therein. All of mankind will make a choice as to his or her eternal destiny. Only those who obey Christ and His commandments will find their eternal abode in the heavenly city (Revelation 22:14; Hebrews 5:8-9; 1 John 2:3-4).

Having established the fact of heaven and hell, we must now realize that there will be a

dividing of men as per their standard for living (Matthew 7:21-23; 25:41). This is where the judgment of God comes to play a part in our eternal destiny. God has determined that there will be a day of reckoning. Paul said, “...*he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness*” (Acts 17:31). This day of judgment will begin when Christ comes again. This event will include all men from every nation. It will affect the souls of every single person who has ever lived (Matthew 25:31-41). At judgment the righteous will find entrance into the “*kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*” (Matthew 25:34). But the unrighteous will inherit “*everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels*” (Matthew 25:41). Judgment is just as sure and as inevitable as every other promise of Almighty God (Titus 1:2). One man said, “A man is a rapid traveler upon the road that leads to death, the grave, the judgment and the endless hereafter.” How sobering this thought is, for it will be a day of reckoning, a day of rewards, and a day of joy or a day of unspeakable sorrow. This should quicken our minds to make sure that we are prepared for this great and notable day. It will be the day when the Lord comes to reward His servants. This day will be unmistakable and it will begin the promised judgment.

He Will Come as a Thief in the Night

“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (2 Peter 3:10). There are many false prophets today with regards to the “time element.” It is amazing how these religious groups hold to a belief that is clearly in contradiction to the word of God. William Miller said, “I am fully convinced that sometime between March 21, 1843 and March 21, 1844, according to the Jewish mode of computation of time Christ will come again and bring all of His saints with Him” (Martin 361). Seventh-Day Adventism opposes Matthew 24:36, “*But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.*” And Charles Taze Russell, a Jehovah Witness leader, said Christ came in 1914 but unseen to men (Lambert 10-11). The Bible teaches that when Christ comes He will be seen by all (Acts 1:9-11). How can anyone possibly say that His coming and the beginning of judgment will be silent and seen by a very few? The Bible loudly declares that this event will be ushered in with a great noise (1 Peter 3:10; 1 Thessalonians 4:16), that “*every eye shall see Him*” (Revelation 1:7), and “*all that are in the graves shall hear His voice*” (John 5:28-29). No, Christ will not come silently and secretly as some claim, but will come to execute judgment upon all of mankind.

Judgment Will Include Everyone

The Jehovah's Witnesses deny eternal judgment of the righteous and the unrighteous. They deny the reality of hell; “Hell, meaning a place of ‘fiery torment’ where sinners remain after death until resurrection does not exist. This is a doctrine of ‘organized religion’, not found in the Bible. Hell is the common grave of mankind. Hell is a God dishonoring doctrine” (Martin 48). The Christian Science religion also denies the existence of the Biblical heaven and hell; “The sinner makes his own hell by doing evil, and the saint his own heaven by doing right” (Martin 123).

The Bible teaches just the opposite of these opinions. Everyone will be there and judgment will not overlook a single person. Notice how clearly God has declared the scope of judgment; “*For*

we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10; also Matthew 25:32; Romans 14:12). Notice that in 2 Thessalonians 4:16-17 where the dead and those who are now alive will be involved in the judgment scene. Not one single person will bypass judgment. It will be awesome for all. Some will rejoice while others will rue the days in which they denied God and the commandments contained in His word (Luke 16:24-25).

We Will Be Judged According to the Word

There are multitudes of people today who deny the "plenary, verbal inspiration" of the Bible. They deny its all sufficiency and will look to human creeds, philosophy, and the mind-set of other men as their guide in life. Those who have ridiculed elders, gospel preachers, and every faithful member of the church will be surprised to see that Christ will open the Bible to judge them. What will people do at judgment who have made fun of God's word, or who have looked for a translation that contradicts Biblical truths? I am glad that I will only be judged by His standard and not from man's. John penned; *"And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works"* (Revelation 20:12). Many will be surprised to see that they will be judged from the very standard that they rejected.

The Judgment Will Be a Sad Day for Many

How could I possibly describe the final scene in such a way so as to convey the complete desperation that will face the lost soul? There will be an absolute realization of failure and feeling of utter hopelessness. The Bible describes the scene for the lost as *"weeping and gnashing of teeth"* (Luke 13:7-8).

Some doctrines teach that no one will be lost. Their idea is "universalism and grace only." This might give some comfort in the here and now, but this religious philosophy is not to be found in the pages of holy writ. In fact a casual reading of the Bible shows the absurdity of such an idea. Jesus taught that there are two roads over which men will travel. One is described as wide, leading to destruction and many would travel upon it; *"broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat"* (Matthew 7:13). While the other road is narrow, leads unto life and few will find it (Matthew 7:14). If there were no other passages in the Bible this would be enough to disprove the doctrine of universal salvation.

Every person who has not obeyed the gospel of Christ and lived faithfully therein will be lost eternally. When one rejects Christ and His church he literally rejects the salvation of his own soul! One must believe the truth concerning the church (there is one and only one: Ephesians 4:4; 1:22-23), that Christ is the Son of God (John 3:16), and that one is to be immersed in water for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16). Those who reject the Bible's teachings in these matters will be lost eternally.

We Have a Great Need to Be Prepared for Judgment

The finality that will be experienced on the Day of Judgment is a concept that staggers the

minds of men. We experience many things in this life, but they are momentary and fleeting. Our finite minds cannot see beyond the here and now. But at judgment a judgment will be given that will last eternally. It will be final. No courts of appeal, no lawyers to extend the rewards phase of our eternal destiny. Thus, it is exceedingly clear that everyone must prepare for the certainty and finality of this great day. The Scriptures ask a sobering question in 2 Peter 3:10-11;

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness.

Then in verse fourteen Peter records three things that are necessary for one to enjoy eternity. First we must be at peace with God. This involves being saved (Romans 5:10; Ephesians 2:12-13); being in the one true church (Ephesians 2:16); and being faithful (James 4:4; Colossians 1:21). Then we must be without spot. Everyone who will spend eternity with God is to be pure (Matthew 5:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:22; 1 Corinthians 3:16-17). And then Peter states that one must be blameless. This is not to imply that one will never commit sin (Romans 3:23; 6:23; 1 John 1:8). It does, however mean that we are to always repent and live in such a way that blame can never be placed upon us. Luke affirmed that to be blameless meant to walk in God's word; *"And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless"* (Luke 1:6).

Conclusion

The coming of our Lord will mark the beginning of eternal rewards or eternal punishment. We will all spend eternity in one of two places (Matthew 7:13-14). What will the Lord's return mean to you? It will be a time of rewards to the faithful (Matthew 25:21). It will be a time of vengeance to the lost (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). Never forget that there is a great day coming. It will either be a sad day or it will be a glad day. What we do in this life will determine our destiny. The Bible clearly shows that one must have faith (Hebrews 11:6), which is obtained by hearing the gospel of Christ (Romans 10:17). He must believe the gospel (Mark 16:15-16), he must repent of his sins (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38), confess that Christ is the Son of God (Romans 10:9-10), then be immersed in water (baptized) for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16). This puts one into Christ (Romans 6:1-11) where all spiritual blessings are to be found (Ephesians 1:3). This is the same process which adds one to the body of Christ, which is the church of Christ (Acts 20:28; Acts 2:38-47; Ephesians 4:4; 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18, 24; 1 Corinthians 12:13). After becoming a member of the body of Christ, a person must then live faithfully so as to obtain the eternal life (1 Corinthians 15:58; Revelation 2:10).

Surely, we can now see the importance of obeying the gospel and living for the Lord. Our eternal destiny depends upon how we will be judged at the great day of the Lord. Judgment is sure; eternity is an endless time that we all will have. Judgment will be joy for the Christian and sad beyond description for those who have now been obedient. The Father sent His Son so that we might rejoice evermore. Judgment will be a great day for the saved.

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CHURCH DISCIPLINE

Jim O'Connor



About the author...

Jim is a graduate of the Northside School of Preaching in Harrison, Arkansas. He began preaching in 1969. In 2000 he made his 11th journey to Europe and his 27th trip to India. His overseas work is under the oversight of the elders at 39th Street. His labors take him regularly to India, Estonia, Latvia, Philippines, Singapore and Costa Rica. His wife Judy is his co-laborer on many of the evangelistic journeys. They are also strongly involved in correspondence course work throughout the world. Jim has authored many tracts in the International Bible Studies series and also many of the lessons in the IBS Correspondence Course series. He is one of the writers for the International Bible Studies publication and involved in all aspects of the IBS work. He is an instructor in the Mid-West School of Biblical Studies. While in the United States he is a frequent speaker on lectureships and gospel meetings.

Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. That's 2 Thessalonians 3:6, and that church discipline! It is a subject that is ignored somewhat in study and ignored extensively in practice. Some even seem to resent the subject, looking upon it as unloving and beneath the character of one who follows Christ. However, this resentment comes from having subjectively judged the word of God, and having ignorantly reached a conclusion that is not only unwarranted, but perhaps even blasphemous.

Love is the very foundation of church discipline. In fact, it cannot and will not be practiced in a loveless atmosphere. If it is loveless, it is punishment, vengeance, or hatefulness, it is not discipline. Biblical church discipline will stem from love for the Lord, love for the Bible, love for the church, and love for individual brethren.

The Purpose for Discipline

If God requires the church to discipline the disorderly, (and he does, Romans 16:17, 1 Corinthians 5:11, 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 1 Timothy 6:5, 2 Timothy 3:5, Titus 3:10), then it becomes very important for us to seek as much understanding of it as we possibly can. I believe a failure to understand church discipline is to fail in the practice of church discipline.

We must not permit ourselves to be influenced by the views and practices of extremists such as the Catholic church practice of burning heretics at the stake, the Boston "Crossroads" practice of "Shunning" or withholding of love, or the liberal denominationalism's rewriting of the law of God to admit the lawless and permit lawlessness. So, we ask, Why does God demand church discipline? What is its purpose? What is it designed to accomplish?

It is designed to show that **the church is subject to Christ** (Ephesians 5:24). Subjection in only that which is convenient is what creates a denomination. Subjection in ALL things makes a church of Christ. Jesus is the head of the church (Colossians 1:18, Ephesians 1:22). The head seeks a "*glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing: but that it should be holy and without blemish*" (Ephesians 5:27). Church discipline is designed to take care of the "spots" and "wrinkles". In the context of discipline of the fornicator, and forgiveness and restoration at his

repentance, Paul wrote: *"For to this end did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things"* (2 Corinthians 2:9).

It is also designed to **save the soul of the offender**. The scriptures inform us that *"God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance"* (2 Peter 3:9). The ALL is inclusive of all who need to repent. In 2 Thessalonians 3:14 the scripture says; *"And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed"*. This is not seeking the humiliation of shame. It is seeking the fruit of shame, humility. Paul's instructions in 1 Corinthians 5:5, to *"deliver such an one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord"* shows very clearly what God intends to accomplish by church discipline.

Church discipline is also designed to **keep the church pure**. Paul wrote the brethren at Corinth, saying; *"Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened"* (1 Corinthians 5:6-7a). The influence of the ungodly will eat at the church. The church can survive in the world, but she cannot survive with the world in her.

Church discipline will also **deter wrong doing**. Paul told Timothy *"Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear"* (1 Timothy 5:20). Undisciplined sin encourages sin. When God disciplined Ananias and Sapphira the scripture says, *"And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things"* (Acts 5:11). God warned in Ecclesiastes 8:11 *"Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil"*.

Church discipline will **let the world know that the church stands for something**. It is said that *"those who don't stand for something will fall for anything"*. This is true for groups as well as for individuals. *"The husbandman that laboreth must be first partaker of the fruits"* (2 Timothy 2:2) is simply saying that conviction must be resident in the heart of the teacher if it is to reside in the heart of the taught. The world needs to know that the church does not endorse the sinful conduct of the disorderly.

Church discipline will also **make our message to the world believable**. A holy message will have little effect coming from a group that endorses, or tolerates, unholiness. Evil conduct not dealt with has crippled the evangelism efforts of many congregations.

Recipients of Church Discipline

Since church discipline is God's discipline, we must investigate his word for instruction in WHO should be disciplined as certainly, and as carefully, as we seek the HOW and the WHY. We are not wise enough, pure enough, nor strong enough to set our own standards as rules in this, or any other, area of religion.

Who does the New Testament describe as unworthy of Christian fellowship? Who does the Bible classify as recipients of discipline?

False teachers are to be recipients of church discipline. *"If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt*

minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself” (1 Timothy 6:3-5). False teachers should have neither audience nor working companion. “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. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed” (2 John 9-11). Those who will not teach what Christ taught should not have the blessing of those Christ bought.

Those who cause divisions and offences are not worthy of Christian fellowship and are therefore to be recipients of discipline. Paul wrote: *“Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them”* (Romans 16:17). The American Standard translation says *“turn away from them”*. This would certainly include the false teachers mentioned before, but it would also include those who would lead a rebellion over opinion. One of the things are God hates is *“he that soweth discord among brethren”* (Proverbs 6:19).

Included in the list of those worthy of discipline are **those who practice immorality**. Paul wrote to the brethren at Corinth and told them *“.....not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolator, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat”* (1 Corinthians 5:11). The words *“Put away from among yourselves that wicked person”* (1 Corinthians 5:13) are too clear to misunderstand.

Those who will not work are also among those who are to be disciplined. 2 Thessalonians 3:10-14 says of those in this category that we are to *“note that man, and have no company with him”*. This is not referring to the disabled, nor to the unemployed in a high unemployment area, but those who simply will not hold down a job and thus hold up their responsibility to their family. Such a one is *“worse than an infidel”* (1 Timothy 5:8) in God's sight.

Another recipient of discipline is **those who walk disorderly**. Paul wrote: *“Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us”* (2 Thessalonians 3:6). The word “disorderly” is a military term meaning “not keeping rank, insubordinate”. One who practices rebellion against ANY commandment of the Commander-in-chief of the Christian army is “walking disorderly” and is to be withdrawn from.

Why Don't All Churches of Christ Practice Discipline?

Church discipline is not a suggestion with optional compliance, it is a commandment from God! Yet it is obvious that it is often ignored. Why? Why is it that obedience in this important area of God's will is the exception and not the rule?

Perhaps some **have seen abuses and don't wish to be identified with it**. It is certainly true that abuses - terrible abuses - have occurred. One needs only to consider the Catholic practice of burning alive any who opposed their doctrines, or the practice by many religious groups of total social isolation, to realize it. However, people have abused food and medicine too. Are we to also stop their use?

I suspect there are even some who don't practice discipline because, deep down, they're just **not really opposed to sin**. That seems to have been the attitude somewhat in Corinth. Paul wrote: *“It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so*

much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you" (1 Corinthians 5:1-2).

I have actually heard it said that **too many need it, it would hurt the church**. Perhaps this is the attitude warned of in Matthew 24:12, *"And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold"*. How would it hurt the church? Her reputation? What kind of reputation does a church have where "too many need it", or that condones sin? Is it because it would hurt the contribution? When did dollars become more important than souls? Is it because it would hurt the work? What work? If too many need it there probably isn't much work being done. It never hurts the church to do God's will. Deciding that discipline would be bad for the church is deciding either that we are smarter than God, or that God made a mistake, or both. Perhaps a reminder of the words of Romans 11:34 is in order: *"For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counselor?"*.

Some actually justify ignoring church discipline by saying **It won't work here**. It worked at Corinth (1 Corinthians 5:1-2 & 2 Corinthians 2:6-7). Multitudes of current day examples of success could be found across our brotherhood. Deciding that discipline won't work because not all will be restored is no different than deciding the gospel won't work because not all will obey it. Remember that restoration of the erring is not the only purpose for discipline.

Some are perhaps **not really convinced of the truth that church members can be lost eternally**. No person is in worse condition spiritually than the Christian who fails to be faithful. *"For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning"* (2 Peter 2:20).

The Scriptures are clear on the subject of church discipline. The Lord has made it clear that some are not worthy of Christian fellowship. It is our responsibility to see to it that God's design in discipline is implemented.

FELLOWSHIP

Michael Wyatt

*About the author...*

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Introduction

A few years back, I ran into several people who said, "You have drawn your little circle of fellowship and that is sinful." I always countered with, "Well, you draw a circle of fellowship, too." They would deny such until I asked them, "Do you fellowship with the drunkard, murderer, immoral and ungodly?" Of course, their answer was, "No!" I would reply, "Well, you have a circle of fellowship, and what makes yours right and mine sinful?" It often took them a while to answer, if they could.

In the matter of fellowship, God has drawn the "circle" of our association, and it is futile for us to make fellowship elastic. Fellowship is based upon the grace of God and is extended on God's terms (His Word) as a foretaste and expression of heavenly fellowship. As there will be some that will not participate in heaven's blessings, there are some that should not participate in the church's fellowship. As closely as possible, we must mirror God's Word in our congregational fellowship and personal fellowship with those about us.

Do you believe in Universalism? That is, that all people, no matter what their beliefs or practices, are acceptable and right with God. If there are no limits to fellowship, every person who has ever lived is in fellowship with God and with every other person who has ever lived. Would you accept that Hitler, Judas (Acts 1:15-20), Jezebel (1 Kings 16:31; Revelation 2:20), Diotrefes (3 John 9), Hymenaeus and Alexander (1 Timothy 1:19), etc. are all acceptable to God in their ungodliness and are our brethren in the Lord? This is Universalism in its worst extreme. This theory ignores the difference between godliness and ungodliness, suggesting that both are equal before God and man. It ignores the righteousness of God and His attitude toward sin (1 John 1:5-7). It ignores the fact that justice is a righteous act and that it would be unjust to allow evil people to go unpunished and righteous people to go unrewarded. Universalism is false! If you cannot accept Universalism, you must admit to some limitations of fellowship with God and His people. Just what those limitations are and how far we can extend fellowship is the issue.

Please note that fellowship with God is equated with salvation. Anyone who is in fellowship with God is surely in a saved position (1 John 1:7; Hebrews 12:22-23). It may well be that some in the local congregation may not be in fellowship with God (1 Corinthians 5:1ff – the church permitted a sinner to be in fellowship unto Paul instructed otherwise). Likewise, some may be in fellowship with God while the church refuses to fellowship them (3 John 9-10; Revelation 2:24; 3:4). The membership list should never be equated with the "general assembly" of those "spirits of just men made perfect"

and who are “enrolled in heaven.” We may make mistakes, but God never does. So, while heaven’s fellowship is beyond our concern, we are required to exercise care and concern in the local, congregational fellowship (2 Corinthians 6:17; Ephesians 5:11). It needs to be clearly pointed out that it is the right (obligation) of the local church to control its membership and who is included. We must “judge righteous judgment” (John 7:24), or “judge a tree by its fruits” (Matthew 7:20). When Saul (later, the apostle Paul) “assayed to join himself to the disciples” in Jerusalem (Acts 9:26-28), he was excluded until information was given about his conversion that made him worthy of inclusion. Congregations are not required to accept every person merely because they express a desire to be a member. Congregations can exclude people from their membership who are not worthy (1 Corinthians 5). Principles upon which God would have us to extend or limit fellowship must be determined from the word of God. Our goal is to avoid including anyone among our number that God would exclude and to avoid excluding anyone whom God would include. We want our local fellowship to mirror, as closely as possible, the fellowship that God extends. (Roberts 1-2)

Definitions of Fellowship

To understand fellowship, we must have an accurate and working definition of the word as used in the New Testament. This is the basis for any fellowship.

A. Thayer’s Definition:

1. Koinonia (noun) – “fellowship, association, community, communion, joint participation...2. Fellowship, intercourse, intimacy...3. A benefaction jointly contributed, a collection, a contribution, 2 Corinthians 8:4; 9:13; Romans 15:26.”
2. Koinoneo (verb) – “to come into communion or fellowship, to become a sharer, be made a partner....”
3. Metoche – “a sharing, communion, fellowship; 2 Corinthians 6:14” (352).

B. W. E. Vine’s Definition:

3. Koinonia (Greek: noun): “(a) communion, fellowship, sharing in common (from koinos, common)...(b) that which is the outcome of fellowship, a contribution, e.g., Romans 15:26; 2 Corinthian 8:4.”
2. Koinoneo (Greek: verb): “to have fellowship, is so translated in Philippians 4:15, RV; for AV, “did communicate.”
3. Metoche (Greek: noun): “partnership, 2 Corinthians 6:14.
4. Metoche (Greek: verb): “Hebrews 2:14 – sharing” (233).

God’s Word Limits Fellowship

There are some obvious things in which Christians CAN HAVE NO FELLOWSHIP. Here is a list of scriptures which tell us the limits that God has given:

1. 1 Corinthians 5:5: Immoral people.
2. Romans 16:17; 2 John 9-11: Doctrinal heresy.
3. Matthew 18:15ff: Impenitent sinners.
4. Titus 3:10; 1 John 2:19: A factious man.
5. 2 Thessalonians 3:6: Those who walk disorderly.
6. Ephesians 5:11: Those who participate in the unfruitful works of darkness.

7. 2 Corinthians 6:14-18: those associations that cause us to share with those who deny God or God's word.

There are some obvious things in which Christians CAN HAVE FELLOWSHIP. Here is a list of such things:

1. We have fellowship with God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit: 1 John 1:3; 1 Corinthians 1:9; John 15; 2 Peter 1:4 (partake of divine nature); Philippians 2:1.
2. We have fellowship with Christ through keeping His commandments: 1 John 2:3-6; Matthew 28:18-20.
3. We have fellowship with brethren: 1 John 3:7. This is expressed as a "partnership" (metoche + qualifier):
 - a. Fellow prisoners – Romans 16:7;
 - b. Fellow workers – Romans 16:21;
 - c. Fellow partakers of gospel – 1 Corinthians 9:23;
 - d. Fellow partakers of body – 1 Corinthians 10:16-17;
 - e. Fellow partakers of promises – Ephesians 3:6;
 - f. Fellow partakers of grace – Philippians 1:7;
 - g. Fellow servants – Colossians 1:7; 4:7;
 - h. Fellow partakers of glory – 1 Peter 5:1.

Basically, fellowship is a participation or sharing in the things God has authorized. This may be classified as (1) having a share in: Philippians 1:5; 4:15-17, (2) giving a share to: 2 Corinthians 9:13, or (3) sharing with: Acts 2:42; Galatians 2:9; 1 John 1:3. This would extend to all people and all things which are approved by God and which are authorized by the word of God. A good question to determine whether or not we might have fellowship with a person or thing is to ask, "Would God share in this with me?" (Roberts 3-4).

Faulty Standards of Fellowship

Some extend fellowship to all that hold to the deity of Jesus. We are told that participation in error does not sever fellowship so long as we accept Jesus as the Son of God. This would make a distinction between "gospel" and "doctrine." Some determine that if you accept a "core gospel," you are in fellowship with God and no "doctrine" will sever this fellowship. However, this is an unscriptural distinction based on faulty definitions. Both gospel and doctrine are used interchangeably in the scriptures and our fellowship with God and our brethren is determined not only by what we believe about the "person" of Jesus (His Deity), but also what we believe about what He taught (Matthew 28:18-20). It is not possible to worship Jesus as Lord without doing what He says (Matthew 7:21). This loose attitude toward fellowship based solely on the deity of Jesus would compromise every distinctive facet of the church of Christ which we comprehend by the "doctrine of Christ" (2 John 9-11).

Some want to include everyone in fellowship who are members in a denomination. These would suggest that membership in a denomination is equal to fellowship with God. Such people make no distinction between the church which belongs to Christ and denominationalism. They also accept anyone of any denomination regardless of the creeds and moral values of that church.

First of all, we need to see that denominationalism is not equal to New Testament Christianity. Though a church existed in the time of the apostles (Acts 2:47; Romans 16:16), no denomination existed until sin entered the church (1 Corinthians 1:10-13) and division was condemned. No modern

denomination existed in the time of the apostles. The first denomination was the Roman Catholic Church (1 Timothy 4:1-3; 2 Timothy 4:1-4; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12), followed by the formation of Protestant denominations, beginning with Luther. Fellowship with God is found in Christ and His body, the church (Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:4; 5:23; 1 Corinthians 12:13), not in denominations started by men.

Secondly, extending fellowship to all that are in denominations would involve us in fellowship with immorality and religious error of every kind. Some denominations permit women to take leadership positions condemned by God (1 Timothy 2:12ff); others include immoral people in their membership (adulterers, homosexuals, abortionists, etc.); some allow, even promote, evolution, premillennialism, faith only, once-saved-always-saved, and other errors to be taught. Additionally, every denomination has a creed book in addition to the word of God to which it subscribes and by which it governs its members. Accepting fellowship with denominations involves accepting human traditions and human creeds which are not inspired from God and which contradict the scriptures.

We must remember that fellowship is determined by God's will and not ours. The church belongs to Christ (Romans 16:16; Acts 20:28) and he sets the terms of salvation and fellowship. What we do in extending fellowship is but an acknowledgement that Christ is head of the church (Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:22-23) and that we are seeking to act as He would wish us to do. Using personal feelings and emotions as a standard for fellowship is a faulty standard. (Roberts 2-3).

Proper Standards of Fellowship

Fellowship is possible, but it must come on God's terms, not man's. So, what are God's terms? THE BIBLE! God inspired the Bible as a pattern for man to follow. When we submit to His regulations, we are brought into salvation and guided through life to heaven.

God has listed His terms for fellowship in Ephesians 4:3-6:

Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

When we agree on these seven steps, then God will tie us into fellowship and we can walk together. However, if we deny even one of these, then we deny fellowship with God, the Bible and His church.

1. One Body. In Ephesians 1:22-23, Paul told them that the body is the church. Hence, one body means only one church.
2. One Spirit. This is the Holy Spirit. Sure, there were other spirits (i.e. demons, etc.), but there was/is only one right Spirit to follow.
3. One Hope. The Spirit calls us to have one hope, the hope of heaven.
4. One Lord. Though there are many masters that vie for our submission, only one Master deserves it. It is the Lord Jesus, who suffered and died for our salvation.
5. One Faith. The faith is the message that produces faith in the heart (Romans 10:17). It is the faith that was delivered once and for all (Jude 3).
6. One Baptism. Of all the baptisms mentioned in the Bible, only one is right in the sight of God for the present era. That one baptism is immersion in water to wash away sins (Acts 22:16).

7. One Father. He is Jehovah God, the Creator of the Universe, Giver of Light, Saver of Souls. Only by submitting to the will of the Father can we be saved (Matthew 7:21-23). God has promised that if we speak the same “things” and the “things” we speak are the truth about these seven steps, then we will have fellowship and be united.

Conclusion

What is the end result of speaking the same thing about the seven steps of unity? First, we gain fellowship and unity with God. John wrote his first letter because he wanted all believers to have fellowship with the Godhead (1 John 1:3). Second, we gain fellowship with others who speak these things – the church. Third, we gain strength from our common pursuit of heaven. Solomon said, “And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken” (Ecclesiastes 4:12).

Imagine standing arm in arm, hand in hand, shoulder to shoulder for the Lord! We would be able to take on the wiles of the devil and raise the righteousness of our nation (Proverbs 14:34). Combining our efforts, we could reach out more effectively to the lost and pluck them from the fire (Jude 1:22-23). The great product of fellowship is a massive workforce for God that will affect change in our world, our community, and our lives.

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MARKING FALSE TEACHERS

Richard Massey

About the author...

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From the very beginning, the church has been troubled by false teachers. Paul warned the Ephesian elders that false teachers would disrupt unity and would lead souls astray (Acts 20:28-31). Paul made it his practice to warn brethren of the dangers of false prophets. He stated to the Ephesian elders: *"For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock, also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them"* (vs. 29-30). At this point Paul did not know the exact names of the individuals that would create the problems, but did remind them, *"Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears"* (Acts 20:31). John informs his readers to be on guard against the numerous false teachers that endangered the spiritual security of the church (1 John 4:1). In Acts 15 we read of false teachers promoting circumcision as a part of the Gospel message of salvation (vs. 1). We must realize that these general warnings about false teachers are still needed today.

Not only did the church need a general warning about false teachers, but it needed a specific warning as well. To the Christians in Rome inspiration states: *"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them"* (Romans 16:17). This command clearly requires that false teachers be identified. How else could a purveyor of error be avoided? Only those who have been specifically named as false teachers can be avoided in particular. On two different occasions Paul, by inspiration, identified by name teachers who had departed from the faith. In 1 Timothy 1:19-20 he said, *"Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme."* Some brethren think it is wrong to publicly name false teachers. Did Paul sin by mentioning the names of these two men who had left the faith? No, certainly not! That conclusion is baseless. Paul is writing by direction of God. Timothy was given specific names of the ones that had departed the faith. All those who read the epistle would also be alerted to these men and the danger of their false doctrines. Since the epistles were inspired documents, they would be widely circulated and Paul was well aware of this.

Names were mentioned also in Paul's second letter to Timothy: *"And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already: and overthrow the faith of some"* (2 Timothy 2:17-18). Faithful brethren had a need to know; Paul knew this. The two names alerted Christians not to trust these men as teachers of the truth. They were apparently dependable men at one time, but not any longer. They had begun to spread lethal error that would upset the sound faith of Christians. God is right to have

these men identified (or marked) so that faithful brethren could now avoid them. John also identified Diotrephes as a man that needed to be confronted for the harm he was doing to a local congregation (3 John 12). This is the correct thing to do. A woman called Jezebel was identified in the church of Thyatira as a false prophetess (Revelation 2:20). God did not want anyone else following her, so He marked her by calling her name. Marking those who propagate error is correct procedure because the Bible says so.

There are several scriptural reasons for marking false teachers:

- C First:** A Christian is a spiritual soldier (Ephesians 6:10-18; 2 Timothy 2:3-4). A good soldier will warn his comrades of impending danger, for he is likened to a watchman on the wall (Ezekiel 3:17-21). It has already been noted that both Paul and John both marked those that could not be trusted to teach the truth. These inspired men have set the precedent through their pens and by their actions. The threat that false teachers pose is no less for the church today. If we care about the souls of others we will do what we can to notify members about false teachers and do so by calling their names.
- C Secondly,** those promoting error need to be marked by name because some false teachers were, at one time, men who were sound in the faith. The Bible says, *“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth and shall be turned unto fables”* (1 Timothy 4:3-4). We do not always understand why some good men turn away from the truth and accept false doctrine, but it happens nonetheless. Remember also that Paul said, *“Also, of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them”* (Acts 20:30). Paul was warning the Ephesian elders that from their own ranks false teachers would develop and cause division among the membership. In our own lifetime we have seen this happen over and over. Respected men, who were once trustworthy and faithful to the truth, are now venturing away from Bible truth. These men do not announce that they will depart from the faith and hold to the truth of the Gospel. They often claim that they are still preaching the same truth that they have always taught. It is imperative that our brethren be notified of those who no longer abide in the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9). Take heed to the following: *“From which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling; desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm”* (1 Timothy 1:6-7). When teachers swerve from the truth, we must then obey Romans 16:17-18 and make them publicly.
- C Thirdly,** much is at stake. The precious souls of men and women, boys and girls hang in the balance. Nothing is more valuable than the souls of men (Matthew 16:26). Not warning people of false teachers results in a tragedy of indescribable proportions; souls will be lost. In the presence of the scribes and the Pharisees, Jesus warned the multitude of these religious hypocrites (Matthew 23). In His rebuke, He pronounced eight woes upon them in their hearing. The Lord told the multitude that when the scribes and the Pharisees successfully converted a soul, that this person would be *“...twofold more the child of hell than...”* the scribes and the Pharisees were (Matthew 23:15). False doctrine condemns souls to hell; it does not save them. If a speeding bus were about to strike an unsuspecting pedestrian, it would be criminal not to warn them immediately. They will surely die or be badly maimed if they are not warned. Jesus sounded out a clear alarm to the multitudes because He did not want them to become

the victims of these wolves in sheep's clothing (Matthew 7:15). Jesus understood that when souls were in jeopardy, action is needed. Jesus did what was right, and we can only be right if we follow His example.

False teachers are often loved and given great devotion by those who have been fooled by the sheep's clothing they wear. When the name of the false teacher is announced, often the ignorant quickly come to his defense. It is not unusual for these men to be loyally defended by those who have no idea of the false doctrines they espouse. The false teacher often seems too kind, too respected and too popular to be guilty of teaching erroneous doctrines. To the masses the Pope seems too quaint, elderly, pious and revered to be leading souls astray. In the eyes of the public Billy Graham has shaken the hand of too many presidents to be capable of espousing false doctrines. Heaven's mandate requiring teachers to be tested is habitually ignored by the public and many of our own brethren (1 John 4:1). They just accept their popularity as proof that they are promoting sound doctrine.

Exposing false teachers does not enhance one's popularity. Jesus was crucified for being such an outspoken critic of hypocritical teachers. These false teachers did not like Jesus marking them. The same is true of the prophets. Instead of being commended for exposing false teachers, Jeremiah was made a mockery (Jeremiah 20:7-10). Moses also became very unpopular. He was blamed for the death of those that actually caused division among the children of Israel (when it was actually God who had destroyed the rebellious—Numbers 16:41-50). The record shows that Moses withstood them to their face and before the whole congregation. Stephen did not gain popularity for exposing the error of those in his audience (Acts 7:1-60). From these few examples we can see that identifying false teachers is often a dangerous undertaking. The sheep's clothing worn by false prophets has many fooled. Thus when faithful brethren have the courage to mark teachers of error, they will often be attacked and treated as wrongdoers. Defending false teachers will only mean that more souls will be affected by their error. As did the noble Bereans, you and I should always intelligently check the doctrines of all teachers against what the Bible says (Acts 17:11; 1 John 4:1). In other words, are teachers teaching exactly what God's word says? Never should we allow our emotions, love for an individual or sympathies for them dominate our rationality. Let no feelings hinder us from complying with the scriptures.

The elders of the church should take the lead in handling these matters. God has designated them as the spiritual overseers of the local congregation (Acts 20:28-31; 1 Peter 5:1-4). Titus was told to appoint men as elders who were *"holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers"* (Titus 1:9). A gainsayer is one who speaks against the truth. Elders must have the ability to identify false doctrine when they hear it and then have the courage to confront the purveyors of error immediately. Entire families can be lost to the error that false teachers bring, therefore the elders must not delay in taking action. Mouths of false teachers must be stopped (Titus 1:10-11). Since elders are watching for the souls of the men, members of the congregation should follow them in any marking procedures (Hebrews 13:17). Understand that there are some cases where the elders feel it unnecessary to disclose all of the facts; we should follow them nonetheless. Members should do their best to trust the wisdom and judgement of the elders.

The Lord made it clear that we will, without doubt, have encounters with false teachers. Peter wrote, *"But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them,*

and bring upon themselves swift destruction” (2 Peter 2:1). He made it equally plain that these men or women must be identified and avoided. We live at a time when a soft, easy religion is desired. Marking false teachers is not an easy thing for us to always do, but it is the true religion of the Bible. We must be courageous and brave and do what the Lord requires. Hesitation is not obedience. Complete obedience will ensure salvation for us and certainly for others as well.

ABORTION

Michael P. Wyatt



About the author...

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Since “Black Monday,” January 22, 1973, abortion has been protected by the U.S. constitution, as interpreted by the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court’s decision entitled *Roe v Wade*, along with its lesser-known companion case, *Doe v Bolton*, struck down all laws of any kind, State, Federal, or Local, that protected the lives of unborn human children. I emphasize human because it is still legal to protect unborn animals – only unborn humans are denied protection. The result was, for all practical purposes, legal abortion for any reason or no reason, throughout all three trimesters, with only the most minor restrictions being permitted in some states in the last few years. As a result, over 37 million unborn babies (approximately 1.5 million per year, 4000 per day, or one abortion every 21 seconds) have been slaughtered. Those numbers are so huge they stagger the imagination, so let’s put them into perspective:

- A. More deaths in any one-month than there were Americans killed in the entire Viet Nam War.
- B. The population of Augusta, KS, wiped out every 2 ¼ days.
- C. The entire State of Maine (1.25 million) or Nebraska (1.6 million) wiped out every year. (Kansas gets wiped out every 2 years. Has been destroyed over 13 times since *Roe v Wade*.)
- D. Total deaths since *Roe v Wade* equals the combined populations of 23 states! (Alaska, Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Utah, Vermont, West Virginia and Wyoming). (Slater).

Methods of Abortion

Abortion methods vary but include the dilation and evacuation (D & E), vacuum aspiration (suction) of the baby out of the uterus, saline (salt) poison of the baby through injection, hysterectomy (caesarian section) and prostaglandin-induced abortion which causes severe premature birth of the child. Many times these aborted fetuses are born alive and left to die of exposure. Today, aborted babies are being sold and used for all kinds of purposes. (Dodson 240).

The most recent method to come to our attention is that of partial-birth abortion. All have seen

or heard of the current Congressional debates regarding partial-birth abortion, which backers euphemistically refer to as “dilation and extraction.” As far as I know, the measures are at the point of this writing being discussed by our lawmakers in Washington. So that Christians might be informed on just exactly what is occurring in abortion-clinics, listen to late-term abortionist Martin Haskell from Dayton, Ohio, in a paper presented at a seminar sponsored by the National Abortion Federation. Robert W. Lee (*The New American*, 4-15-96, p. 4) writes that after locating the baby within the womb, Haskell goes on to describe his procedure. The

“surgeon uses his fingers to deliver the lower extremity [legs], then the torso, then the shoulders, and then the upper extremities.” With only the head remaining inside the mother, and the baby oriented “spine up,” the “surgeon then takes a pair of blunt, curved Metzenbaum scissors in the right hand. He carefully advances the tip, curved down, along the spine and under his middle finger until he feels it contact at the base of the skull under the tip of his middle finger.” He then “forces the scissors into the base of the skull. Having safely entered the skull, he spreads the scissors to enlarge the opening,” after which the scissors are removed and the surgeon inserts a “suction catheter into this hole and evacuates the skull contents [sucks out the baby’s brain]. With the catheter still in place, he applies traction to the fetus, removing it completely from the patient” (Haskell 4)

Let’s ask a few questions of Dr. Haskell and other players in this debate.

Question: Are these abortions done only for genetic reasons, such as to abort a deformed child?

Answer: “Most of my abortions are elective in the 20-24 week range...In my particular case, probably 20 percent are for genetic reasons. And the other 80 percent are purely elective.”

Question: Are not the babies either killed, or in a medicinal coma at the time of this procedure?

Answer: “No, its [the baby] not. No, it’s really not. A percentage are for various reasons. Some just because of the stress...” (Haskell during a 1993 taped interview with *American Medical News*.) “The baby’s body was moving. His little fingers were clasp together. He was kicking his feet. All the while his little head was still stuck inside. Dr. Haskell took a pair of scissors and inserted them into the back of the baby’s head. Then he opened the scissors up. Then he stuck the high-powered suction tube into the hole and sucked the baby’s brain out.” (Brenda Pratt Shafer, a registered nurse and one-time aid to Dr. Haskell).

Question: How frequently is the procedure performed?

Answer: “Frankly, I don’t think I was any good at all until I had done 3,000 or 4,000 [abortions] in later pregnancies” (James McMahon, medical director of the Eve Surgical Centers in Los Angeles, as quoted in the *Los Angeles Times* 1-7-90).

There, friends, is in part the essence of the current Congressional debates. Some of the Congressmen have responded only by refusing diagrams explaining the procedure to be shown on TV. They are afraid that if people would really learn what is occurring they would be against it. Have we advanced as a civilization past King Herod’s rule, who slaughtered the male babies of Bethlehem? (Lockwood).

When Does Human Life Begin?

The basic question that must be dealt with in this debate is: When does human life begin? If the unborn child is not a living human being, then killing (aborting) one is no different than stepping on a grasshopper; but if the unborn baby is a living human being (as I affirm), then abortion is murder!

Here we will list five basic positions regarding the question: When does human life begin?

I. **The infant becomes human at some point after birth.**

- A. Proponents of this view do not equate life with humanity – the child is living before it is human, according to them.
- B. Some of these Doctors and Philosophers have suggested that babies should be examined at birth, declared to be human if healthy/normal, if not, then killed.
- C. Dr. Peter Singer (*Pediatrics*, July 1983):

The philosophical foundations of the sanctity of life view have been knocked asunder. We can no longer base our ethics on the notion that human beings are a special form of life made in the image of God, singled out from all other animals with an immortal soul. Our better understanding of our own nature has bridged the gulf that once we thought to lie between ourselves and other species. So why should we believe that the mere fact that a being is a member of the species homo sapiens endows its life with some unique, almost infinite value? Only the fact that the defective infant is of the species homo sapiens leads us to treat it any differently from the dog or pig. The order of species, or species membership alone, should not have that kind of moral relativity.

- D. There is no Biblical basis whatsoever for this view. Its proponents are Humanists who do not believe the Bible anyway.

II. **The baby receives soul upon taking its first breath of air.**

- A. Claims Bible basis from Genesis 2:7, where God breathed the breath of life into Adam, and he became a living soul.
 - 1. If babies were formed by the same process Adam was, this would be valid.
 - 2. A child doesn't wait till birth to breathe. Oxygen is received via the mother from conception until birth.
- B. Other criteria for life make it clear that the baby is a living soul before being born, e.g. the life is in the blood (Genesis 9:4-5; Leviticus 17:11-14; Deuteronomy 12:23).
 - 1. An unborn baby has its own blood supply, independent of the mother's (may even be a different type).
 - 2. Proverbs 6:16-17, God hates hands that shed innocent blood. How He must hate the hands of abortionists!

III. **Life begins when the baby could survive outside the mother's body (viability).**

- A. This position has no claim at all for a Bible basis.
- B. This is a measure of how advanced medical technology is, not of human life!
 - 1. Babies survive today that would surely have perished thirty years ago. Are such

preemies human today, but they weren't back then?

2. If life equals ability to survive independently, then invalids are non-humans (this is why euthanasia has followed so closely on the heels of abortion)!

IV. Life begins when the baby moves (i.e. when the mother “feels” the baby move).

- A. The old term is “quickening.”
- B. No Biblical basis at all (but still held, especially by some who received medical education many years ago).
- C. This is a measure of the mother's sensitivity, not of the baby's alive-ness.
- D. Ultrasound demonstrates that the baby is moving long before mother can feel the movement.
 1. Heart begins beating at 18-25 days!
 2. A baby moves about, kicks, flexes, etc., long before being large enough that the mother can feel the kicks and pokes.

V. Life begins at conception.

- A. Psalm 51:5, David began to exist at conception; it wasn't just a blob of matter that later became David.
- B. All that is added after conception is nourishment and oxygen.
- C. An unborn baby is simply in an early stage of development, but is still a living human being! (Toddlers are not adults, but we agree that they are living human beings; they are in an earlier stage of development than we adults are.)
- D. A fertilized ovum is genetically identifiable as human, and is unique (today you have the same genetic code you had when you were one cell; no one else has ever had the same genetic code you have; no one will ever have it again.) (Slater, pages 1-3).

When the 23 chromosomes of the male sperm unite with the 23 chromosomes of the female egg at conception, a new being is created. After conception nothing is added to the fetus except nutrition and oxygen. The fetus is dependent on the mother for only three things: nutrition, oxygen and safety (constant temperature, etc.). After birth, the baby remains dependent on someone for nutrition and safety. Many newborns do not require external breathing assistance. However, as we learn more about Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, it is becoming evident that there are many children who do require, at times, assistance in breathing.

Everything that determines the physical characteristics of a child is determined at conception. Hair color, sex, eye color, height, skin tone, and mental ability are determined at conception. Even at two months old and only one inch long, the child has a complete set of working organs, heartbeat, and even brain waves. The embryo is but a miniature infant. (Dodson 240)

Prior to the 1973 Supreme Court decision, the conclusion of the medical group of the First International Conference on Abortion, 1967, held as follows:

The majority of our group (19 to 1) could find no point in time between the union of sperm and egg, or at least the blastocyst stage (the last part of fertilization where twinning occurs), and the birth of an infant at which point we could say that this was not human life. The changes occurring between implantation, a six-weeks embryo, a six

months fetus, a one week-old child, or a mature adult are merely stages of development and maturation. (Dodson 241)

The Biblical Standpoint

From the Biblical standpoint, abortion is murder! It is the killing of an individual, not the elimination of a part of the mother's body. Biblical principles clearly manifest that abortion is the taking of the life of unborn children. This is so because of the biblical implication that life begins at conception.

- A. Notice, under the Old Testament, God's severe penalty on even accidental abortion.

If any man strive and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart from her, and yet not mischief follows: he shall be surely punished, according as the woman's husband will lay upon him; and he shall pay as the judges determine. And if any mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life. (Exodus 21:22,23)

- B. Conception is given by God. *"and the Lord gave her [Ruth] conception, and she bare a son"* (Ruth 4:13). The Lord *"opened her [Leah's] womb; but Rachel was barren. And Leah conceived and bare a son"* (Genesis 29:31-32). Note also that *"the Lord had fast closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech"* (Genesis 20:18).
- C. God causes the fetus to develop. Job asked, *"Did not he that made me in the womb make him? And did he not fashion us in the womb?"* (Job 31:15). *"Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh...with bone and sinew"* (Job 10:11). *"For thou didst form my inward parts: thou didst cover me in my mother's womb"* (Psalm 139:13). *"Before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee...I sanctified thee, and ordained thee..."* (Jeremiah 1:5).
- D. One receives his spirit at conception; else how could Job have implored, *"Why died I not from the womb? Why did I not give up the ghost [spirit- MPW] when I came out of the belly?"* (Job 3:11). See also Psalm 51:5, which affirms that life begins at conception. Zechariah 12:1 states, *"...and formeth the spirit of man within him."*
- E. The unborn is a human being. John, the unborn babe, *"leaped in her [Elizabeth's - MPW] womb"* when she heard Mary's salutation; he leaped for joy (Luke 1:40-41). What a powerful proof that human life begins at conception! Note also that "brephos," translated "babe" here used is also used for an infant: *"And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger"* (Luke 2:12; cf. 2 Timothy 3:15). Thayer says for "brephos" "an unborn child, embryo, fetus; a newborn child, an infant, a babe." Paul was "separated" by God for service to Him while still a fetus (Galatians 1:15). Question: What if Elizabeth, Mary, and Paul's mothers had aborted them? Would that have been immoral? (Cates 80-81).

From the Biblical standpoint, abortion is murder. It is the killing of an individual, not the elimination of a part of the mother's body.

What Can We Do?

Realizing that life begins at conception, what can Christians do about abortion?

- A. Pray
 - 1. Pray for our government officials (1 Timothy 2:1-3).
 - a. Before you complain, pray!
 - b. Proverbs 14:34, *"Righteousness exalts a nation...."*
 - c. Proverbs 29:2, *"When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice...."*
 - 2. Pray for women with difficult pregnancies.
 - a. Most aborting moms are panicked, uninformed, desperate (may be pressured by husband/boyfriend, parents, peers).
 - b. Try to redeem, not condemn (John 8).
 - 3. Pray for abortionists (Matthew 5:44, compare with Luke 23:34).
- B. Vote
 - 1. One way of being salt and light (Matthew 5:13ff).
 - 2. You are a Christian everywhere you go, including the voting booth.
 - 3. This is not a corruption of religion with politics (or vice-versa).
 - a. Certainly the battle is ultimately won or lost by persuading people, not by passing laws – but;
 - b. God ordained civil government to administer justice (Romans 13:1-8); the majority of folks will not respond positively to God's word, but civil government exists to restrain those who would practice wickedness.
- C. Teach
 - 1. Teach (and practice) Biblical sexual morality.
 - a. Namely, that all sexual relations outside of marriage are wrong!
 - b. Prevention via purity (contrast to the world's teaching of prevention via safe/protected sex. Their prevention often fails and there is no such thing as safe or responsible fornication!
 - 2. Teach Biblical view of human life.
 - a. Genesis 1:27, that man is made in God's image.
 - b. Genesis 9:5-6, that life is sacred.
 - c. Abortion is logical consequence of theory of evolution.
 - 3. Teach the facts about abortion.
 - a. You would be surprised to know how many people think it is illegal to teach the facts about abortion.
 - b. Be assured the other side is busy teaching its lies and distortions.
 - 4. Teach the plan of salvation.
 - a. Unless we do this, we are just treating the symptoms. We must change people's hearts, not just their outward behavior.
 - b. Illustration: We treat the symptoms of a disease (e.g. fever, pain), but we must also treat the cause, or else the other is in vain. (Slater 3,4).

Conclusion

They continue to “*shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols...*” (Psalm 106:38). Make those idols lust, greed, and convenience, and you have the Holy Spirit’s indictment of our modern society.

It is tremendously sad that the evil of abortion exists. Who is willing to affirm, “*The baby is not a human life?*” Who? If it is a human life (one that is obviously innocent), then how can one conscientiously kill the child?

Saddest of all is that we have a society that does not care. In 27 years, we have not been able to pass a Human Life Amendment or get a Supreme Court who will overturn the horrendous Roe v Wade decision. How long can God allow the innocent blood of this nation to be shed without rendering judgment against us?

In this election year we need to let the world know where we stand on the question of shedding innocent blood. Let’s urge people to vote their consciences, and get this sad chapter in our nation’s history behind us! If not us – WHO? If not now – WHEN?

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EUTHANASIA

Eugene Jenkins

About the author...

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Introduction

We live in a complicated and confused world! On one hand we hear declarations about “save the child” and questions such as “Ask yourself, Is it good for the children?”. On the other hand we constantly hear declarations of “the woman’s right to choose” in regard to killing her unborn child, even when the only part of the baby remaining in the womb is the head (partial birth abortion). How can anyone be “for” the children when they uphold the barbaric murder of the unborn or partially born?

The complication and confusion does not end with the contradictory statements concerning children. According to Lottie Beth Hobbs, when abortion was legalized in 1973, “Astute analysts warned that the court ruling would result in ‘convenience’ abortions, and that legalization of euthanasia would in time logically follow” (3). Were those analysts correct? Indeed so! Each year millions of innocent children are murdered by legal butchers at the request of their mothers, for convenience, and the euthanasia movement is engulfing the world, including the United States.

Suicide

Adding to the confusion of our world are the conflicting views of those who promote the right to commit suicide, such as Derek Humphry, in his book *Final Exit* (a national best seller), which teaches people how to commit suicide with drugs and a plastic bag, and those who teach against it (Smith 3). According to Wesley J. Smith, recently:

...with mental health maven Tipper Gore at his side, Surgeon General David Satcher, issued an urgent “Call to Action to Prevent Suicide.” Suicide, Dr. Satcher wrote, is one of the country’s worst public health problems. Approximately 31,000 Americans die each day at their own hands (compared with approximately 20,000 homicides per year). Dr. Satcher bemoaned the appalling statistic that between 1952 and 1996, the number of suicides among adolescents and young adults, tripled. More teenagers and young adults die from suicide than from cancer, heart disease, AIDS, birth defects, stroke, pneumonia, influenza, and chronic lung disease combined. Suicide strikes elder Americans especially hard. Nearly 18 kill themselves each day, with the highest rate being among white American males, aged 65 or older. Unfortunately, Dr. Satcher’s campaign faces an uphill battle. The United States is growing increasingly pro-suicide and suicide promotion is ubiquitous (1).

Don't expect the confusion to end any time soon. After all, many of the same ones who call for "taking care of the children," and speak out against suicide, (such as Mrs. Gore) are the very ones who do an "about face" and strenuously defend the right to kill children in the name of "choice"!

Definitions

General definitions:

Webster, 1977: "Euthanasia [Gk, easy death, from *eu-* + *thanatos* death]: the act or practice of killing individuals (as persons or domestic animals) that are hopelessly sick or injured for reasons of mercy" (A. Merriam-Webster 395).

Webster, 1997: "Euthanasia. 1. Also called mercy killing. The act of putting to death painlessly or allowing to die, as by withholding extreme medical measures, a person or animal suffering from an incurable, esp. A painful disease or condition. 2. Painless death" (Random House 670).

The Voluntary Euthanasia Society defines Euthanasia as "good death. The word has come to mean the bringing about of a gentle and easy death" (1).

B. A. Robinson cites the Netherlands State Commission on Euthanasia as saying:

The word Euthanasia originated from the Greek language: *eu* means "good" and *thanatos* means "death." The meaning of the word is "the intentional termination of life of another at the explicit request of the person who dies." That is, the term euthanasia normally implies that the act must be initiated by the person who wishes to commit suicide. However, some people define euthanasia to include voluntary and involuntary termination of life. Like so many moral/ethical religious terms, "euthanasia" has many meanings. The result is mass confusion (2).

More specific definitions:

4. "Passive Euthanasia: Hastening the death of a person by withdrawing some form of support and letting nature take it's course" (Robinson 2).
5. "Active Euthanasia: This involves causing the death of a person through a direct action, in response to a request from that person" (Robinson 3).
6. "Physician Assisted Suicide: A physician supplies information and/or the means of committing suicide (e.g. a prescription for lethal dose sleeping pills, or a supply of carbon monoxide gas) to a person, so that they can easily terminate their own life" (Robinson 3).
7. "Involuntary Euthanasia: The term is used by some to describe the killing of a person in opposition to their wishes" (Robinson 3).
8. "Non-voluntary Euthanasia: Ending the life of a patient who is not capable of giving their permission" (Definitions 1).

Understanding The Terminology

One would think that the confusion concerning euthanasia would be overcome by a study of the definitions. Yet, this is not the case. In fact, confusion reigns over various terms used, and there

is good reason. Efforts are constantly made by the campaigners for the legalization of various forms of euthanasia, to incorporate pleasant words into their definitions, that will be more palatable to the masses — and they are often very successful (as are the proponents of the murder of the unborn) Concerning this, Rita L. Marker and Wesley J. Smith note:

“Sticks and stones may break my bones but words can never hurt me” was a children’s rhyme that was very common not many years ago. It was also totally wrong. The deep emotional pain inflicted by words can often hurt far more and for much longer than the physical pain of a broken bone. Today, as the debate over what has become known as the “right to die” is taking place another type of harm can result from words. That harm can be deadly. Words that sound familiar — like treatment, compassion, comfort care, and terminal — now may mean something far different than they did only a few years ago. Those words, as they are currently used, may do more than hurt. They may kill. Take, for example, the seemingly clear statement — “If I’m terminally ill, the only medical treatment I want is comfort care.” That statement could now be interpreted as a request for a deadly drug overdose by a person who has a life expectancy of months or even years (1).

It, of course, takes time for such changes to occur.

On January 27, 1939, in an article titled, “‘Mercy’ Death Law proposed in State,” the *New York Times* reported that the Euthanasia Society of America had drafted a bill to “legalize painless killing.” Charles E. Nixdorff, the group’s treasurer, took issue with both the article’s title and its reference to killing and, in a letter to the editor, he wrote that the words “killing” and “death” had sinister connotations. He suggested that it would be better to describe euthanasia as “merciful release” so that the public would not fear the Society’s proposal (Marker & Wesley 2).

Neither the newspaper, nor Mr. Nixdorff’s organization, heeded his advice, but they have learned a lot about public relations since then. One lesson they have learned and heeded is that “. . . all social engineering is preceded by verbal engineering. If words or their meaning can be changed, the quest to change hearts and minds will be achieved” (Marker, Smith 2). As a result:

. . . today when mercy killing is discussed, it is couched in euphemisms — words of gentleness or the language of rights. Titles of euthanasia advocacy groups contain words like “compassion,” “choice,” and “dignity.” Even the Euthanasia Society of American (sic) has undergone name changes to present a more positive image. (In 1976 the Euthanasia Society of America changed its name to the Society for the Right to Die and, in 1991, it became known as Choice in Dying.) No longer does anyone but its strongest opponent refer to mercy killing. The word “euthanasia” is generally avoided in proposals to legalize it. Old words are replaced or given different, vague meanings. Like a constantly changing kaleidoscope, meanings shift ever so slightly, forming new patterns of thinking. Slowly, quietly — but inexorably — the previously appalling is transformed into the present appealing (Marker 2).

The Slippery Slope

One of the arguments those against Euthanasia use is the slippery slope argument, which proposes that voluntary euthanasia will soon lead to involuntary euthanasia. Of course, the pro-euthanasia forces deny this argument, saying “This is misleading and inaccurate - voluntary euthanasia is based on the right to choose for yourself. It is totally different from murder. There is no evidence to suggest that strictly controlled voluntary euthanasia would inevitably lead to the killing of the sick or elderly against their will” (Answers... 1). Are they correct in their claim? Not according to *The Remmelink Report*, the first official government study of the practice of Dutch euthanasia, released on September 10, 1991. “The two volume report. . .documents the prevalence of *involuntary* euthanasia in Holland, as well as the fact that, to a large degree, doctors have taken over end-of-life decision making regarding euthanasia” (Euthanasia... 2).

According to the Remmelink Report, in 1990:

- < 2,300 people died as the result of doctors killing them upon request (active, voluntary euthanasia).
- < 400 people died as a result of doctors providing them with the means to kill themselves (physician-assisted suicide).
- < 1,040 people (an average of 3 per day) died from involuntary euthanasia, meaning that doctors actively killed these patients without the patients’ knowledge or consent.
 - < 14% of these patients were fully competent.
 - < 72% had never given an indication that they would want their lives terminated.
 - < In 8% of the cases, doctors performed involuntary euthanasia despite the fact that they believed alternative options were still possible.
- < In addition, 8,200 patients died as a result of doctors deliberately giving them overdoses of pain medication, not for the primary purpose of controlling pain, but to hasten the patient’s death. In 61% of these cases (4,941 patients), the intentional overdose was given *without the patient’s consent*” (Euthenasia... 2, 3).

“All of this was done even though “Dutch Penal code Articles 293 and 294 make both euthanasia and assisted suicide illegal, even today” (Euthanasia... 1). How could this be? “. . .as the result of various court cases, doctors who directly kill patients or help patients kill themselves will not be prosecuted as long as they follow certain guidelines” (Euthanasia... 1). The problem is that since 1981 those guidelines “have been interpreted by the Dutch courts and Royal Dutch Medical Association (KNMG) in ever-broadening terms” (Euthanasia... 1). It surely sounds like the “slippery slope” argument has been proven to be true. Surely, we cannot believe that the slope is any less slippery here in our own country!

Confusion Continues

As noted at the beginning of this study, we live in a complicated and confused world. Well, the confusion continues! The proponents of euthanasia encourage the continuation of confusion by the redefining of terms. The emotional state of patients and their families brings about confusion as well. How can we overcome that confusion? This is an especially important question for those of us who

are Christians. How do we give an answer about euthanasia? How do we deal with the claims and counter claims concerning the issue? How do we deal with the emotions of others, and ourselves, concerning loved ones — and even ourselves?

God's Divine Will

The most important place for us to turn is God's divine will. Surely, the answers we need are there! Please consider:

- < Human life is sacred because God “. . .giveth to all life, and breath, and all things. . .” and “. . .in him we live, and move, and have our being. . .For we are also his offspring” (Acts 17:25-28).
- < God's regard for the sacredness of life is seen in the regulation recorded in Genesis 9:6, which says, *“Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.”*

As Lottie Beth Hobbs notes, “This contains two very strong points. Man's life is sacred for he is made in God's image. It also establishes that one who sheds innocent blood becomes guilty and worthy of capital punishment. This principle is re-stated in the New Testament -- Romans 13:4” (20).

The Psalmist requested of God, *“Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth”* (Psalm 71:9). Again, in verse 18 he declared, *“Now also when I am old and grayheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come.”* God does not forsake the elderly, and neither should we! Instead of accepting the idea that they are not useful in their latter years, or allowing them to think so, we need to recognize their usefulness in speaking of and showing God's power.

One of the most powerful arguments against euthanasia concerns the case of King Saul, recorded in 1 Samuel 31:1-6. Saul had been mortally wounded in battle against the Philistines. Rather than die slowly in torture or suffer humiliation from the enemy, he begged his armour-bearer to kill him. Rightfully, his armour-bearer refused, and so Saul tried to commit suicide. Later, as recorded in 2 Samuel 1:1-10, an Amalekite who was passing by heard the same request from Saul; *“Stand, I pray thee, upon me, and slay me: for anguish is come upon me, because my life is yet whole in me”* (v. 9). What did the Amalekite do? He did exactly what the proponents of euthanasia want us to do today. *“So I stood upon him, and slew him, because I was sure that he could not live after that he was fallen. . .”* (v. 10). A key question is, “WHAT WAS GOD'S REACTION TO THIS ACT OF EUTHANASIA?” **GOD CONDEMNED HIM! HE WAS THUS PUT TO DEATH** (v. 13-15)! From this judgement, we must conclude that it was totally unacceptable to God, regardless of the motive behind it (Simpson 685; Gore).

The supporters of euthanasia argue against such verses by declaring, “None of the religious arguments against assisted dying are relevant to those who do not share those beliefs” (Religious Views...2). They then document various denominational preachers and teachers and give statistics from opinion polls that show that large percentages of religious people are in favor of medical aid in dying (Religious Views...1-3). All that such arguments prove is that the majority of people have left the standard that God has given. When one leaves God's standard it is easy to leave again and again — another slippery slope. Of course, leaving the standard, does not mean that the standard changes, or that they are not going to be held accountable to it!

Conclusion

Friends, the practice of Euthanasia has many advocates. They have made many inroads. They continue to “soften” the terminology used to make it easier for people to accept what will be done.

Simply put, we need to be aware. Lessons such as this one will help with that awareness, but there is simply too much going on to cover it all in such a short time frame. Please take the time to study further on this issue. Always keep in mind that although “pro-euthanasia groups and the media tend to focus on a patient’s right to self-determination. . . such rights mean nothing without a recognition of the fundamental sanctity of human life” (Major 691, 692).

One of the specific items that I will personally be taking a closer look at is “living wills.” After my mother’s death in February, I, along with my siblings, encouraged many people to have one made. “Living wills seem practical, and there is nothing intrinsically immoral about such statements (only if they remain consistent with the sanctity-of-life ethic)” (Major 695). Yet, in my study for this lesson, I have recognized that the living will does have its problems, and often is used as a tool to “get in the door” concerning euthanasia.

Bill Goring said in his tract on this subject, “The legalization of euthanasia represents a ‘Pandora’s Box’ of evils about to be thrust upon society. Christians must actively oppose this type of atrocity.” Brethren and friends, those evils have indeed been thrust upon us, and we as God’s people MUST oppose them!

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DRUGS, ALCOHOL AND TOBACCO

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Introduction

Drugs, Alcohol and Tobacco contribute greatly to many of the problems in our society. "Ready To Give An Answer" regarding drugs, alcohol and tobacco is needed today as much, maybe more, than at any other time in the history of our nation.

It will be our purpose to discuss drugs, alcohol and tobacco in the following ways:

1. Drugs:
 - a. What are they?
 - b. What is drug abuse?
 - c. Why do people turn to drugs?
 - d. Why Christians must leave drugs alone.
2. Alcohol:
 - a. The Use of Alcohol is a real problem.
 - b. Solomon's description of the effects of alcohol.
 - c. What Alcohol Does or Will Cause People to do.
3. Tobacco:
 - a. The high cost of smoking.
 - b. Some reasons why the Christian must not smoke.

DRUGS

The drug problem has reached momentous proportions. It is estimated that more than 6,000 people a year die from the use of cocaine and opiates such as heroin. Drugs are one of the biggest businesses in the world—a \$500 billion-a-year business, says the U. S. Senate. More than \$95 billion are raked in by cocaine dealers each year.

There are five categories in which abusable drugs can be divided. First, there are barbiturates (sedatives, depressants) that were introduced in 1846. Second, Amphetamines (stimulants) were introduced in 1930. Third, hallucinogens have been defined "as substances which are capable of producing bizarre and even colored interpretations of visual and other external stimuli by action on the brain and all the body senses." Fourth, Marijuana is a drug found in the flowering tops and leaves of the Indian hemp plant. Fifth, narcotics are addictive drugs which provide insensitivity to pain when

properly used, but which in excess will produce stupor, coma and sometimes death.

What is Drug Abuse?

It is a chain smoker unable to quit. It is a lady starting her day with a diet pill for a pickup and ending it with a sedative for sleep. It is a man habitually unwinding with several drinks. It is a twelve-year-old experimenting with glue sniffing. It is a teenager smoking pot. It is the hard-core addict-shooting heroin. Above all, it is a threatened person chemically retreating from stress.

Why Do People Turn To Drugs?

First, some people become addicted to drugs through the course of legitimate medical treatment. Individuals may be given large doses in cases of burns, etc., and their bodies become physically dependent on them.

Second, some peoples' addiction comes as a result of intemperate curiosity. There is nothing wrong with curiosity provided it is tempered with reason, caution and common sense. Curiosity leads to desire, desire leads to experimentation and experimentation may well be that door that leads to addiction.

Third, some start on drugs out of a desire to conform to what their friends or classmates are doing. Everyone likes to be accepted and a part of their group.

Fourth, some use drugs as a means of escape. Doctors sometimes administer drugs in a constructive way to escape pain. It may be an effort to escape reality. It may be an effort to escape boredom. It could be an effort to escape loneliness. Psychiatrists say that people with a strong sense of purpose have no need of escapism offered by drugs.

Fifth, some use drugs as a sign of rebelliousness or non-conformity to "the establishment" and its traditional ideas and standards.

Sixth, some use drugs because of their desire for pleasure. Their friends tell them about their pleasant experience while under the influence of drugs. They try it, hoping for the same "good trip," but theirs may be a "bad trip."

Why Must Christians Leave Drugs Alone?

First, such use of drugs (except those prescribed for medical purposes) is illegal. There are both state and federal laws dealing with narcotics. The Christian is obligated to obey every ordinance of man, whether he likes it or not, so long as it does not conflict with God's law (Romans 13:1-7; Acts 5:29; 1 Peter 2:13-17).

Second, Christians are to "*abstain from all appearance [every form - JM] of evil*" (1 Thessalonians 5:22; Cf. Ephesians 5:11; 1 Peter 2:11). The use of drugs and narcotics is surrounded by too many other evils—crime, immorality, and degradation.

Third, evil companions corrupt good morals (1 Corinthians 15:33). Many addicts get in the "wrong crowd." Some surveys show that 54% started using drugs because some friends of the same age did.

Fourth, the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and one must not abuse it (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). Drug abuse affects the mind and the body.

Fifth, the Christian does not require drugs for “kicks” and “escapism.” The Christian life should be full and satisfying because of our relationship with Christ (Galatians 2:20). Paul learned to be content in Christ (Philippians 4:11; Cf. 1 Timothy 6:6) – not in drugs.

Sixth, sin enslaves (Romans 6:16). No slave was ever more whipped than the dope addict.

ALCOHOL

Drunkenness and other evil effects of alcohol constitute one of the gravest social problems in America today. Claude Gardner said, “drinking in America is condoned, popularized and advocated. It has been made glamorous, even essential to social mobility. Tippling and ‘social drinking’ have been galvanized into respectability.” Dr. Albert Schweitzer believed that “drink is commercially our greatest waste, socially our greatest criminal, morally and religiously it is our greatest enemy.” Some doctors and psychiatrists consider alcoholism to be our “number one mental health problem.” Some people do not realize that alcohol is itself a drug.

Solomon's Description of Alcohol

Who hath woe? Who hath sorrow? Who hath contentions? Who hath babbling? Who hath wounds without cause? Who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder (Proverbs 23:29-32).

All of these symptoms are familiar, but all may not know that Solomon's description is also scientifically accurate. A medical authority writes:

Under the influence of alcohol our animal tendencies, which are normally under the control and restraint of the highest brain centers—those through which our will, our self-control, our judgment, our reasoning, etc., are exerted—are depressed, and there results a certain freedom from restraint, with consequent failure of judgment, inability to appreciate or to weigh consequences of one's acts, marked overconfidence in one's powers, both mental and physical, careless, freer speech, and other evidence of profound intellectual depression.

The serpent and adder (viper) simile is also remarkably accurate from the scientific standpoint. The serpent (Cobra of India, coral snake, cottonmouth moccasin) bite their victims—that is, they insert the fangs and macerate or chew the tissue as the venom is being injected. Hence the expression “biteth like a serpent.” The venom of this class of snakes is predominately a poison of the nerve tissue, and is, therefore scientifically classed as a neurotoxin. The viper class (rattlesnakes) does not bite, but strike and drive their fangs like the sting of a wasp, inject the venom and withdraw in a fraction of a second. The venom is a poison of the blood and blood vessels, it is therefore classed as a hematoxin. The serpents bite and the adders sting. Alcohol does both. The venom of the serpent is a neurotoxin and that of the adder is hematoxin. Alcohol is both. At the last the drunkard is a mental or nervous wreck. Alcohol as a neurotoxin has ruined her nerves. Alcohol as a hematoxin

wrecks his whole body. Some medical authorities class sixty diseases as directly or indirectly traceable to alcohol.

What Alcohol Does or Will cause People To Do

First, alcohol corrupts courts and government, bringing national destruction and shame.

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 (Isaiah 5:22-24).

Second, alcohol inflames lust, deadens judgment and enslaves the will.

Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things. Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast. They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again (Proverbs 23:33-35).

Third, alcohol makes men forget God.

Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them! And the harp, and the viol, the tabret, and pipe, and wine, are in their feasts; but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands (Isaiah 5:11-12).

Fourth, the curse of God is on every man, every business, and every government that gives or sells liquor.

Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and makest him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness! Thou art filled with shame for glory: drink thou also, and let thy foreskin be uncovered: the cup of the Lord's right hand shall be turned unto thee, and shameful spewing shall be on thy glory (Habakkuk 2:15-16).

Fifth, the Bible clearly reveals some of the terrible things individuals will do while under the influence of alcohol. Noah, the first picture of drinking became drunken, lay naked in the tent before his family, and later cursed one of his sons (Genesis 9:20-25). Lot was drunk when he committed incest with his daughters (Genesis 19:30-36). Nabal, a rich but churlish man who opposed David, died at the end of a drunken spree (1 Samuel 25:36-38). Amon, when his heart was merry with wine,

murdered his brother Absalom (2 Samuel 13:28-29). Elah, king of Israel, was slain by Zimri, his captain *“as he was...drinking himself drunk”* (1 Kings 13:8-9). While Benhadad, king of Syria, was drinking himself drunk a few Israelites put his army to flight (1 Kings 20:13-20). Ahasuerus, king of Media and Persia, when his heart was merry with wine, commanded his wife to display her beauty before drunken men (Esther 1:10-11).

Sixth, alcohol leads to poverty and rags. *“Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh: For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags”* (Proverbs 23:20-21).

Seventh, drunkenness will keep people out of heaven.

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies. Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God (Galatians 5:19-21).

Eighth, the Lord will forgive drunkards that gave up alcohol.

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, not effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you;’ but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

TOBACCO

Over 400,000 Americans die every year from smoking-related diseases. Former U. S. Surgeon General, C. Everett Koop, said he believes that tobacco products are “just as addictive as heroin and cocaine.” It is loosely estimated that, due to smoking, the cost in health care expenses, and lost productivity is over \$52 billion.

Some Reasons Why The Christian Must Not Smoke

First, smoking hurts your influence, especially with non-smokers. Most Christians believe that smoking hurts one’s influence because they don’t want their preacher to smoke. One teenager said to his mother: “How can the teacher tell me I ought not to smoke when he has a package of cigarettes in his shirt pocket?” Another individual, in whose home a Christian was conducting a Bible study, said: “It was hard for me to listen to him as he blew smoke in my face.”

Second, you are filling the temple of the Holy Spirit with poison. Webster defines nicotine as “a very poisonous voltaic weakly basic liquid alkaloid...that constitutes the chief active principle of tobacco.”

What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's (1 Corinthians 6-19-20).

Third, you are depriving yourself, your family and your God of money that could be used for good purposes. If an individual smokes two packs a day his tobacco cost each month will be approximately sixty-five dollars. Is this being a good steward of your money?

Fourth, you are shortening your life, in fact some would say one is slowly committing suicide. All of us have likely heard people excuse themselves from a group to go out and smoke by saying, "I'm dying for a smoke." The evidence from medical search groups is in and their conclusion is essentially the same. People are dying for a smoke.

Warning after warning is given that smoking can be harmful to your health. Many diseases are caused by smoking. Some surveys show there is one-fourth less lung cancer among non-smokers.

Fifth, many Christians have doubts about what they are doing. "I know I should quit" or "do you think it is a sin to smoke?" indicates doubt. The man that doubts what he is doing sins by doing it.

Hast thou faith? Have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin (Romans 14:22-23).

Sixth, smoking will enslave you. "*Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey*" (Romans 6:16). The nicotine in tobacco becomes something that tobacco users crave. But the smoker willingly follows his taskmaster. First, he will patiently endure endless unpleasantness for his taskmaster—hacking, shattering morning cough, smokers' headaches, cigarette-induced mouth and stomach complaints. Second, he will tolerate burned holes in his clothing, furniture, rugs and tablecloths. Third, he will fork over more money for insurance policies. Fourth, he will willingly put up with the characteristic odor of a smoker. Fifth, he will knowingly risk offending those who don't smoke.

CONCLUSION

Smoking will have dangerous consequences. Nicotine has no beneficial effects in alleviating nervous tension. Smoking is largely a matter of the mind. Without smoking your influence will be greater; your body will truly be a temple of the Holy Spirit; you will have more money; you will live longer, and you will be the kind of person God wants you to be.

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MODESTY AND DANCING

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Modesty

It is apparent that as each year passes men and women are exposing more and more skin to the public. People are under the impression that less is better when it comes to clothing. For example in the world of sports (i.e. gymnastics, ice-skating and track and field, etc.) the clothing has become extremely abbreviated and more revealing. Also, swim wear (as compared to what was worn at the turn of the last century) has gone beyond shameful and in the future, if trends continue as they are, will probably be eliminated altogether. Clothes that people wear every day are shorter, skimpier, and designed to be sexier looking. Social influences definitely affect the attitude of church members. People imitate the things they see others do. It has been called the “monkey see, monkey do syndrome.” Yes, even ladies in the church are starting to show more of their flesh. Their shorts are getting shorter and their necklines are dipping lower. It is unfortunate that they fail to see a problem with it. The world has conditioned them to believe that if it is socially acceptable, then it is also morally acceptable. It is apparent that more teaching needs to be done on the subject.

It is my belief also that Genesis three is the logical place to begin a study of modest clothing. In the sequence of events found in Genesis three God reveals elementary matters on the clothing that He prefers. When Adam and Eve sinned for the first time their eyes were opened, and it was at this point they perceived that their bodies were naked (Genesis 3:7). The first couple immediately tried to cover their bodies; it was their first attempt to clothe themselves. The Bible says they made aprons of fig leaves (Genesis 3:8-9). They knew that being naked was not the way to be seen of God. They nakedness made them ashamed. Men and women must learn the same sense of shame. It is shameful to be naked before the eyes of others.

Adam and Eve worked to cover their private parts with the fig leaves (Genesis 3:7). But the fig leaves did not cover enough of their bodies. It is tremendously important to recognize that God was not satisfied with the aprons which Adam and Eve had made. Brevity is not what God is looking for in clothing. The aprons did not pass the inspection of God. The aprons were immediately replaced with coats of animal skin (Genesis 3:21). Even though there were only two people inhabiting the earth at this time, it was time for them to become accustomed to having on clothes, for they were to wear them for the rest of their lives. If the abbreviated clothing was not acceptable to God then, what makes us think that He is different now?

The tunic is a long garment that covers a major portion of the body. All those wishing to please Him must duly note the fact that God wanted their bodies **completely** covered. God did not make short shorts, mini-skirts, bikinis, halter-tops, etc. He did not make clothes that look like the outfits

Tarzan and Jane wore in the Hollywood movies. Artists have often portrayed Adam and Eve in clothing that resembles the cave-man look (rough, shaggy-looking animal skins). Do we not think that God is capable of making something more tailored than a cave man suit? The priests under the law of Moses also wore coats, however, artists in these instances are always careful to draw human images with longer and more beautiful garments (Exodus 28:40; 29:8; 39:27). Do the artists really think that God is incapable of making beautiful clothing? If God made the clothing, and He did, then why do we think it was crudely constructed? God can make beautiful clothing and He can make it modest at the same time. Coats are long garments, therefore we know that God has authorized such as modest apparel. Who can deny it? Fashion designers in Paris or New York may think skimpy clothing is in vogue, but God does not.

Whatever God does is highly significant. If man is to please God then close attention must be paid. The account of Adam and Eve happened approximately six thousand years ago, even so the Bible does not record an instance where God has change this initial standard of long clothing. It was long for modesty then, and it must be the same for modesty today. Yes civilization has made advancements and many things are different now, however this does not mean that God's standard of modest clothing has changed. Just because we drive automobiles and Adam did not, does not mean we can shorten our clothing. If God is to be pleased then it must be done with modest clothing. God has set the standard and we must stay accustomed to it.

That standard of modesty can be seen again in the robes that the Levitical priests were commanded to wear. The same word that is translated "coat" in Genesis 3:21 is also used to refer to the robes of the priests. Because it is the same word, we can be sure that the coats of Adam and Even are similar in length to the ones worn by priests. Today it is believe that if the climate is hot then you ought to take clothing off to stay cooler. However, consider that for the first forty years these Levitical priests wore their coats it was in the very hot desert wilderness of the Sinai Peninsula. Even today, residents of Saudi Arabia wear long flowing robes in this hot region. Wearing less does not equate to cooler body temperatures. Clothing that is wet with perspiration is far cooler than just the bare skin. Besides, God was not trying to make life miserable for the priests, but that they would be modestly dressed.

Let's not attempt to associate culture with what God required of people in those times. Culture had nothing to do with the way Adam and Eve dressed. There was no culture in the beginning; Adam and Eve were the setting the trends in their day and the trend called for long garments. It had nothing to do with culture but everything to do with pleasing God. The same was true of the children of Israel. They were separated from all other nations before the robes were made, hence the robes did not need to meet with any cultural requirements of the day. They just followed the pattern set by the Lord.

Furthermore, beneath the coats the priests were commanded to wear pants (Exodus 28:40-43). God gave the following instructions, "*And thou shalt make them linen breeches to cover their nakedness; from the loins even unto the thighs they shall reach*" (v.42). Underneath the priestly robes, their nakedness was to be covered with trousers. The robes were long and covered many parts of the body, but still were not sufficient. Other precautions were taken to ensure a modest appearance. Do not forget, it was God who instituted these requirements. The office of the priest was to maintain the highest standards of dignity. This included the clothing they wore. Things written before, in the Old Testament, were written to teach lessons necessary for proper behavior before God. According to Romans 15:4 these important Old Testament principles were recorded for the purpose of teaching people today. The priests were holy and in representing God were required to

wear clothing that demonstrated perfect purity. Nakedness, whether partial or complete are embarrassing and shameful.

Christians are also New Testament priests who represent the same holy God that the priesthood in the Old Testament served (1 Peter 2:5-11). Those wearing the name of Christ should be very careful to wear clothing that presents purity before the Lord just as was manifested in the Old Testament. Servants of the Lord must avoid every appearance of evil; which includes immodest clothing (1 Thessalonians 5:22). Christians should always be more modestly dressed than our present world. Certainly we should never be just like it. Clothing designed to appeal to the sexual appetites of the flesh should be rejected. Christians should “...*adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety...*” (1 Timothy 2:9). Sexual reserve must be practiced in regard to the clothing worn. The wardrobe of Christians should portray godliness (1 Timothy 2:10). Mini-skirts, short-shorts, bikini tops and bottoms, tight jeans, unbuttoned blouses and the such-like does not present an image of one professing godliness, but that of worldliness.

Fathers and mothers need to put their foot down with their children in regard to clothing. A return to decency must begin with Christian homes leading the way. Every Christian Bible camp that I have ever been associated with required knee length shorts to be worn. Short shorts, halter tops, tank tops, etc. have never been permitted. These camps do not allow boys and girls to swim together at the same time. There is always a privacy fence placed around the swimming pool to keep the eyes of the opposite sex from viewing those who were swimming. Robes and other clothing were worn over the bathing suits as swimmers went to and from the swimming area. Are these camp directors just old fogies? Do they need to update their standards for the new millennium? NO! These camp directors understand what the Bible teaches about modest dress and are attempting to teach standards of modesty to the young folk who attend. May God bless them as they continue to uphold principles that are right.

Dancing

Let us also address dancing. Speaking of Bible camps, I have never known of a camp that allowed dancing. No summer camps sponsored by faithful brethren permit dancing of any form; be it square dancing, waltz, ballet, modern, jitter bug, etc. To my knowledge no sound churches that have ever arranged to have a dance at their church building; it just does not happen. A lot of my sound brethren play volleyball, softball, dominoes, card games, eat homemade ice cream and water melon, but never, ever, put on a dance. Dancing allows the bodies of males and females to touch in the wrong places. It puts their bodies into motion in ways that are indecent. Until recent years, not even denominational churches would have sponsored dances. I state all of this to establish the following point—generally people have recognized that dancing and religion are two elements that do not mix. Men closely embracing the wives of other men at a dance cannot be the way to maintain thoughts that are pure and wholesome (Philippians 4:8). This generation already has enough trouble controlling lustful thoughts without creating a situation that encourages more. How can teenagers be encouraged to keep their minds pure if the church arranges situations where they put their bodies together in such close intimate contact for long periods of time?

Let's do some testing and proving as the Bible commands us (1 Thessalonians 5:21). What would happen if a school planned to have a dance, but all of the boys were to dance together in the gym and all of the girls danced together in the cafeteria—totally separated? I asked a group of young

men this question and they responded, "No one would attend." This proves one point: dancing is sexually motivated. If boys and girls were separated when they danced it would eliminate the need for chaperones policing the kids to stop more intimate things from developing. Teens want to be intimately embraced with the opposite sex in dancing or they will just stay at home. They want to shake their stuff in front of some handsome boy or a shapely girl, not before others of their own gender. Current dances feature bodily gyrations that are sexually suggestive. Dancing seen on television shows that dancing has just gotten worse provocatively speaking. There is no question that dancing is all about sexual enticement. Anyone who denies it cannot be speaking honestly. It is an impure as it can be.

Let's make another observation about the dance. Under what conditions are people found dancing? Is it not in darkened rooms? In one town our family lived across the street from a school cafeteria where school dances were held and consistently the room was always very dark except for some tiny strobe lights that flashed. Why is it that people like to dance in a darkened atmosphere? Its because they want a "romantic" atmosphere to go with the intimate embracing that associates dancing? Where can most adults be found dancing? Is it not in nightclubs, beer joints, dance halls, all of which dimly lit places. In these establishments men come to pick up women or visa versa. After dancing, they often leave together for a night of sexual activity. Dancing is commonly associated the consumption of beer, wine and whiskey. In these night clubs the booze flows like water. As a matter of fact dancing and drinking go together like drinking and drunkenness; alcohol and liver disease; tobacco and cancer; where the one is there will be the other also. When people have a party in which alcoholic beverages are served, it almost always has dancing too. Does this cause dancing to appear a wholesome activity for Christians? Does this association with drunkenness put dancing in a good light? Hardly! This does nothing but incriminate dancing as unholy, indecent and worldly.

There are two Greek terms that incriminate dancing as sinful: *lasciviousness* and *revellings*. Both terms are found in a list of works of the flesh located in Galatians 5:19-21. This passage teaches that people who participate in these activities will not inherit the kingdom of God. Included in the definition of *lasciviousness* is "unbridled lust, excess, shamelessness" also, "indecent bodily movements, unchaste handling of males and females, etc." (Thayer 79). That definition fits perfectly what is seen in the modern dance. Dancing is unbridled lust. It displays shameful and indecent movements. The body is seen gyrating sexually suggestive ways. Dancing is also the unchaste handling of the bodies of males and females. *Revellings* has been defined as "drinking parties" that involve "carousals in the streets." This puts one in mind of events like New Year's Eve bashes in New York City and Mardigras in New Orleans, where people are out in the streets, drinking and dancing in an unbridled, lustful atmosphere.

Who can defend dancing as a wholesome activity for Christian men and women, boys and girls? There is not scriptural basis by which it can be exonerated. If you let one man embrace another man's wife, cheek to cheek, without the music, impropriety can be easily identified. We can also understand how two unmarried individuals embracing for a long periods of time, body touching body, will have wholesome thoughts encouraged. Adding music will not change the situation in the least. How right-thinking Christians can believe that dancing will encourage purity of mind is a mystery. Christians are commanded to maintain holiness and dancing does not fit into the formula (1 Peter 14-16).

Christians have so many wonderful ways to enjoy life. Fishing, hunting, golfing, gardening, baseball, dominoes, reading, crafts, etc., are all innocent and harmless activities. We do not need

dancing to have a good time. Jesus, the apostles or any New Testament Christian are said to have involved themselves in dancing. Nonetheless, we believe that they were people who rejoiced, were blissful and lived a full and rewarded life. It seems to me that some Christians do not believe that life will ever be worth anything if they and their children are denied participation in worldly activities. How sad it is that they feel this way. Let us remember that life is of the highest quality when we follow the plan that God has laid out in His word. I believe Jesus when He said that He was come “...*that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.*” (John 10:10). Dancing was not included in the abundant life.

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MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, AND REMARRIAGE

Charles Coats

*About the author...*

Charles is a native of Arkansas, having been born there August 22, 1953. He and his wife Leanna have been married since 1975. They are the parents of two grown sons, Brandon and Benjamin. Charles has worked with congregations in Arkansas, Missouri and Michigan. He has been laboring with the church in Webberville since 1991. He has spoken on lectureships and meetings in Oklahoma, Texas, Mississippi, Ohio, Missouri, Arkansas and Michigan. Charles directed lectureships in Fouke and Dierks, Arkansas and currently is director and instructor of the South Michigan Teacher Training School which began in February of 2000. Charles also works a full-time secular job with Dunnage Engineering.

In what could be seen as a cycle of “I had it”, “I lost it”, “I want it back”, many people seem to be in constant pursuit of the appropriate marriage partner. In the United States and other portions of the world, marriage is not viewed as a sacred institution ordained by God. It is, rather, a place to have a little fun and companionship, but if it does not work out, then end it and look for something else. Too many times, marriage is a lot like our views on clothing. If we do not like the clothing, we throw it out and get something else.

In the United States, 50% to 60% of first marriages end in divorce. Second marriages (or greater) end in divorce approximately 70% of the time. The problem lies in a person’s attitude towards marriage. Years ago, people entered into marriage with the understanding that it was for life. People did not even consider ending that marriage. People used to frown upon those who divorced, and taught their sons and their daughters to keep their marriages together.

How do people view marriage today? Some people believe marriage is the culmination of the trial period. Two people will first live together and “try out” each other. After awhile, if everything has worked out, the people will be married. This attitude fights against the very reason for marriage (cf. 1 Corinthians 7:1). It lessens marriage as nothing more than the completion of the sale after the goods have been examined. Besides being Biblically wrong, this “living together” does nothing to improve divorce rates.

Some people view marriage as a temporary situation. That is, they do not enter into the marriage with the idea of a permanent attachment to one another, with death being the only thing that will separate them. Therefore, the least little problem will cause them to look elsewhere and discard the mate they now have.

Others think of marriage as a game. They marry because it is the thing to do. It fits into the idea of the social status that they need. And, to many people, it seems that the more marriages you have the more social status you enjoy. It is certainly the case that divorce is not viewed as a shameful thing by the majority of our society. Most have reached the point where they will not blush, nor are they ashamed (cf. Jeremiah 6:15).

Many do not take seriously the vows they make when they are married. They may talk about “for better or for worse”, “richer or poorer”, and so forth. But what happens in too many cases is when the going gets tough, people run away from the problem. When one vows a vow before God, he or she must understand that they are obligated to keep it (cf. Numbers 30:2; Ecclesiastes 5:4; Ephesians 5:25).

These and other such views will cause people to not take marriage seriously and to easily enter into divorce. People need to understand the purpose and seriousness of marriage in order for them to enter into marriage with the right attitude. It is my prayer that when they see that they need to be faithful to God in all things, they will work hard to fulfill all God has said concerning the marriage.

Marriage was instituted by God in Genesis 2:22-24. In marriage, the man and the woman are to remain together until death separates these individuals (Matthew 19:1-6). Marriage was designed to bring children into the world (Genesis 1:28; 3:16). It was designed to provide companionship for man (cf. Genesis 2:18). Marriage has as part of its function to provide the fulfillment of our sexual needs (1 Corinthians 7:1-5). Sexual activity outside of the marriage bond is sin (Hebrews 13:4).

It is a serious decision one must make when one chooses the person they wish to marry. Much has been said concerning whether to marry a Christian or a non-Christian. Too often, we become embroiled in the discussion that we miss the point of what we are discussing. Choosing a mate is deeper than whether the person is a Christian or a non-Christian. One must remember that the person he or she chooses to marry will be the closest person to them on earth. They will have the greatest influence over their mate than anyone else. This person can either make life miserable or outstanding. They will know the inner secrets of their mate and how the other person thinks. When choosing a mate, answer this question: **WILL THIS PERSON HELP ME GO TO HEAVEN?** Some say to marry only a Christian, but I know some Christians that I would not want my children to marry. When two people enter marriage, they are joining together in that great march to one day dwell eternally with God. The wrong mate can make it extremely difficult to achieve this goal, or can cause the other person to lose their soul entirely.

The rule of marriage is what people seem to miss. They have all their ideas and dreams, but do not seriously consider the attitude they must have when they decide to marry. If one enters into a marriage with the wrong attitude, the marriage is almost certain to fail. What is the rule of marriage? **ONE MAN AND ONE WOMAN JOINED TOGETHER FOR LIFE!!**

(It must be noted that marriage is not for two men to be joined together, nor for two women to be joined together. Homosexuality is condemned by God, and all homosexuals will be lost eternally unless they repent of their sins (Leviticus 18:22; Romans 1:24-32). Marriage is for a man and a woman.)

When troubles come to a marriage, rather than work through these problems, the married partners start looking to end this partnership. Divorce becomes the only answer they see. A sad commentary on our society is how our young people will talk about all the different “mothers” and “fathers” they have (because of divorce), and talk about it as though this is purely natural.

Divorces usually come out with everyone being the loser. The two who are divorcing carry the difficulties of such things as sharing the children, child support, bitter feelings, and the other myriad of problems associated with divorce. The biggest losers are the children. They tend to blame themselves and then must deal with parents who do not see each other nor really like each other. They become “balls” tossed back and forth between two players.

Besides the lifestyle problems that are associated with divorce, there are serious spiritual considerations with which those who would divorce must deal. While many states allow divorce for any reason, the Bible does not. Marriage is such a serious institution that God only has allowed one acceptable reason for divorce. What God has to say is so basic, it is not very hard to understand. What usually happens to hinder one's understanding of these verses is that personal issues enter the picture.

People have in the past held correct and strong views concerning divorce, only to waver from these views because their children or a loved one divorced. They were forced to hold fast to the correct view or soften their view lest they condemn the ones they “love”. Whatever it is God has said, the Christian must hold without wavering (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:58).

In studying the issue of divorce, one must consider what Jesus taught us on the issue. We want to take some time and explore what the Bible says.

But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced, committeth adultery (Matthew 5:32)

And this I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery (Matthew 19:9)

And he said unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery (Mark 10:11,12)

Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery (Luke 16:18)

And to the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not he husband put away his wife (1 Corinthians 7:10,11)

But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart . . . (1 Corinthians 7:15)

These verses tell us something about divorce. From these, we can see the principles set forth by God, and we must use these principles when dealing with situations today. If a divorce is right or wrong, it will be determined by these principles. We are doing no one any favors if we teach them error on the subject, and allow them to make the decision to divorce, in violation of God’s will.

The verses cited above give us the following information concerning divorce. (Remarriage will be discussed later.)

Matthew, Mark, and Luke give us the general rule concerning divorce. All teach us the rule is universal (“*whosoever*”). They all relate that one is put away (Mark talks about either party.). Each shows us that when these are put away, they could enter into an adulterous situation if they choose to marry again. The rule is: **WHOEVER (MALE OR FEMALE) DIVORCES THEIR MATE AND MARRIES SOMEONE ELSE WILL BE GUILTY OF ADULTERY!**

1 Corinthians 7:10 is the general rule restated with the desired outcome stated if they so choose to divorce. A man and a woman should not divorce. However, what if they do? They should remain unmarried (i.e., marry no one else) or be reconciled to one another (i.e., restore the marriage

bond they broke). Some will argue that this passage is talking about a separation and not a divorce. However, please note that Paul says he is giving what Jesus had taught (cf. Matthew 5:32; et.al). He is also applying the principle of marriage God set up — the two must stay together. Further, in 1 Corinthians 7:15, Paul addresses a non-Christian who “departs”. This is understood as this person breaking the marriage bond (divorcing his Christian wife). In the Greek, the word “depart” in verse 11 and verse 15 are the same word. Contextually, Paul is dealing with divorce and applying the principle to the situation. It should also be noted that the verses dealing with divorce (cited above) all talk about being married **to another** after the divorce, not to the same person.

1 Corinthians 7:12-16 address the issue of a Christian and a non-Christian married to one another. The Christian is enjoined to keep the marriage together. Do not divorce. The Christian is also taught that there is not much they can do if the non-Christian decides to leave the marriage. This passage of scripture does not teach anything about remarriage. It does, however, strongly reinforce to the Christian that God must be first in our lives, and that we must not allow our husbands or our wives to cause us to compromise (cf. Luke 14:26,27).

Whatever divorce situation we are addressing, we must apply the rule to the situation. The rule is absolute. The situation does not change the rule. In looking at the rule, we must also take into consideration any exceptions **GOD** has given. We must be careful not to interject what we think, feel, or believe. Sometimes, people will argue that children in a marriage or that the two people love each other changes the rule. Too often, people will twist God’s rules to fit their needs. This they will do to their own destruction (cf. 2 Peter 3:16).

Has **GOD** given any exceptions to his rule? Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 address the exception -- *“saving for the cause of fornication”; “except it be for fornication”*. Fornication is defined as illicit sexual activity. It includes adultery, incest, pre-marital sex, homosexuality, and bestiality. It is any sexual activity that is engaged in by those who are not married to each other or who do not have the right to be married to each other.

The rule says that a person is not to put away his or her mate. The exception allows one (NOTE: It does not **COMMAND** one) to put away his or her mate if that mate has committed fornication, i.e., engaged in illicit sexual activity. The one put away is the one who has committed fornication.

One who puts away his or her mate for reasons other than fornication and then marries another commits adultery. One who puts away his or her mate for the reason of that person’s fornication and marries another does not commit adultery. The only person authorized to enter into another marriage after the divorce is the one who puts away his or her mate **FOR** the reason of that person’s fornication. The person put away because of their fornication cannot remarry and be in keeping with God’s word.

God’s desire is that the marriage stay together until the death of one or both of the parties in the marriage (cf. 1 Corinthians 7:39; Romans 7:1-4). He does not want man to break the marriage bond (Matthew 19:6). Marriage is so sacred to God that he allows **ONE AND ONLY ONE EXCEPTION** -- fornication. There are no other acceptable reasons with God for people to divorce.

We have already touched on the issue of remarriage, but we want to examine this a little more. When I began this discussion, I mentioned a cycle of “I had it”; “I lost it”; and “I want it back”. People enter into a marriage; the marriage ends in divorce; these people then strive to regain that which they lost -- marriage. They do not necessarily use any good guidelines (and many do not understand that

there are guidelines) when they make the decision to marry again. Our discussion on remarriage will concentrate only on the issue after the divorce.

Since the only reason allowed for divorce is fornication, then those who divorce for reasons other than fornication cannot marry another person. The verses in Matthew, Mark, and Luke all state this. Regardless of how much sympathy we might have for someone in a divorce, it is possible that one can get himself or herself in such a situation that they cannot marry again.

Those who put away their mates because of that mate's fornication can marry again. That is the force of the exceptive clause. (Along these lines, please note that the way the exceptive clause is given that one guilty of fornication cannot put away the mate not guilty of fornication and then marry again. If one is put away for reasons other than fornication, even if the other person has committed fornication, the one put away may not enter into another marriage.)

The verses dealing with divorce show that the fornication must be the reason for the divorce. It is not the case that one can divorce for reasons other than fornication; wait around for the one he or she divorced to commit fornication; and then claim a right to remarry based on that person's fornication. While the person did commit fornication, this fornication was **AFTER** the divorce. When reasoning on divorce, we must always go back to the reason **FOR** the divorce, not what happens after the divorce.

The same is true of death. One is not free from the marriage bond if their mate dies **AFTER** the divorce. If one divorces for the wrong reasons, nothing that happens after the divorce changes the reason for that divorce.

Since God does not allow divorce for reasons other than fornication, and since people cannot marry again if their divorce was wrong, then what does one do if they do these things? If one divorces for the wrong reason, one must repent of the divorce and remain unmarried for the remainder of their life. If one has entered into a marriage that they should not be in, then they must repent of their sin and dissolve that marriage. As long as that person remains in that marriage, they are committing adultery. Only the cessation of that unscriptural marriage will end this sin.

Divorce is not a game. It is an action on the part of people that could leave them in a situation of having to remain unmarried for the remainder of their lives. If we teach error on the issue of marriage, divorce, and remarriage, we can cause people to be lost forever. It behooves us to make a strong stand on these issues, so we can have strong homes that will give us a strong church.

WORSHIP AND SERVICE

Michael P. Hughes

About the author...

Michael is the evangelist for the church in Blue Springs, Missouri, having labored with them since February of 1998. He attended the Northside School of Preaching and has labored with churches in Louisiana and Missouri. He is a fellow laborer in the International Bible Studies lectures. He and his wife Thelma have three children, all grown.

"Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." (Matthew 4:10)

"Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name." (Deuteronomy 6:13)

With these two passages it is easy to see that God has wanted throughout time for man to worship/fear as well as to serve Him. The Hebrew word fear (03372 *ary yare' yaw-ray'*) is defined as follows;

"a primitive root; TWOT-907,908; v AV-fear 188, afraid 78, terrible 23, terrible thing 6, dreadful 5, reverence 3, fearful 2, terrible acts 1, misc 8; 314 1) to fear, revere, be afraid. 1a) (Qal) 1a1) to fear, be afraid 1a2) to stand in awe of, be awed 1a3) to fear, reverence, honour, respect 1b) (Niphal) 1b1) to be fearful, be dreadful, be feared 1b2) to cause astonishment and awe, be held in awe 1b3) to inspire reverence or godly fear or awe 1c) (Piel) to make afraid, terrify 2) (TWOT) to shoot, pour." (*Online Bible Hebrew Lexicon*).

Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible defines it as

to fear; mor. To revere; caus. to frighten:—affright, be (make) afraid, dread (-ful), (put in) fear (-ful -fully, -ing), be had in reverence (-end), X see, terrible (act, -ness, thing)." In Matthew the corresponding word that Christ used was worship; "4352 *proskunew* *proskuneo pros-koo-neh'-o* from 4314 and a probable derivative of 2965 (meaning to kiss, like a dog licking his master's hand); TDNT-6:758,948; v AV-worship 60; 60 1) to kiss the hand to (towards) one, in token of reverence 2) among the Orientals, esp. the Persians, to fall upon the knees and touch the ground with the forehead as an expression of profound reverence 3) in the NT by kneeling or prostration to do homage (to one) or make obeisance, whether in order to express respect or to make supplication 3a) used of homage shown to men and beings of superior rank 3a1) to the Jewish high priests 3a2) to God 3a3) to Christ 3a4) to heavenly beings 3a5) to demons . (*Online Bible Greek Lexicon*)

Strong's defines the same word as follows;

4352. proskunew proskuneo *pros-koo-neh'-o* ; from 4314 and a probable derivative of 2965 (meaning to kiss, like a dog licking his master's hand); to fawn or crouch to, i.e. (literally or figuratively) prostrate oneself in homage (do reverence to, adore):--worship.

What is obviously inherent in both words, fear and worship, is the idea of one having an attitude of reverence, awe, and homage that is due to the almighty God. At the same time it is also evidenced in both passages that one that professes to have this reverential awe is also expected to serve the one towards whom the awe is directed. Of course as both passages indicate the direction of the reverence and the awe is heavenward, directed toward the Almighty Creator of this wondrous universe of which we as individuals are only a small part of.

If that was all that was contained in the concept of worship then we probably wouldn't have any trouble defining today what worship is. There would be none, I think, that would argue that we shouldn't have reverential awe toward the God of Heaven at all times regardless of what we may be doing. In having this reverential awe we will then remember that our God is a consuming fire, *"Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: {29} For our God is a consuming fire"* (Hebrews 12:28-29). We will remember that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, *"For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. {31} It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God"* (Hebrews 10:30-31). We will also be reminded through maintaining our reverence and awe toward the almighty that should we sin wilfully there remain no more sacrifice for sin, *"For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, {27} But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries"* (Hebrews 10:26-27).

One who has this proper reverence would also recognize the need to **work** out their salvation, *"Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling"* (Philippians 2:12).

There is without a doubt a distinct lack of absence on the part of many, both within and without the church, that reverential awe that one should have toward God which is the cause of the moral decline of our society as well as a leading away from God's word by many of those within our church. When we air national television programs that promote the idea that not only does everybody lie, but that lying is necessary and that this would be a terrible world to live in if we did not lie to one another (see Revelation 21:8 to see God's stance on this subject), when laws are developed to protect such sins as abortion and homosexuality, when a nation's prime leader can be caught lying and breaking the law because of infidelity to his marriage and a nation says "no big deal," then it is indeed evident that such a society has lost any reverential awe toward the Almighty that it may have collectively once had.

By the same token, when God's people profane the church, identify it as just one of many "denominations," bring the mundane into the worship, and turn worship into the mundane then it becomes evident as well that they have forgotten the reverence, awe, and homage due to the Most High.

It can easily be seen that were reverential awe all that was contained in the concept of worship

there would be no problem. Such, however, is not the case and this is where we begin to have a problem with certain brethren today that argue that everything one does is an act of worship. They confuse the life of service that is a result of ones reverential awe with the specific acts of obeisance that God has commanded as part of that life of service, such acts to be performed with the specific intent of bowing the head to, kissing the hand, and prostrating oneself to and toward the Almighty.

Burt Jones writes in an article entitled "If Worship Were Sin": "Worship, true worship, must be prompted by the right motive, actuated by the highest purpose, and with a deep desire to meet heaven's approval through obedience to His gospel. Worship is an attitude of mind as well as a physical act (John 4:23-24)" (7). That is precisely what Jesus was teaching the woman at the well when He said that one must worship God in spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24). He was teaching that one must worship with proper reverential awe directed toward God and in the manner or in accordance with those acts with which God has specified that man is to direct toward Him as worship. To worship in truth must mean to worship in accordance with His word (John 17:17). If then God has specified in His word specific acts to be directed toward Him as acts of worship (and He has), then there is no sense in which it can be logically argued that "everything that we do that is not sin is worship." In fact, the opposite would be true, anything offered as an act of worship that is not specified by God as such would be vain worship. *"Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men"* (Mark 7:7).

In 1998 Buster Dobbs wrote an article entitled "Is All Of Life Worship" in which he presented the followings syllogism;

1. All sacrifice offered to God is worship.
2. Christians are to continually offer their bodies as a sacrifice to God.
3. Therefore there is a sense in which worship is continual... (Hatcher 4).

He then followed with the next statements;

Such devoted service to God is clearly worship. It involves *all* that we do. Whether we earn a living for our family, or seeking lawful entertainment and recreation, it is to be done in the name of the Lord. As holy, royal priests we make an offering to the father (sic) through the son (sic) in everything we do... (Ibid).

One year prior he stated;

The holy kiss is not worship. It is a greeting. Paul says so. It edifies no one. It is not something due a reigning God. It is not clearly taught in the New Testament as worship. It is alright for saints to greet one another with a holy kiss if they desire to do so, but it is not an item of worship. (Dobbs "O Holy..." 4)

Later in the same article he states; "Foot washing is in order when it helps and is benefits our fellow creature but it is not worship because, like the holy kiss, it is directed to humans and not deity." (Ibid).

Then in January 1999 he makes two statements in an article entitled "Worship;"

“The New Covenant authorizes five specific acts of worship on the prescribed assembly day.” Then; “When a Christian offers a song of praise to God, whether in assembly or in a private setting, it must be in the prescribed way (without instrumental accompaniment) just as inner chamber prayer must be offered according to Bible instructions.” (Dobbs “Worship” 3-4).

Then one month later he once more switches tracks and tells us;

The Holy Spirit, through the pen of Paul, defines spiritual service. In view of the mercies of God (John 3:16), he (sic) tells us to offer our bodies a living sacrifice, which is (now, he (sic) is about to tell us what the living sacrifice is...of what it consists...of its nature) which is spiritual service. The living sacrifice is service. Sacrifice connotes worship. The presenting our very souls to God as a sacrifice of worship. That is what it is! Paul said so. (Dobbs “Holy and Unholy,” 4)

In the space of two years this man has told the reading audience that “everything we do is not worship, everything we do is worship, everything we do is not worship, everything we do is worship. His readers should be plenty confused at this point as to just where he really stands on the subject. If everything we do is worship then why is the “Holy Kiss” and “foot washing” not worship? If everything we do is worship then why has God “authorized five specific acts of worship on the prescribed assembly day?” If everything we do (that is not sin) is worship then why did God limit the worship of the assembly to only five acts?

Brother Dobbs is not the only one to take this position. Jess Hall Jr. wrote a book entitled *Worship A Living Sacrifice* in which he defends this same position. On pages 13-14 he states:

The mistake is concentrating on each separate act of the Christian's life instead of concentrating on the Christian's entire life.

The act of worship is not the offering of each act, but the offering of the entire life to God as a living sacrifice.

The Christian live his or her entire life to the glory of God, having laid it (and continuing to lay it) on His altar in the ultimate act of worship—the giving of self.

It is unfortunate the we now have conservative brethren siding with the liberals in their cry that everything we do is worship. Brethren, the Word of God never teaches us that everything we do, or that our entire life, is an act of **worship** to the Heavenly Father. What it does teach is that we are to sacrifice self as we live our lives in **service** to Christ our Lord and God our Father.

The argument that everything we do is worship seems to stem from abuse of Romans 12:1-2;

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. {2} And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

The argument is made that sacrifice is always worship therefore everything we do is worship. First I would be careful with the argument that sacrifice **IS** worship. Sacrifice **WAS** authorized in the Mosaic law as worship, burnt offerings, peace offerings, sin offerings, (Leviticus 1-7). Nowhere however has the New Testament suggested that sacrifice was worship. Christ was our final sacrifice offered for our sins upon the cross,

Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; {19} But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: {20} Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, {21} Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God. (1 Peter 1:18-21)....And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour (Ephesians 5:2)... For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: {25} Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; {26} For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. {27} And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: {28} So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation (Hebrews 9:24-28)... But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; (Hebrews 10:12),

and the sacrifice that we are now to make, a living sacrifice is that which is our reasonable service. It is the service that we logically should offer to the one whose grace was extended toward man through His Son's sacrifice upon the cross.

Our reasonable service is to make ourselves a living sacrifice that we may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. This is our reasonable service because no longer do we serve sin (Romans 6:17-23) and now are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people (or a people of God's own possession) that we should show forth the praises of Him that has called us out of the darkness into His marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9).

How are we to do this? How do we present ourselves as living sacrifices? It is through our submission to Him, through our obedience to His word. It occurs when we seek first the kingdom of Heaven and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33). It occurs when we love him sufficiently to keep His commandments and thus be His friend (John 14:15; 15:14). It occurs when we visit the sick, feed the hungry, give the thirsty drink, tend the afflicted, visit those that are in prison (Matthew 25:31-46). It occurs when we let our light shine before men that they may see our good works and glorify our Father which is in Heaven, (Matthew 5:14-16). It occurs when we visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction and keep ourselves unspotted from the world (James 1:27). It occurs when we restore a brother that has been overtaken in a fault and bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:1-2). It

occurs when we provoke one another to love and good works, when we do not forsake the assembling of ourselves together and exhort one another, (Hebrews 10:24-25). In other words as we dedicate ourselves to God, commit our lives to His service, do those things which He has commanded, then we present ourselves as a living sacrifice to Him. This is not an act of worship, rather it is a life of service (which is only reasonable) of which the acts of worship that God has authorized is but one part.

Let each of us consider our lives and make sure that we are offering to God in our lives that reasonable service that presents ourselves to Him as a living sacrifice. Everything we do is not worship, but everything we do we should do in the proper conduct that befits the servants of the King.

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WOMEN TRANSLATORS

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About the author...

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Introduction

The topic of this discussion has for sometime been one that has caused confusion and even in some cases it has caused a rift between brethren. Our intention is neither to impugn anyone's character nor to determine the motive for what has been done relative to the use of women translators. I simply want to look at the infallible Word of God and determine what is found therein and to walk accordingly. I believe this to be the case with every God fearing brother or sister in Christ.

It is not my intention to limit the role of women in their work for the Lord. A woman's role is essential and important to the growth and development of the church. From the very first, she has had a wonderful part in God's plan for the salvation of mankind (Titus 2:3-5). The Bible records the example of many godly women that shows their great worth (Acts 9:36-39). However, there are some limitations placed upon her as to the time and place in which she is to exercise her responsibilities (1 Corinthians 14:34-35). This does not make her a second class Christian. It is just the way in which God set things in order.

What Is a Translator?

A translator is one who turns one language "into one's own or into another language, to express in more comprehensible terms: explain..." (*Webster's* 1241). If one is speaking in English to a Spanish audience, there is need for understanding if the message is to be made known. The hearer must know what is being stated before there can be a response to the message. Therefore, the work of a translator is clear. It is to make known the message which is being given in a language not understood by those in the audience. This often requires the thoughts and ideas of the translator to be used for clarity's sake. Words must be changed or substituted if there is to be knowledge of the message.

When one language is being translated into another, there will of necessity be some changes made in the wording. In an article written for *Seek The Old Paths*, May 1996, Roger D. Campbell, a missionary for many years in the foreign field, stated that the translator

Sometimes explains the message. This is sometimes absolutely necessary. Example:
Suppose you go to Taiwan and preach on the church. You emphasize that the word

church is 'singular' in Matthew 16:18, saying that Jesus promised to build only one church. However in the Chinese language, the word for church and churches are one and the same (no distinction in plural and singular). Question: what does the translator do? In all cases that I can remember he has said what the American said about the singular, and then the translator explains to the audience that the speaker is making an argument based on the Greek or English text. Example 2: Same situation occurs when the American speaker emphasizes that 'elders' is in the plural in Acts 14:23 and 20:17. In Chinese, the word is not in the plural. What does the translator do? He explains what the speaker is saying, and usually the speaker does not have any idea what the translator said (Campbell).

I believe that this example shows that a translation is not always the words that have been given at the outset. It is not and cannot be "word for word."

Another point that needs our attention under this heading is the determination as to whether or not the translator is parallel to a microphone. There are some that are saying the translator acts as a microphone, in that the translator only echoes what another has said. We have already observed that a translator cannot by virtue of language barriers give "word for word" translation. A microphone can and does exactly that! We might add that there are no restrictions in the Bible that prohibit amplification of one's voice. Whereas, there certainly is a clear command showing that women are to be silent in the churches. A public address system cannot translate from one language to another. I believe this is so clear that this objection will fall upon itself.

Also, we must note that a translator does not fall under the heading of an expedient. For a thing to be expedient there must be Bible authority for its being done. Some have said that a translator is much like a songbook in that it is used to carry out the command to sing. First of all one does not need a songbook in order to sing. It is never expedient to violate a commandment. The songbook is an expedient, but to use the mechanical instrument is an addition and is in violation of our command to sing. It adds a part that is not authorized (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16). We are to sing in our worship to God, but we have some restrictions upon the what and the how. The same is true with the teaching in the worship assembly. Men are to proclaim the gospel of Christ and women are not to have any part of leading in this part of worship.

Do We Have Any Bible Examples of Women Translators?

All that we do in religious matters must be by divine authority. For there to be authority, it must be given in Scripture (1 Peter 4:11). It is never found in unlearned emotionalism or in the "end justifies the means" philosophy. Emotions sometimes move us to want to do or say a particular thing, but it must never be our guide. If the principle of the "end justifies the means" were to be applied to our religious practices, we could emotionally justify a number of things that are unscriptural. For instance, it might sound good to help the church raise funds for its growth by using "cake sales, raffles, bingo", or any other fund raising device. However, we know that the Bible authorizes the church to be supported by the membership giving on the first day of every week as they have "prospered" (1 Corinthians 16:1-2). This offering is to be in proportion to what one has earned (2 Corinthians 9:7). Fund raisers are not authorized; therefore they are not to be done in the Lord's church. The above example will show the emptiness of the argument given by some who say, "we are doing it because

there is no other person to translate.” Of course we can see that the “end does not justify the means.”

There is not one command, not one authorized example, nor one inference that will give the authorization for women to translate in the worship assembly. Thus, we must conclude that it is not God’s design for her to be in this position. In fact, we have a restriction relative to this matter. Paul clearly prohibited women from exercising spiritual gifts in the assembly, including the gift of interpretation. *“Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law”* (1 Corinthians 14:34). If God gave this restriction to the Spirit-gifted women during the time of miracles and forbade them from exercising that gift, surely we can see the error in saying that she can exercise a non-spirit gift today.

Does Anyone Have the Right to Give Her this Authority?

One of the main arguments that I hear is that she can be in the position of translating before the worship assembly if she is given the authorization. Some say it is an expedient. But for a thing to be an expedient there must already be an authorization for the action. There is not one single person with the right to make changes in what God has legislated.

It is without question that when she is translating she is in a position of authority! A careful reading of 1 Timothy 2:9-12 shows that a woman is not to have the authority over a man. She is not to be his teacher or take the position of authority.

In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works. Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.

Notice that this verse tells her to “*be in silence*” (1 Timothy 2:12). How then can she translate (vocalize the message) and not be in violation of this passage? Then in 1 Corinthians 14:23-35, Paul again gives instructions to the assembled saints concerning this matter (vs. 23 “whole church”). He begins by instructing the MEN to remain silent if there was no interpreter (other man) present (27-28). If men in the first century had this prohibition, and they did, how can we today say that we can use women to interpret if no other man is present? Remember that she is to be silent in this assembly (1 Timothy 2:12)!

There are some that contend that 1 Corinthians 14 and 1 Timothy are not referring to the same restrictions. However, they are parallel passages. Notice the ways they are alike:

- 1) Women are not to teach in the public assembly (1 Timothy 2:12; 1 Corinthians 14:34).
- 2) She must not usurp authority (1 Timothy 2:12; 1 Corinthians 14:34).
- 3) She is to be in silence in the church (1 Timothy 2:11; 1 Corinthians 4:34).
- 4) She is to be in subjection (1 Timothy 2:11; 1 Corinthians 4:34).
- 5) From the beginning it was God’s plan for the woman to be in subjection (1 Timothy 2:13-14; 1 Corinthians 14:34).

From these passages we can see that there is no one with the power to change God’s restrictions

upon the women concerning their actions in the church. To do so is to violate God's plan (Revelation 22:18-19).

Who Is the Teacher?

I truly believe that when we have answered this question we will have closed the door on the use of women translators. I know that there are some that contend that the translator is not the teacher, and are only repeating what the preacher has stated. We have already shown that the translator must take some liberties in conveyance of the message. In my mind this fact alone proves who is doing the teaching.

The responsibility of a teacher is to make known a certain topic. For there to be a transfer of information there is by necessity a need for the hearer to understand. Without understanding there can be no response to that which is presented for consideration. In Romans 9:23 we find a very interesting phrase: "...that he might make known the riches of his glory...." The words "make known" comes from the Greek word *gnorizo*, meaning to make known; subj. to know:--certify, declare, make known, give to understand, do to wit, wot" (Strong 20). In other words the gospel must be made known so that a believer might obey that which was made known. What if the message was not understood? It could not be obeyed and it is the teacher who makes known the message. Notice 1 Corinthians 1:21: "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (Emp. TLS). Of course we know that it is the gospel that brings the message of salvation (Romans 1:16). But we must also realize that we are saved by a faith that acts upon the gospel that is taught (Hebrews 11:6; Romans 10:17; James 2:26). If anyone is to obey the gospel they must first hear the message. The word "hear" does not mean simply to audibly hear, but to understand. Notice Acts 19:5; "When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." The word "heard" means to understand. I do not believe that any faithful student of the Bible will argue with this conclusion. A person must know what is being said before they can understand and they must understand before they can obey!

In 1 Timothy 2:8-15, the apostle Paul by inspiration is dealing with the woman's role. Verse 8 shows that men are to pray in mixed company. Verses 9-10 teach that she is to be modest in her attire; and verses 11-13 give instructions relative to learning, teaching and the reasons for such. The word "teach" in verse 12 comes from the word *didasko* which means "to teach or speak in the public assembly, to direct, admonish" (Moulton 98). The verse prohibits women from having a teaching role in the public assembly. Some would say that she is not teaching; that she is only translating what is being said. My conviction is that she is the only one who can teach those who are hearing (understanding) what she is saying. If a language is not understood there is no information being transferred! Teach means to provide instruction, to cause one to understand the subject, to guide a study or to impart knowledge concerning a given subject. Suppose that I was teaching World History in a college course and I spoke in a language that was not known by the class, would the students learn from me? Of course, we know that this class would never know anything about World History because they would not understand. However, if there was a translator present who could "give understanding" to the foreign language that I spoke then the class would learn. It would not be from me but from the one who taught them!

Let me pose a question. I believe that when this question is honestly answered, without

preconceived notions, we can come to an understanding of just who the teacher is in reality. Let us suppose that an English speaking man is preaching the gospel to an audience that only understands Russian. He is preaching the plan of salvation and has given every step required by God with book, chapter and verse. He has been true to the Bible, but the translator, in her giving the message to the audience, leaves out baptism for the remission of sins. Which of these two would be the false teacher? What will the audience obey? Oh, I know that some will say the translator was not true to the message she received; but my friends that is not our question! Which speaker's instruction will the audience be able to obey? It is clear that the person who is heard and whose language is understood is the teacher.

I have often wondered what might be the thoughts of an audience who could not understand the man who is giving a lesson on 1 Timothy 2:12, but is able to understand the woman translator. What would be the reaction of a sincere person who is seeking the true church when they would hear a woman saying, "the woman is to be silent in the church?" I just wonder if they would be confused when they heard, *"Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church?"* (1 Corinthians 14:34-35) We have often said that the way to recognize the church of the Bible is to find one that is doing what the Bible teaches. We have taught that this is what distinguishes the true church from denominationalism. I still believe that this is true. I also believe that an unbeliever who hears a woman teach that she is not to teach, would certainly be confused.

Conclusion

It is a wonderful thing to fulfill the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). I am so thankful for every person who is making sacrifices in order to carry the saving message to a lost and dying world. I love and commend every good and faithful brother and sister who has made it their goal to please God in this great work. We need more faithful people who are willing to be mindful of lost souls. Every Christian will answer to God in judgment for their involvement in evangelism. We must be careful never to do anything that is so clearly contrary to God's instructions.

I pray that all of us will prayerfully consider these matters and not simply be led by the heart or by someone else's zeal and enthusiasm. May God help us ever to *"seek and save that which is lost"* (Luke 19:10). But at the same time let us never do things that are clearly prohibited.

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CREATION AND EVOLUTION

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Genesis 1:1 *"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."*

In these ten terse words of the first verse of the Bible there is the affirmation of the existence of God and the origin of the heaven and the earth. Although the Bible does not give us a systematic proof for the existence of God, it states it clearly as fact and then gives evidence to support it. At the turn of this century Herbert Spencer, a noted British philosopher, declared that there are essentially five fundamentals of science: time, force, action, space and matter. He did not know it, but he was merely discovering the wisdom of God which had been written by Moses, who lived more than 3,000 years before his time, in **Genesis 1:1** (Thompson 125).

Look at it: *"In the beginning (time) God (force) created (action) the heaven (space) and the earth (matter)."* It is apparent from this (as well as many other passages) that the Bible is not a work of man, but is, in fact, the inspired Word of God, which affirms that God created the heaven and the earth and all things therein in six days. In addition to the testimony of God's Word (internal evidence) we also have the creation itself (external evidence) which demands a Creator and points to the conclusion that God is. This is what Paul was talking about in **Romans 1:20**, *"For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse."*

These two lines of evidence: (1) Internal from God's inspired Word, the Bible and (2) External from the observation of the creation point to the conclusion that God is and that He is the Creator of all things in heaven and earth. These two lines of evidence are sometimes called General and Special revelation or "Sky and Scripture." We can learn some things about God and His creation just from observing nature. But, we cannot learn what we must do to be saved or how we are live our lives by this observation. For that, we must have special revelation from God — the Bible. David in **Psalms 19** dealt with both of these types of revelation. In **Psalms 19:1-6** he wrote of the wonders of God's creation in the heavens above, *"1 The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork."* Then, in **Psalms 19:7-14**, he describes God's revelation through His law, *"7 The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple."*

However, the creation account of **Genesis 1-3** (as well as the account of the flood and other truth found in **Genesis 4-11**) and the foundation of our faith as Christians (which if we deny the first 11 chapters of Genesis, we must also deny Jesus as being true who spoke of these things in the accounts of the Gospel), is being attacked by atheists, skeptics, agnostics and deists, who are

teaching the theory of evolution in our public schools and universities (some of them operated by our brethren), as well as from many in the “scientific community.”

One of the things which we must recognize in our study of creation and evolution is that true science and true religion do not conflict or contradict each other. Problems arise when men employ false science, such as Paul called the “...*oppositions of science falsely so called*..” in **1 Timothy 6:20** or false religion (such as idolatry, polytheism, theistic evolution) which do conflict with each other and the truth of the creation account. What we are trying to do is show that the evidences usually used to support the falsehood of the theory of evolution, do not support their belief (and it is a belief or religion, which takes more faith than believing in the Bible because of the lack of evidence). Actually where true science is employed it manifests the knowledge of God's creation. Man is simply discovering the wisdom of God from the creation of the world in true science.

Thus, it shall be our purpose in this lesson to examine the evidence, both Biblical and scientific, which supports the truth of the creation account and disproves the theory of evolution. In order to do this, we need to understand the meaning of the terms we are using.

I. DEFINITION OF TERMS

Many times when we consider this subject we make the assumption that there is only one kind of creation and one kind of evolution. And generally, this is true. However, there are times when we need to be more specific when dealing with various false concepts and doctrines which surround this subject. There are actually two different types of creation (which is not to imply that both are true) and three different types of evolution (which again does not imply that all are false).

A. Creation:

1. General creation. The theory of general creation is basically the idea of those who are pantheists and deists. The view of the pantheists is that God and nature are identical — “the universe is an extension of God's essence rather than a special creation” (Jenkins 19). Their doctrine teaches that “God is everything, everything is God” (ibid). In this belief there is no personal God separate from the creation. Actually, it denies God and exalts nature to the level of God. Ever see the bumper stickers: “Love your mother”? These are not talking about your Mom, but “Mother Earth.” I have news for them — this earth is not my mother, and this planet or even the universe is not God! But, this is pantheism, or as one man called it “pan-everything-ism” (ibid).

The concept of the deist is that God created the heaven and the earth, but then has not intervened either in any way to alter it since the creation. Geisler defined “deism” as the view that holds that “God created the world but denies his supernatural intervention in it on the grounds that the world operates by natural and self-sustaining laws of the Creator” (Geisler 151). Deists believe that God is personal, yet their concept of God will not allow God, “to perform miracles of personal communication (revelation)” (ibid).

Yet, this view is inconsistent at best. This is not to say that we believe that God is still working through miracles today (1 Corinthians 13:10). But, the view of deism would deny the miracles of the Old and New Testament, and ultimately deny that God has communicated either directly (prophets, apostles) or indirectly (through His Word) to man at any time, which is not true. In other words, God

just created the world (wound it up) and has just set back and done nothing since (let it run down).

Both of these views of creation are false and deny the power and truth of God's Word concerning His creation.

2. Special creation. This is the view we normally refer to when we mention creation. We affirm from **Genesis 1 & 2** (as well as **Exodus 20:11; Matthew 19:4; John 1:3; Acts 17:24; Ephesians 3:9; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 11:3; Revelation 4:11**) that in the beginning God created “ex nihilo” (out of nothing, **Hebrews 11:3**) the heaven and the earth and all things therein (including man and woman) in six, 24 hour days. We believe that **Genesis 1-11** (which includes the account of creation) is to be interpreted literally, rather than as some professors at some “Christian” universities have asserted, that it is a “myth” or at best should be interpreted figuratively.

In opposition to the general theory of evolution, special creation affirms that (1) The organisms now living have descended from beings of the *same kind* which were created (Genesis 1:11); (2) Within created kinds processes of change may occur to such an extent as to produce individuals differing to a considerable degree (several races of man from one original pair); (3) Any physical or mental changes which have occurred in organisms since creation have arisen (except in cases of miraculous intervention) through natural causes which now continue to be in operation and which therefore can be studied experimentally (Marsh 26).

In opposition to deism and pantheism, special creation affirms that God presently governs or sustains all things by His word. Paul and Peter both affirmed this truth. Paul in **Acts 17:28** said, *“For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.”* In **Hebrews 1:2-3** in speaking of Jesus, he wrote, *“...by whom also he made the worlds; 3 Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power...”* Peter wrote in **2 Peter 3:7**, *“But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.”*

Special creation is based upon both internal and external evidence, and is clearly the most reasonable view of the origin of the universe and the existence of life, as we will show when we discuss some of the problems with the general theory of evolution.

B. Evolution:

1. The General theory of evolution — also known as Organic evolution, or Macro evolution. This is the type of evolution which we normally refer to when we use the term evolution. The word “evolution” literally means change or “unfolding, unrolling” (Jenkins 23). But, this simple definition does not adequately address the issue of the general theory of evolution because special creation allows for some change or unfolding (Mark 4:28).

What is the theory of organic evolution? Well, first of all it *is* a theory, which has not been proven, and which cannot be proven by scientific methods. Which means that it is *not* a fact of science or a doctrinal fact. Secondly, it is a belief of some of the scientific and academic community which basically teaches, that “millions of years ago (when) lifeless matter (what: matter) acted upon by natural forces (force) gave origin to one or more minute living organisms which have since evolved into all living and extinct plants and animals, including man” (*Evolution* 7).

According to Dr. G.A. Kerkut, the general theory of evolution is based upon seven basic

assumptions, the last five of which, really are based on the first two. (1) The first assumption is that non-living things gave rise to living material, i.e. spontaneous generation occurred. Some evolutionists deny this today, as they teach either the eternal matter theory or the continuous generation theory (pop-up). However, none of these theories can be scientifically proven or supported and are actually in conflict with established scientific laws (such as the 1st and 2nd laws of thermodynamics). (2) The second assumption is that spontaneous generation occurred only once. The other five assumptions all come from this one, which teach the interrelation of viruses, bacteria, plants and animals and assert that the smaller life forms gave rise to the higher life forms from a common ancestral stock. Kerkut admits that acceptance of these assumptions is a matter of *faith, belief, or trust* (150-156).

We are told that in order to accomplish this slow gradual evolutionary process it took millions and millions of years. In order for the general theory of evolution to work they have to have immense periods of time, which is one of the marks of evolution: an ancient earth — billions of years old. This is also where we must meet them in dating fossils, rock formations and the age of extinct species such as dinosaurs. The creationist and the evolutionist use the same facts, but we interpret them in the light of revelation and true science, while the evolutionist denies God's word and twists (or ignores) scientific principles in order to prop up his theory.

2. The Special theory of evolution. This is also known as Micro (small) Evolution. This simply refers to change within specific groups or species, which can come through the effects of the environment or through the natural differences which occur from the random (or in some cases, such as cattle, dogs, horses, etc. controlled) gene combinations in reproduction. We do not deny that these types of changes, variations or fluctuations take place in plants and animals. Dogs are still dogs, regardless of their differences in size or color. Monkeys are still monkeys, cattle are still cattle, horses are still horses, and men are still men, regardless of variations.

But, this is greatly different than the general theory of evolution, such as Darwin and modern evolutionists teach, which demands large changes such as a water animal becoming a reptile, which becomes a mammal, which then becomes a man. In fact, the Genesis account presents only five distinct “kind” among animals and presents man as distinct from animals. The “kind” of Genesis are water creatures, birds, cattle, creeping things and beasts of the earth (Genesis 1:21,24). However, this is not to be confused with modern taxonomy, which came into existence in the 1700's, and which defines the various genus, species and so forth.

3. The theory of Theistic evolution. Some just call this Theistic Evolution, but it is a theory and a doctrine which is taught by some in the religious world in an attempt to reconcile the Genesis account of creation with the theory of evolution, which demands an earth which is billions of years old. It is a compromise between the general theory of evolution and the general theory of creation. There are essentially two theories in Theistic Evolution:

i. The Gap theory which teaches that there is a large gap of time which occurred between the creation of the heaven and the earth of **Genesis 1:1** and the six days of creation which are then set forth beginning in **Genesis 1:2**. Basically, those who believe in this theory assert that God created the heaven and the earth in the beginning, but then it was destroyed, (made without form, and void) with possibly plants, animals and even men being destroyed with it. Then it lay idle for perhaps millions and millions of years; and was finally re-made or re-formed according to the account of the six days of creation.

ii. **The Day-Age theory** which teaches that God created the heavens and the earth, as **Genesis 1:1** affirms, but then let it slowly evolve over millions of years. The mechanism to get this time is found in that they teach that the six days of **Genesis 1** are not literal 24 hour days, but that each day represents a long period of time (perhaps millions of years each) in which the various things mentioned in each day were allowed to evolve, according to the theory of general evolution. About the only difference between this theory and general evolution is the origin of the universe and supposed belief in God as the ultimate creator. Both of these views are false, in the light of both external and internal evidence which we will show as we examine the problems of evolution.

II. THE PROBLEMS OF EVOLUTION. (General and Theistic)

A. Denies The Existence Of God And Origin Of The Universe By Creation.

This is why atheists (I know God does not exist), skeptics (I doubt God exists) and agnostics (I don't know if God exists or not) generally subscribe to the theory of evolution. Without God in the picture, they have no other logical explanation of the origin of life (which is not to say that evolution is either logical or scientific, it is not)! Even if they are given the theory of evolution, they still have explain the origin of matter and the existence of the universe.

Some in an attempt to do so, have come with the theory of continuous generation which states that matter and energy are constantly being created. But this is contrary to the 1st law of thermodynamics (conservation of energy) which states that no energy is being created or destroyed. Other evolutions attempt to say that the universe has always existed (eternal existence), however the 2nd law of thermodynamics (energy deterioration) refutes this false view, because of the law of entropy or that things are generally deteriorating or falling apart.

Those who subscribe to the "big-bang" theory still have to answer where the matter/energy came from in the first place, as well as several other arguments concerning the arrangement and order of the universe and natural law. Did all of these things just happen by accident or chance? Evolutions say yes! But, who could believe it given the unbelievable mathematical odds against chance origin!

There are several arguments, which some now call the classical arguments for the existence of God, which were developed by St. Thomas Aquinas in the 13th century, which have been modified and added to by others through the years. One of the objections to the use of these arguments is that some believe that by logic or reason we can prove the existence of God, rather than accepting by faith His revelation. However, I view them as additional logical evidence which can be used to convince the unbeliever (atheist, skeptic, agnostic) who will not accept the internal evidence of the Scriptures of the existence of God and His creation of all things. Here is a brief overview of them: (Jenkins 31-34).

1. The Ontological Argument — We can think of one who is perfect. This basically affirms that the idea or concept of God could not originate with man (since our mind cannot create, but simply observes, stores, arranges and analyzes) therefore, it must have come from without man. This implies revelation from a higher being, who must of necessity exist. Therefore, God is. Alexander Campbell argued in the *Campbell-Owen* debate that the concept of God is ultimately traceable to an original communication between the Creator and the creature.

2. The General Argument — Universal belief in God or man is a religious being by nature. History proves that all nations have belief in a supernatural being(s). Of course, their belief and their worship may not be accurate (polytheism, mythological), but still there is a natural tendency for man to worship someone or something beyond himself. The human heart has a craving for God in every society, even if there are exceptions. In fact, the atheist *is* the exception to the general rule of man's desire to be religious. Why is man this way, if there is no God? The atheistic answer must be that matter (not spirit) produced the thought that God exists, which is impossible!

3. The Cosmological Argument — This is also known as Cause and Effect. Paul wrote in *"For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God."* In this context, the reference to the "house" is a reference to the various covenants (Moses & Christ). However, the principle still stands. For every effect there must be an adequate cause. The earth and universe exists, therefore there must be an adequate cause for it: a builder — a Creator.

Logically, in order for the universe to exist, there must have been something which has always existed. From nothing, comes nothing. There are only two possibilities: matter or mind (spirit). Yet, we know that it cannot be matter, because of the 2nd law of thermodynamics. Thus, it must be mind (spirit) which is eternal. That mind (spirit) is identified and described in the Bible as God! Therefore, God is the cause (uncaused cause) behind the effect of the universe (His creation).

4. The Teleological Argument — Design demands a Designer. We believe this in everyday life. Paley pointed out that a watch requires a watchmaker. The universe operates according to precise astronomical laws, did these just happen by chance or were they planned and continue to function by the design of an omnipotent, omniscient Creator? Consider the various interrelationships of the planets which must take place in order for universe to exist, as well as all the factors (distance from the sun, oxygen, cycles of day and night, water cycle, etc.) of this earth which must perform according to exacting laws in order to sustain life. Did all of these just happen by chance or accident? No! *"Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear."* (Hebrews 11:3).

Consider the human body and mind with all its various systems and organs, did all of these just happen by chance and genetic mutations as evolution assumes? Of course not! David wrote in **Psalms 139:14**, *"I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well."* All of the wonders of creation point to God as the Great Designer and Creator of all things.

5. The Anthropological Argument — The Moral Argument which argues for the existence of God from the existence of morality (laws of right and wrong), which implies a source of absolute right and wrong from outside of man. There can be no doubt that there is a moral law, although man may differ on where the line should be drawn. The evolutionist has the words "right" and "wrong" in his vocabulary, just as we do. He believes it would be wrong for his rights to be violated, or his person or family to be harmed. But, on what basis, if there is no God and consequently, no absolute moral law? The thieves and murderers of this world are entitled, with equal validity to their opinion, as the person who feeds the hungry and clothes the naked, if there are no absolute moral values one act is no better or worse than another.

If we say there are moral values, then we must conclude that they came from somewhere. But, it could not be from matter, since it is amoral. Yet, evolutionists assume that all things came from lifeless matter. But, moral nature in man and the universe demands a *moral person* as the source or

origin outside of man. This leads us to the conclusion that God is that moral being who gave man an absolute standard of right and wrong: moral law.

There are other arguments which support the existence of God (such as the Esthetical Argument) but these should be sufficient to convince the person who rejects God's Word but is logical and rational of the existence of God, which the evolutionist denies.

B. Evolution Is Not Truly Scientific Or A Fact Of Science.

The second problem which the evolutionist must face is that true science does not support his theory. Again, we emphasize that true science and true religion do not conflict! They are in complete harmony. As brother Bert Thompson wrote, "Science is that 'looking glass' given to man by God for the purpose of investigating and having dominion over His creation" (4:44).

Despite the fact that most evolutionists (Vance, Miller, Huxley, Goldschmidt, Dobzhansky, Muller, Sagan, Bonner, Beadle) confidently affirm in their writings that evolution is a "fact" of science, yet the evidence points to the truth that evolution is not a "fact" of science, but a merely a theory of man, which cannot be proven by scientific methods, because of the limitations of the scientific method. What are these limitations? Brother Thompson gives five of them in the AP study course: (5:50-53).

1. The scientific method is limited to what can be observed with the five senses.

Science cannot deal with events which cannot be observed, measured or analyzed. Obviously, science cannot deal with an event which was not observed by human witnesses. The evolution of man, by its very definition, could not have been observed by men, since they do not appear in the evolution model until the last few years of the earth's existence.

2. The scientific method is limited to the present. Science cannot deal with historical events beyond human history (which must be case if evolution is true), since it must be possible to observe, experiment and reach conclusions concerning a hypothesis. If evolution were still taking place today, why aren't experiments being conducted to try and prove it? (Like putting monkeys in cold environments, which one theory asserts is how monkeys evolved into men, and seeing if they turn into men.)

3. The scientific method is limited to telling us "how" a process works, not "why." There is a world of difference in being able to know how an automobile works and why it works the way it does. The same is true concerning electronics, nuclear physics and other scientific fields. We may know how a certain device may work, but we still not fully know why. We may have theories, but that is all.

4. The scientific method is limited in that it is amoral (non-moral). It cannot tell us that a certain principle or invention is either right or wrong. Guns and knives use principles of science (physics) to operate. Are they of themselves, right or wrong? The same gun or knife which will kill a poisonous snake or help to provide food will also harm or kill an innocent person. The same TV/VCR which can be used to spread evil and smut can also be used to preach the Gospel. The same radio or telephone which can be used to spread gossip and hatred, can be used to communicate the truth of God's Word. Only God's moral law, revealed through His Word, can determine if science is being used in the right way.

5. The scientific method is limited in that it cannot deal with the unique. One evolutionist

stated, "one time events on earth are outside of science" (Dr. Paul Weisz, Elements of Biology). In order to test a hypothesis by the science, one must be able to experiment and reproduce the same results time and again. However, one of the assumptions of evolution is that spontaneous generation occurred once. However, if it occurred just once, then it is outside the realm of science. Thus, evolution cannot be proven by the scientific method and it cannot be a "fact" of science, but an unprovable theory!

In addition to these limitations, many of the arguments used to support the theory of evolution do not support it, but lend even more evidence to the creation account. For instance, comparative anatomy (monkey's anatomy to man's anatomy) does not prove that man evolved from monkey, but that our Creator used similar designs in what some have called "economy of design." Yet, the many differences of anatomy are often overlooked by evolutionists and brushed aside. Yet they still exist and the Bible still teaches that there are differences in the blood of man and animals, as well as the flesh. Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 15:39**, *"All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds."* Paul also declared in **Acts 17:26**, that God, *"...hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation;"*

Genetic mutation and natural selection are also sometimes introduced as proof of Darwinian evolution, but when one studies the scientific facts about such, we find that the mathematical odds of even one good mutation happening are so great, that it cannot possibly fit the evolutionary time frame. One evolutionist admitted that if there were 100 million individuals which reproduced a new generation each day, the chances of good results from mutation would only take place about one time every 274 billion years! Evolution assumes a much better rate than this.

One of the marks of evolution is also the time required for evolution to take place. There must be huge amounts of time in order for evolution to take place. We are told that the impossible becomes possible given enough time. This means that the earth must be billions of years old for evolution to occur. How do we answer the evolutionist who holds up his dating methods as "proof" that the earth is billions of years old?

First of all, many of the dating methods are based on assumptions. They assume that the theory of uniformitarianism, or that the earth is a closed system, that it has changed at the same rate continually, is true. But, this does not allow for the earth's environment or the rate of change in processes, as well as cataclysmic events. Second, many of the radioactive dating methods have been shown to be highly inaccurate by using samples of material of known age, and yet were found to be 1,000's or in some cases millions of years old.

In fact, there are over 75 different dating methods now which indicate that the earth is relatively young, less than 10,000 years old. If we trace the genealogical records of the Bible we perhaps cannot be exact, but we can come close to the age of the earth being about 6,000 to 8,000 years old now. Adam Clarke placed creation at 4,004 B.C.. Perhaps, someday science will find him to be exactly correct! But, one thing is certain, the earth is not millions or billions of years old!

How do we explain then, that the earth seems to be millions of years old to some who will not accept the Biblical account? Apparent age. How old were Adam and Eve when they were created? How old did they appear to be? How old were the rocks and the earth when it was created? How old did they appear to be? The earth may appear old to some, because God created it this way.

No, evolution is not a "fact" of science, but as we can see, it is scientifically unprovable. It is

at best a theory, which some do not even believe is a scientific theory, and could more properly be called, a belief.

C. Problems With Theistic Evolution.

The reason both types of theistic evolution, whether the gap-theory or the day-age theory, are so prevalent among those in the “Christian” universities and among their professors is that they have been saturated with the theory of evolution, which demands millions/billions of years, yet they do not wish to completely deny the existence of God and His creation. Thus, they try to compromise with both in order to get the time needed for evolution and end up being wrong on both counts.

In answering these false theories we can observe that the Gap theory mis-uses the Hebrew words in Genesis 1:2 trying to make them say that the earth “became” without form and void, rather than it “was” as in KJV; as well as wresting Isaiah 45:18 to make it say things were not created as they are found in Genesis 2. The Day-Age theory overlooks that the Hebrew word YOM in Genesis 1 refers to a 24 hour day; as well as the division of the day by evening and morning in Genesis 1; in addition it cannot answer the problem of the plants of the third period “day” surviving without the light from the fourth period “day” as well as symbiotic relationships.

So, even though there are specific arguments which are made for each theory, which can be answered by examining the specific passages which are being twisted, there are two passages which totally destroy both the gap and day-age theories. They are:

Matthew 19:4 where Jesus said, *“...Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female,”*

Exodus 20:11 where Moses wrote, *“For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.”*

Jesus tied the “beginning” of **Genesis 1:1** to the sixth day of creation, when God created Adam and Eve, as male and female. There is simply no time here for a gap of immense time or for day-ages to take place between the first and sixth day.

Further, **Exodus 20:11** tells us that God “made” (not remade or reformed) heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is in six days. This answers the gap theory. Further, the Hebrew word for “day” (YOM) for the sabbath day is the same as for the six days of creation. If the sabbath was a 24 hour day which occurred every seven days (and it was), then the six days of creation had to also be 24 hour days.

Please notice, as well that those who say that theistic evolution doesn't have any effect on anything but the creation account of **Genesis 1-3** have denied what Moses wrote in both Genesis and Exodus (thus reducing them to myth or falsehood) and have denied that Jesus is telling the truth in **Matthew 19**. If Jesus did not tell the truth about this, then He was not the Son of God and if He was not the Son of God, then He is not our Savior, and if Jesus is not our Savior, then we are all without hope! If we can eliminate the first 11 chapters of Genesis, as well as Exodus, and eliminate Jesus as telling the truth about creation, then we might as well throw out the whole Bible and join hands with the evolutionists and atheists. Brethren, theistic evolution is not simply a harmless doctrine of compromise, but it is a dangerous false doctrine with serious implications.

III. EVOLUTION VERSUS CREATION FROM A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE.

A. Evolution At Variance With The Bible.

The general theory of evolution cannot be reconciled or adjusted in any way to harmonize with the Bible. It is at variance with the Bible in several areas: (Jenkins 28).

1. Evolution denies that life was *created*. (Genesis 1).
2. It denies that God created man (male and female) (Genesis 1:26-27; Matthew 19:1-4).
3. It denies that man was created in the image of God, with a soul, distinct from the animals (Genesis 1:26-27; Psalm 8:3-8).
4. It denies that man was originally in a *garden* (the word implies an orderly, not chaotic, place) (Genesis 2:8).
5. It denies the original *kinds* in **Genesis 1**. It overlooks the fact that it is physically impossible for men to cross with animals.
6. It denies the fall of man (Genesis 3). Evolution will not admit that man needs a Savior.
7. It overlooks the difference between human blood and animal blood (Acts 17:26).
8. It overlooks the distinction between the four different kinds of flesh (1 Corinthians 15:39).
9. The evolutionary geologic record differs with the Genesis account on two major points:
 - i. **Evolution:** Water creatures before land plants. **Genesis:** Plants on 3rd day; water creatures on 5th day.
 - ii. **Evolution:** Reptiles before birds. **Genesis:** Birds on 5th day; creeping things on 6th day.
10. Evolution denies that God governs or sustains all things (Acts 17:28; Colossians 1:17; Hebrews 1:3; 2 Peter 3:7).
11. Evolution is not in harmony with at least three scientific laws (natural laws given of God):
 - i. 1st Law of Thermodynamics. No energy is being created or destroyed. Either matter has always existed (eternal) or it was specially created at some time in the past.
 - ii. 2nd Law of Thermodynamics. Process of entropy or that everything is decaying (which refutes eternal matter theory). This says that the world came into being at a time not infinitely remote. Relatively young earth.
 - iii. Law of Biogenesis. All life comes from existing life. God gave life unto all living things and man in the beginning. Divine or special creation is in harmony with all three of these laws, while evolution conflicts with all three in some way.
12. Evolution denies all Biblical miracles, from creation, up to and including the virgin birth and resurrection of Jesus.
13. By implication, evolution denies that Jesus is the only begotten Son of God (Matthew 16:16).
14. By implication, evolution denies that the Bible is the special, divine revelation of God given to man.

15. Ultimately, evolution denies the existence of God and the origin of the universe!

CONCLUSION

The theory of evolution is not something which can be taken lightly, whether it comes to us in the form of organic evolution or theistic evolution. Both pose a threat to our faith and the faith of our children. All those who profess Christ must not only reject the theory of evolution in its various permutations as false, but we must stand up and “...sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.” (1 Peter 3:15).

Hopefully, this brief lesson will be a start and an encouragement to all of us to better equip ourselves to answer the falsehoods of the theory of evolution and to teach the creation account of Genesis with more vigor.

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PREMILLENNIALISM

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About the author...

Paul Meacham and his wife April, have 3 children. Paul is the speaker for radio and television for the Truth For The World program. He is also involved in meeting work and promotional/informational work for Truth for the World and does foreign evangelism in conjunction with Truth for the World.

In Matthew 3:2 we find John the Baptist was going about Judea *“And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”* In Matthew 4:17 we find that *“...Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”* In Matthew 10:7 we see Jesus sending His twelve disciples (later known as apostles) to the Jews of their day with the instruction that *“...as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.”* This was a true and noble message for the kingdom surely was at hand and men needed to ready themselves. However, many today are continuing to preach that message when it is neither true nor noble. Looking longingly to the future for what has already been delivered, they, in misbegotten expectation of a man-conceived panacea, reject the kingdom our Lord established. This rejection of God’s provision for man’s salvation is at the very core of premillennialism.

Since this lectureship centers on being able to give an answer on a variety of Bible topics, I have decided to fulfill my assignment by first asking a question and then answering it. As is the case with all profitable answers, we will appeal to God’s Word as the sole authority on all matters religious and spiritual. I have chosen these particular questions for three reasons. For the most part, these are questions I have been asked by others during discussions of the tenets of premillennialism. These questions naturally guide us into much of the subject matter to be considered. Based on the current false teaching most people hear on this matter, these are questions any Christian is likely to be asked during a discussion of premillennialism.

What is Premillennialism?

This is a much easier question to ask than it is to answer. The difficulty stems from the fact that premillennialism has taken so many different forms over the years and even among its staunchest adherents there remains significant disagreement of belief. The disagreement arises from, and is continued by, the contradictory conclusions their teachers draw from their self-serving interpretations of prophetic and often highly symbolic passages. For the sake of our discussion, we will define premillennialism as: the belief that at some point in the future Jesus will (1) return to this earth, (2) establish an earthly kingdom, and (3) rule from the throne of David in Jerusalem for 1000 years. This definition, of course, is not comprehensive, but, even while debating many of the finer aspects of

premillennialism, most who hold this false doctrine do agree with these three points.

Will Jesus Return To The Earth?

Many would answer with an emphatic “Yes!” Some would say, “I’m not sure.” The Bible says, “No!” In Matthew 26:64 as Jesus stands before the injustice of the Jewish High Priest, He tells them that they will “*see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.*” This is a warning that at the end of time He, the Christ, would see them again in judgement. The difference is that at the end Jesus will be the judge and they will be on trial (2 Corinthians 5:10). Notice the passage refers to Jesus as coming in the clouds. The figure of God coming on the clouds is often used to represent judgement (Psalm 18:6-10; Isaiah 19:1-4; Matthew 24:30; Mark 13:26; Luke 21:27; Revelation 1:7). Many have supposed from these passages that Jesus is coming in the clouds **to the earth**. Notice, however, 1 Thessalonians 4:17. “*Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*” The Bible does not show Jesus as coming to the earth, but rather us as leaving the earth to join Him in the air. “*And so shall we ever be with the Lord.*” This is considered by some to be a minor point, but the fact is that according to the Bible record, Jesus will never again set foot on the earth. Will Jesus return to the earth? If we are ready to give the Bible answer, we must answer “No”.

Will Jesus Establish A Kingdom?

To the surprise of many the Bible answers this question, “No!” If the question were restated, “Did Jesus establish a kingdom?” The answer would be “Yes!” Again, let’s allow the Bible to speak for itself. God promised Jacob that a ruler would come through Judah (Genesis 49:10). God established a kingdom (physical Israel) under the Old Testament law that was typical of a kingdom (the church) that was yet to come (1 Samuel 8:5-7; Galatians 6:15-16). Jehovah specified that a king would come from the line of David and rule from David’s throne (2 Samuel 7:8-16). Luke records for us that Jesus is the King through whom the Father fulfilled this promise (Luke 1:31-32; Acts 2:29-36), and that “*...he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end*” (Luke 1:33). This is the same kingdom that is prophesied in Isaiah chapter two, Daniel chapter two, and Joel chapter two, and whose prophecy was fulfilled in Acts chapter two. That it was divinely planned that Jesus should establish and reign over a kingdom is without question.

That His kingdom has already been established and He is now reigning over it is equally certain. Matthew, Mark, and Luke all recorded the promise of Jesus to establish His kingdom during the lives of those who saw Him walk this earth about 2000 years ago (Matthew 16:28; Mark 9:1; Luke 9:27). Either Jesus lied, which is impossible (Numbers 23:19; 1 Samuel 15:29; Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:17-18), Jesus failed, which is also impossible (Genesis 18:14; Job 42:2; Jeremiah 32:17; Mark 10:26-27, 14:36), or Jesus established His kingdom during the lifetime of those to whom He spoke in the first century.

The Bible even tells us exactly when He was established as King over His kingdom. Daniel 7:13-14 reads thus,

*I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man **came with the clouds** of heaven, and **came to the Ancient of days**, and they brought him near before him. **And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom**, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, **and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed** (emp. PDM).*

Please notice the text does not say that He will receive His kingdom when he comes in the clouds to the earth. Rather, He received His kingdom when He went in the clouds **to the Ancient of days**. The record of this event is plainly given in Acts 1:9-11 when Jesus ascended back to the Father in heaven. That is why the apostle Paul could tell the Colossian Christian to give thanks to the Father *“Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and **hath translated us into the kingdom** of his dear Son”* (Colossians 1:13, emp. PDM). This would have been an impossible task if the kingdom had not already been established.

Some may ask, “If the kingdom has already been established, where is it?” Again the Bible provides the answer. In Matthew 16:18-19 Jesus promised to build His church and give Peter the keys to the kingdom. Here Jesus answers for us the question. His church is His kingdom. Paul addressed the letter we know as First Thessalonians to *“the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ”* (1 Thessalonians 1:1). Then in chapter two and verse twelve he exhorted them to *“walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.”* The kingdom of God is not hard to find. One simply has to look where it is. If we look into the future for something existing in the present, we will miss it. If we look for a king ruling on earth when there is a King ruling from heaven, we will miss Him. So, will Jesus establish a kingdom? If we are ready to give the Bible answer, we must answer “No, He already established it.”

Didn't God promise the Land of Canaan to the nation of Israel?

This question is vital to any discussion of premillennialism not because the Bible makes it important, but because of the great importance premillennialists place on this small piece of land. In his book *The Gathering Storm*, Harold Lindsell claims

... the land of Palestine is designed by God to be the centerpiece of, the events surrounding the end times Israel is one of the keys to the end of the age. Whoever loses sight of Israel and its role in the events connected with the consummation of history has an incorrect view of the second advent of Jesus” (Rutherford 26, 37).

This misunderstanding of the land of Palestine and whose it rightfully is, is so strong that it has even exerted political influence on American foreign policy.

Now, let's examine the question. Did God promise the land of Canaan to the nation of Israel? The answer is “Yes.” However, the land of Canaan (currently fought over by Israel, Jordan, Syria, the Palestine Liberation Organization, and others) is not the God-given property of any people today. How can both be true? The answer is found in the Biblical record.

In Genesis chapter 12 Jehovah ordered Abram, later renamed Abraham, out of his homeland

and into another land. Upon arrival Jehovah promises Abram that the land of Canaan would belong to his children (Genesis 12:7). It is upon this promise that the premillennialists build their hopes of a restored physical nation of Israel in the land of Palestine. When the United Nations in 1948 declared Israel to once again be a nation, many were sure the “end time prophecies” were beginning to be fulfilled. However, to conclude such ignores the record of what God did for Israel and with the land of Canaan in the intervening years.

The book of Joshua opens with God’s instruction to “...*arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, **unto the land which I do give to them**, even to the children of Israel*” (Joshua 1:2, emp. PDM). This occurs just after Moses has died and Joshua is beginning to lead Israel. God was at that moment in the process of giving them the land He had promised to Abraham. That was not an eternally ongoing process. Joshua 21:43-45 tells us,

*And the LORD **gave** unto Israel all the land which he sware to give unto their fathers; and they **possessed** it, and **dwelt** therein. And the LORD **gave** them rest round about, according to all that he sware unto their fathers: and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; the LORD **delivered** all their enemies into their hand. There failed not ought of any good thing which the LORD had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass. (Emp. PDM)*

At the end of his life Joshua reminded the people,

*...behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that **not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the LORD your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof** (Joshua 23:14, emp. PDM).*

There are two other things that we should note in Joshua’s farewell address. First, we should note that the claim that God had already delivered to Israel the things promised (Joshua 23:14) follows a reminder that it was Jehovah who had driven their enemies out of the land and had thereby given it to them (Joshua 23:13). Second, we note that the following verse warns them of the conditional nature of their inherited land,

Therefore it shall come to pass, that as all good things are come upon you, which the LORD your God promised you; so shall the LORD bring upon you all evil things, until he have destroyed you from off this good land which the LORD your God hath given you (Joshua 23:15)

The inheriting of the promised land was never intended by God to be a blank check for unrighteousness. Rather, the land was one of the blessings a Father provided for His children and, as with all other blessings, it would be withdrawn if they were disobedient.

That Israel was disobedient and forfeited the land God gave them is also a matter of record (2 Kings 17:22-23, 25:1-21; 2 Chronicles 36:16-20). In fact, Nehemiah chapter nine gives a wonderful history of Jehovah’s dealing with his people. Nehemiah begins by acknowledging Jehovah as the

Creator (Nehemiah 9:6). He then shows that God fulfilled His promise to Abraham (Nehemiah 9:7-8, 23-25), that Israel rebelled and was therefore removed from the land (Nehemiah 9:26-35), and that only God's mercy brought Israel out of captivity. He acknowledges that God was right in so dealing with Israel and that they were returned to the land as servants that Jehovah might fulfill His own will and bring from that nation a savior (Isaiah 46:10-13; Nehemiah 9:36-38). So, did God promise the land of Canaan to Israel? If we are ready to give the Bible answer, we must answer "He promised them the land, gave them the land, and they, by their disobedience, forfeited the land."

What is the Rapture everyone is talking about?

The rapture, as premillennialists allege, will be (1) a sudden return by our Lord, (2) a secret return by our Lord, (3) and the sweeping up into heaven of all the righteous from the earth, both living and dead. They further claim that the rapture will be followed by a seven-year period of persecution known as the tribulation and that the tribulation will end when Jesus comes to earth, accompanied by those who have been raptured and His angels, to fight the battle of Armageddon. Jesus will secure victory and will then establish His kingdom and rule from Jerusalem for 1000 years. The question we should ask is, "What does the Bible say about the rapture?" The answer is, "Nothing!"

The word "rapture" is not even in the Bible. The word is of Latin (*raptō*) not Greek origin and means to sweep or catch away. The word "rapture" in the English language has come to mean, being caught up or swept away with happiness or joy. What is more important than the absence of the word from the Text, is that the premillennial concept of the rapture is not in the Bible. In fact, the Bible record of Jesus' second coming makes the premillennial concept of the rapture impossible.

The Bible does say that Jesus will come suddenly. Matthew 24:36-25:46 is a series of teaching about the second coming of Jesus and the end of time. Matthew 24:42 tells us to, "*Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.*" Matthew 24:44 warns, "*Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.*" The second coming of Jesus will be sudden and unexpected. However, the Bible denies that His coming will be secret. Revelation 1:7 says, "*Behold, he cometh with clouds; **and every eye shall see him**, and they also which pierced him: and **all kindreds of the earth** shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen*" (emp. PDM). Paul comforted the Thessalonians by saying "*For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven **with a shout**, with **the voice of the archangel**, and with **the trump of God**: and the dead in Christ shall rise first*" (1 Thessalonians 4:16, emp. PDM). Jesus' coming will be sudden but it will not be a secret.

Further, the Bible tells us that Jesus' coming will mark the end of time and the end of the world. The apostle Peter teaches us that the same God who once destroyed the world with water is currently maintaining the existence of this world and that it is "*reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men*" (2 Peter 3:7). Additionally, Peter warns us not to become complacent and disbelieving as years pass because "*the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up*" (2 Peter 3:10). Once again we see the sudden, unannounced nature of the Lord's coming, but we also learn that on that day the earth will be completely destroyed. That means there will be no time for the seven years of the tribulation or a 1000-year earthly reign of Christ. All will come to an end on that day.

The Bible also denies the premillennial idea that there will be separate resurrections for the good and the evil. The Bible records that all will be raised, changed, judged, and assigned to their eternal destination when Jesus returns (Matthew 25:31-46; John 5:28-29; Acts 17:30-31; Romans 14:11-12; 1 Corinthians 15:23-55; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 20:11-15). That means the rapture, tribulation, 1000-year reign, and battle of Armageddon the premillennialists tell us about simply will not happen. They can not. There is no time or place for them in the Inspired Account. What is the rapture everyone is talking about? If we are ready to give the Bible answer, we must answer, "It is the invention of man's mind and has no Bible foundation at all."

Doesn't the Bible say anything about a 1000-year Reign?

The answer is, "Yes." In Revelation 20:4 John wrote,

And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

This is the only passage in the Bible that mentions a millennium. While it is true that one passage is enough to firmly establish a doctrine, the passage in question must actually teach the doctrine in question. In other word, this passage must actually say what the premillennialists claim. It does not! In fact, not only does it not support all the premillennial doctrines, **it does not support any** of them. In examining the twentieth chapter of Revelation, brother Rod Rutherford in his wonderful book, *The Millennial Mania*, observes,

There are several essential items missing for this to refer to a millennial reign of Christians on earth with Jesus Christ:

The second coming of Christ is not mentioned.

The resurrection of the body is not mentioned.

A reign **on earth** is not mentioned.

The literal throne of David is not mentioned.

We Christians today are not mentioned (please note that it is "they" not "we" who reigned).

Christ on the earth is not mentioned"

(78, emp. RR).

That is core of their doctrine. Everything that premillennialism is built on, everything that its practitioners rely on, this passage fails to provide. Homer Hailey, in his *Commentary on Revelation* concluded, "A theory which rests on a passage of Scripture in which not one of it peculiar tenets of doctrine is found cannot be true" (390). Such is certainly the case with the 1000-year earthly reign of Christ and the twentieth chapter of Revelation.

So, some may ask, what is the 1000-year reign mentioned in Revelation 20:4? It is a symbolic

and figurative way of representing victory for those who serve and follow Christ. Those on the thrones were seen earlier (Revelation 6:9-11) under the altar crying out for judgement against the wicked who had killed them. Moving these martyrs from under the altar (representative of death and sacrifice) and placing them on thrones (representative of victory and rule) was a message of comfort and encouragement to those of John's day who were enduring Roman persecution. Its divine preservation affords all who suffer for the cause of the Lord the strength and courage of assured victory. Does the Bible have anything to say about a 1000-year reign? If we are ready to give the Bible answer, we must answer, "Yes. But probably not what you have heard on television and radio."

Please do not wait for some future kingdom. The kingdom of Christ is available now and by His Gospel you are called to it (2 Thessalonians 2:14). Obey His word and He will save you (Hebrews 5:8-9). Refuse Him and you will surely die (2 Thessalonians 1:7-8).

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THE A. D. 70 DOCTRINE

Ted J. Clarke



About the author...

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Introduction

Since the 1970s, primarily Max King of Warren, OH has promoted this false doctrine, when he published his book, *The Spirit of Prophecy*. In *The Nichols-King Debate*, King claims: "The Holy Scriptures teach that the second coming of Christ, including the establishment of the eternal kingdom, the day of judgment, the end of the world and the resurrection of the dead, occurred with the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A. D" (1). The followers of the A. D. 70 doctrine do **not** believe there will be a future second coming of Christ, at which time all the dead will be raised and judged, with the righteous receiving an immortal resurrection body and eternal life and the wicked given eternal punishment in hell. Incredibly, they contend all of those promises were fulfilled when the Roman armies destroyed Jerusalem and its temple in the year A. D. 70. There are others, such as Ed Stevens and some denominational names that basically agree with King, but do not follow all that Max King teaches on this topic. Others like Jack Scott, Don Preston, and Tim King (Max's son) follow his thinking very closely.

The Supposed "Key"

One of the first teachers of this idea was J. Stuart Russell in a book, published in 1887, entitled, *The Parousia: The New Testament Doctrine of Our Lord's Second Coming*. Others have pretty much followed Russell's approach. There is a very close association between what the doctrine of Universalism has taught about eschatology (end time events) and what is taught by present day A. D. 70 theorists (Varner 32-77). Terry Varner has given a summarized history of this movement which we do not have the space to review (32-77). For King, and others, all Biblical prophecy was concluded in A. D. 70 and there is **nothing** that remains to be fulfilled (*Spirit* 392; *Cross* 666). King's supposed "key" to interpreting the prophecies in this fashion is given below.

It is the belief of the author that the spiritual method of interpretation is firmly established in the Bible, and that it is the basic and primary method of interpretation involved in end-time prophecy. This is not to deny that the literal method has a place

in scripture, for many prophecies have a material fulfillment. This is especially true in Christ's first coming to fleshly Israel, and also with respect to the last days of fleshly Israel. Since prophecy involves two Israels of God (fleshly and spiritual) in the last days, one can expect to find a twofold application of prophecy. One must, however, recognize the fact that the spiritual method of interpretation prevails in regard to the establishment and development of spiritual Israel, and to her is given a large portion of Old Testament prophecy. (*Spirit 1-2*)

Part of what King says is true, but one cannot consistently make all interpretation pertaining to the nation of fleshly Israel have only a physical application, nor can one make all interpretation pertaining to spiritual Israel, the church/kingdom of Christ, have only a spiritual application disconnected from anything physical.

King does not strictly adhere to his "key," except where his A. D. 70 doctrine requires. For example, John the Baptizer was sent to the physical nation of Israel as a forerunner of Christ (Matthew 11:7-14; 17:10-13). According to Isaiah 40:3-4, John was to fill the valleys, lower the hills, make the crooked paths straight (cf. Luke 3:2-5). Did John physically make Palestine a flat land with nothing but straight roads? Of course not, for what the prophet Isaiah had reference to was a spiritual application; John paving the way for Christ by preaching to the spiritual hearts of Israel to prepare for their Messiah (Varner 19-20). Regarding the church as spiritual Israel, did all prophecies given to them demand spiritual application apart from everything physical? Certainly not! Jesus foretold of the suffering of His followers (Matthew 10:16-22; John 15:18-20; 16:1-4). Was this suffering only spiritual, totally apart from the physical? Of course not! Read Acts 5:27-28, 40-41; 14:19-21; 16:19-24; 2 Timothy 3:12; 1 Peter 4:12-16; Revelation 2:10 et al. (Varner 19-22). Because of these examples and many others that could be mentioned, King's supposed key to understanding the Scriptures will not work.

We are dual beings, created by God and composed of flesh and spirit. From that moment of creation God has never ceased to communicate with mankind in ways that relate to both body and spirit. For example, Curtis Cates points out that we are God's church family, but we are fleshly human beings. Our worship to God is tied to our dual nature. We spiritually observe the Lord's Supper as we physically eat the bread and drink the cup of the Lord (1 Corinthians 11:23-28). When we are physically immersed in water in Christ's name our spirits are cleansed from sin [Acts 2:38; 8:35-40; Romans 6:3-5] (Cates 20-21). In this life God deals with us as we are, composed of both flesh and spirit. In the next life the inner man will receive an immortal spiritual body to inhabit (1 Corinthians 15; 2 Corinthians 4:16-5:8).

The A. D. 70 Doctrine is so complex in its approach to prophecy and the Scriptures in general that it is impossible to cover even its essential elements in one fairly short manuscript. Accordingly, I want to encourage our readers to consult some of the very good and inexpensive resource books available on this topic. I refer to those books marked with an asterisk "*" in the "Works Cited" at the conclusion of this lesson. While I have not cited from all of these, they are all valuable books which inform one on this topic. In the remaining space I want to consider what has been promoted as Max King's "greatest argument" for his A. D. 70 theories. I have chosen this course because of the claims of A. D. 70 theorists regarding Luke 17:20-37, and the fact that there is not a great deal of material answering their erroneous claims on this passage.

Matthew 24-25

We flatly reject King's claim that all eschatological events are past, having been fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem in A. D. 70. Most of us who do reject the A. D. 70 theory believe that Matthew 24, and its parallel treatments in Mark 13 and Luke 21, clearly show that the judgment and destruction of Jerusalem, while being an important event in Biblical prophecy, did not fulfill all prophecy about end time events!

Note the context for Matthew 24. Following Christ's scathing rebuke of the Pharisees in Matthew 23:1-33, Jesus lamented the unfaithful violence of the Jews towards God's messengers and warned them that God's judgment would make their house desolate when He would come again in the name of the Lord (verses 34-39). In chapter 24 the disciples sought to impress Jesus with the magnificence of the temple structures, to which Christ replied that not one stone would be left upon another (verses 1-2). This response by Christ prompted His disciples to ask, *"Tell us when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world"* (verse 3). Jesus answered the disciples' questions about the "when" of His coming in the destruction of Jerusalem by giving them a number of signs which would precede the event (verses 4-34).

Then Christ used the topic of judgment upon Jerusalem to warn of the final and eternal judgment upon all the earth (verses 35-51). Actually, Matthew 25 should also be included as part of Christ's teaching on the second coming and judgment. Luke 21:34-36 shows that this latter section was not speaking of an event connected with the local destruction of Jerusalem. There Jesus said, *"For as a snare shall it come **on all who dwell on the face of the whole earth**"* (verse 35). Matthew 24:34 says that all the signs and events of which Jesus had previously spoken in verses 4-33 would happen to "this generation," the Jews to whom He then was speaking. It is a fact of history that Jerusalem was destroyed in A. D. 70. However, the destruction of Jerusalem was not the "end of the world." "Heaven and earth" did **not** pass away. Jesus said regarding that *"day and hour"* no one knew except God. Then He went on to speak of what it would be like when He did come in judgment *"on all who dwell on the face of the whole earth"* (Luke 21:35; Matthew 24:37-25:46). This division of Matthew 24 into verses 4-34 dealing with the destruction of Jerusalem, and verses 35-51 referring to the judgment connected with Christ's second coming absolutely destroys the A. D. 70 doctrine. This second section shows: [1] there is to be a future coming of Christ **after** the destruction of Jerusalem (Matthew 24:37, 39); [2] there will be a universal judgment of all who dwell on the face of the whole earth (Luke 21:35; Matthew 25:32); and [3] the eternal rewards of everlasting punishment or eternal life will be given at this time (Matthew 25:34-46). Since these passages are such powerful refutation of the A. D. 70 doctrine, King and others seek to overthrow their force.

King's "Greatest Argument"?

In a cassette tape series teaching on "Covenant Eschatology" (another name for the A. D. 70 theory), Tim King, son of Max, said that he was speaking with a university professor "about the differences when you look at the coordinate teachings of Matthew 24 and Luke 17[20-37]." The unnamed professor reportedly told Tim King, "You know, Tim, I think that is your father's greatest argument" (*Overview:Matthew 24 tape*). The younger King obviously agreed or he would not have used the quote as he did.

What supposedly makes Luke 17:20-37 such a great argument for the A. D. 70 doctrine? Luke says some things in this section of Scripture that are also found in Matthew 24. King believes that this creates an impossible problem for those of us who divide Matthew 24 neatly into the two sections noted above, with verses 4-34 pertaining Christ coming in the destruction of Jerusalem in A. D. 70, and verses 35-51 to a yet future coming of Christ in judgment on the whole world. There are some **similar** sayings and events that Matthew's account divides into these two sections that Luke might seem to combine or mix together in Luke 17:20-37. King says,

Evidently some have not taken the time to compare Mt. 24 with Luke chapters 17 and 21. Luke puts in the fall of Jerusalem section what Matthew has in the future coming of Christ section—if what is claimed for **two sections** is a legitimate exegesis of the Olivet Discourse. (Cross 353).

We will illustrate these proposed sections of Matthew 24 and Luke 17 in a moment and show that they do not have the import King assigns to them. Before we do that, consider some other matters.

First, King wrongly assumes that Luke 17 is part of the Olivet Discourse like Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21. Luke 21 was, as Matthew 24 and Mark 13, delivered upon the Mount of Olives just outside Jerusalem. However, according to Luke 17:11 and 19:1, 11, 28-29, Jesus spoke what is recorded in Luke 17 sometime after He left Galilee but before He came to Jericho, on His way to Jerusalem. The Olivet Discourse was given **after** He had made His entry into Jerusalem (Matthew 21:1-11; Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:28-38). It is also worth noting that none of the standard harmonies of the gospels that I have seen combine Luke 17 with Luke 21.

Second, Luke 17 is not a treatise on the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem. Neither the temple nor Jerusalem is mentioned in that text. Christ's teaching here relates, not to the local destruction of Jerusalem, but to the universal judgment that would come upon all men. We will point out some of the universal markers in these verses that point to that future event. Nearly all commentators agree that Luke 17:20-18:8 go together as a unit of teaching given by Christ.

Third, similarity of words or phrases does **not** mean identity of a person, place, or thing (event). Just as some people had the same name, but were different, just so one may describe similar but different events using the same type of words. This is especially true in the Scriptures regarding the judgment of God upon people or nations. Scripture says that God rides the clouds in judgment, but in Nahum 1:3 the judgment was upon Assyria and in Ezekiel 19:1-2 the judgment was upon Egypt. The same is true with the figurative troubling of the heavenly bodies as the sun, moon, and stars (representing the fall of the governing powers of the nations). These were signs that were also used to depict judgment at different times upon different nations, such as Babylon (Isaiah 13:10); Egypt (Ezekiel 32:7-8); Israel (Amos 8:9); and the nations of the world (Revelation 6:12-14). Jesus used the same type of language of coming on the clouds and the troubling of the heavenly bodies to refer to the destruction of Jerusalem (Matthew 26:63; 24:29). One should not find it difficult to accept that the final future judgment upon all mankind might use the same type of judgment language.

What follows is a chart found in the printed outline study guide for the cassette tape *Overview* mentioned earlier (King 20). The material in lighter print on the left hand side under Matthew 24 are those matters in verses 4-34 that pertain to the destruction of Jerusalem. The darker bold print on the left relates to those things I believe pertain only to the second coming of Christ in verses 35-51. On

the right hand side under Luke 17, the lighter print statements, which are similar to some statements in Matthew, are mixed among the bolder print sayings. Since it is unlikely that Christ kept switching back and forth every few verses in Luke 17 from the destruction of Jerusalem to the end of the world, King avers that Luke had to be talking about the destruction of Jerusalem. However, we shall show that throughout the Luke 17 passage the Lord was speaking of His still future final coming in universal judgment upon all of the world.

Chart 2: The Unity of the Olivet Discourse as Seen from Matt. 24 and Luke 17.

Matthew 24	Luke 17
17 "... him on housetop..."	23 "...look here or look there..."
23 "Look here...or there..."	24 "For as the lightening flashes..."
27 "For as the lightning comes..."	25 "...this generation..."
28 "...carcass...eagles..."	26 "As it was in the days of Noah..."
34 "...this generation..."	27 "They ate...drank...married..."
37 "But as the days of Noah..."	30 "...Son of Man... revealed..."
38 "...eating, drinking, marrying..."	31 "...He who is on the housetop..."
39 "coming of the Son of Man..."	35 "...two women grinding..."
40 "...two men ... in field..."	36 "...two men ...in field..."
41 "...two women grinding..."	37 "...body...eagles..."

As may be seen, the consequences of dividing Matthew 24 into TWO divisions results in dividing the parallel teaching of Luke 17 into FIVE divisions within a span of 14 verses. How could any of the disciples follow the conversation of Jesus if this is what he did? Are we really to believe that this is what Jesus is doing in Luke 17, or is the solution to say that the writer is oblivious to what he is doing as he writes the account as he recalls? To the fundamental Bible scholar, neither choice is acceptable. (Overview 20)

King fails to see that the similar language in Luke 17 does not mean the same in some instances as it does in Matthew 24. With your Bible in hand, please follow closely the study of comparing Luke 17 with Matthew 24.

Comparing Luke 17 With Matthew 24

The setting for the discussion of Christ's second coming in Luke 17 grows out of the demand of the Pharisees to know *"when the kingdom of God should come"* (verse 20). Jesus' reply that "the

kingdom of God cometh not with observation” describes the spiritual nature of His kingdom. Jesus told Pilate, “*My kingdom is not of this world*” (John 18:36); therefore, its arrival is not “observable” like world kingdoms which come to power. All earthly kings, such as Pilate or David, reign before they die, but Christ was raised from the dead to sit on His throne (Acts 2:29-30). Christ’s triumphal coronation after His victory over death and ascension to God’s right hand would not be visible by human sight, but the results of this enthronement would be made manifest to all. Peter proclaimed the occurrence of this grand event in Acts 2:22-36. There were visible hints of what was to come regarding Christ’s kingdom, such as His entry into Jerusalem on the colt of an ass (Luke 19:28-40; Zechariah 9:9), but such was not the type of signs of a king the Pharisees expected.

Verse 21 – Because Christ’s throne was not an earthly one with a physical palace and a territory with physical borders, no one could say, “Lo, here! or lo there!”, pointing to a specific place on earth as the seat of God’s kingdom rule. The kingdom of God is real, but not worldly; it is “*within you*” or “*in the midst of you*” (ASV margin). Whether this means that God’s kingdom reign is “within” the heart of man governing his life, or “in your midst,” referring to Christ’s presence as God’s Son and Messiah, the kingdom was not the visible tangible entity that the Pharisees had hoped to see come.

Verse 22 – Verses 22-37 develop in response to the question of the Pharisees and seem to indicate that Christ’s reply that “*the kingdom of God is in the midst of you*” may have direct reference to Jesus as the Son of man. This verse foretells of a time of His absence from the disciples’ midst (cf. John 14:2-3, 12, 18-20 et al.). In His absence the disciples would desire to see again even “one of the days of the Son of man [when He was personally with them, but] ye shall not see it,” that is, not in their lifetimes.

Verse 23 – In Christ’s absence some would try to deceive the disciples saying, “*See here; or, see there*” as though Christ were present back on earth. Jesus warned against being duped by such claims. Matthew 24:23 also refers to the time of Christ’s absence when some would say, “*Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not.*” The Lord issued the same type of warning against being deceived by such claims. Both Matthew 24:23 and Luke 17:23 have reference to the time of Christ’s absence from the earth and false claims about His presence here, but Matthew’s context is rooted in the signs of the destruction of Jerusalem. Luke’s passage relates to any time prior to the second coming of Christ in universal judgment. Therefore, the warning about such things is timeless. The claims to be Christ made by men like David Koresh, Sun Yung Moon and others, are just as groundless as all others who made those pretenses prior to the fall of Jerusalem, or after it. Matthew 24:23-26 gives more of an urgent emphasis to this warning, perhaps because of the proximity in time of that event, but Luke’s universal and timeless application of the same caution shows that the similar material does not signify that they were part of the identical discourse.

Verse 24 – This verse promises that what the disciples would desire, “*to see one of the days of the Son of man*” (verse 22), would come to pass, but only at Christ’s second coming. The disciples need not be deceived by false claims of His coming, for as obvious as lightning streaking across the sky, “*so shall the Son of man be in his day.*” This is no secret coming of Deity, but obvious. Lightning was used in some theophanies in Scripture, whether accompanying His presence (Exodus 19:16; 20:18), or as His agent in judgment (Psalms 18:9-16). It will be impossible not to know when Christ returns “*in his day*” (Luke 17:30), which is likely a variation of “*the day of the Lord*” (Isaiah 13:6; Joel 2:1; Zechariah 14:1; Malachi 4:5); a day of judgment.

Again, the passage in Matthew 24:27 relates to “*the coming of the Son of man*” in judgment

upon Jerusalem, which Christ foretold in verse 3. This is similar language used in a similar judgment event, but not the same event. Luke 21:20-24, which is parallel to Matthew 24 and Mark 13, shows that Christ came in judgment upon Jerusalem via the armies of the Gentiles (Rome). But the judgment in Matthew 24:4-34 is local and Luke 17:20-37 has markers of universal judgment, as there are in the last half of the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24:35-51 and its parallels. These markers, shown in the discussion of the following verses, demonstrate that the coming of Christ in judgment in Luke 17 involves all mankind, not just Jerusalem.

Verse 25 – The fact that Jesus says, “*first* [before His day of judgment which will be evident to all - TJC] *he must suffer many things and be rejected of **this generation**,*” does not mean Luke 17 refers to the time of Jerusalem’s fall. Of course He must suffer many things and be rejected by “*this generation*” to whom He was speaking, for that was the time frame chosen by God for Christ to come, conduct His ministry, and be crucified and raised from the dead (Galatians 4:4; John 1:10-12; Acts 2:22-24). In God’s plan Christ was only in the flesh on earth approximately 33 years. However, Jesus did not say to His disciples in Luke 17 that the judgment of the whole world would take place during the lifetime of that generation. He did say in Matthew 24:34 that Jerusalem would be destroyed during the time of the same generation to whom He spoke. In fact Luke 18:7-8, the conclusion to this unit of Christ’s teaching, implies some substantial passage of time: “*And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?*” Marshall suggests that the probable meaning here of “bear long” (Greek, *makrothumeo*) is, “The elect cry to God night and day, but he puts their patience to the test by not answering them immediately...or, they call to him night and day even though (it seems as if) he is dilatory towards them...” (674-675). In verse 8 Christ responds in such a way that justifies this concept of a significant passage of time. “*I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?*” While the word “speedily” might seem to negate the idea of much time, the Greek phrase is *en tachei*, which can refer to “something which happens after a short interval, i.e. ‘soon’, or which happens in a very short space of time, i.e. ‘quickly’, or which happens before men are ready for it and when they do not expect it” (Marshall 676). “Soon” can be a relative term, depending upon one’s perspective about the matter (cf. 2 Peter 3:8-9).

A remark about a soon coming implies, nonetheless, a delay. Since delay in vindication may become an excuse to lose faith, Jesus goes on to say in effect, “Pray and look for the return,” knowing that it will come. Though the delay seems long, after the vindication it will seem short....In comparison to eternity, what is the span of time between Christ’s first and second comings? This point is especially true in light of the vindication’s permanence. (Bock 2:1455)

One must consider the use of “speedily” in 18:8 in the context of Christ’s question, “*When the Son of man cometh, will he find faith on earth?*” While no definite amount of time is specified, “The question as a whole presupposes a time of tribulation for the disciples in which they may be tempted to give up faith because their prayers are not answered; it is meant as an exhortation to take seriously the lesson of the parable that God will certainly act to vindicate them” (Marshall 669). One lexicographer says,

“*aiphindios* [sudden] is comparable to *en tachei* [speedily] in the parable of the Widow and the judge.... Luke 18:7-8 contrasts the slowness and patience of God—who delays [*makrothumei*], takes a long time to do justice for his people—with his sudden and rapid [*en tachei*] = speedily) intervention. The emphasis is on prompt execution (cf. Rev. 22:12; Plutarch, *Tim.* 21.7). We may interpret “suddenly, all at once, at one stroke” or better “like lightning”: swiftness is a sign of diligence, of a resolute and sovereign will. . . . (Spicq 1:51, fn 6)

These elements indicate that “*the Son of man in his day*” (Luke 17:24, 30) is not the judgment brought upon Jerusalem and the generation contemporary with Christ, but a universal judgment removed in time from A. D. 70.

Other markers point to Luke 17 being a more widespread judgment than Jerusalem. “*In the day when the Son of man is revealed*” it will be night time with people in bed in one location and day time with people up and working in another place when this judgment is rendered (verses 34, 36). This widespread area, geographically far enough apart for it to be night one place and daylight in another proves Luke 17 to be speaking of a judgment beyond Jerusalem. However, this is in harmony with Luke 21:33-35, which also deals with the universal judgment of Christ’s second coming. There the Lord warned, “*Heaven and earth shall pass away*” and cautioned “*take heed unto yourselves [lest] that day come upon you unawares.*” The **extent** of the judgment of “that day” is shown in verse 35, “*For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.*” This fits with the universal tenor of judgment in Luke 17 and shows that the coming of the Lord and the judgment Christ prophesied in Matthew 24:35-51, with parallels in Luke 21:33-36 and Mark 13:31-36, are of **universal scope**, affecting “*all of them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.*” Although the destruction of Jerusalem was tremendously significant, it obviously did not bring judgment on all who dwell on the face of the whole earth. What is more, the judgment of Luke 21:35 speaks of a snare or trap on all in the whole earth. “The image of a trap describes the quickness and unexpectedness with which that day will snap shut and catch its victim. The day will reveal God’s judgment. Jesus’ point is to be ready for it so as to not be left out.... The end’s reality should call one to live prepared for the end, by being faithful to God” (Bock 2:1693). Christians could not be caught unawares in a “snare” by the events in the fall of Jerusalem, for the Lord gave them signs to read which enabled them to flee (Matthew 24:15-16).

Verses 26-30 – Since these verses are part of the second coming section in Matthew 24:35-51, and agree with the second coming theme here in Luke 17:20-37, we have no need to treat them here, except to point out that they serve the same purpose in both books, pointing to Christ’s second coming in universal judgment.

Verse 31 – “*In that day,*” of the final judgment, the person who is on the housetop is not to enter his house for personal belongings, nor is the man in the field to return back to his house for them. Matthew 24:17-18 and Mark 13:15-16 basically give the same instructions, but for different reasons. Matthew and Mark speak of the necessity of a quick departure from Jerusalem and the cities of Judea, fleeing to the mountains to save one’s life. No material possessions are worth the risk of being trapped in a city or village and losing one’s life trying to get a coat or other things “*out of his house.*” When Christians saw the imminent danger of the Roman armies surrounding Jerusalem, they were to flee to the mountains and not enter the occupied areas (Luke 21:20-21). The “*redemption*

[which] draweth nigh” in Luke 21:28 is that which God provided by the signs to warn them of the life threatening destruction which would befall those in Jerusalem. Their watchfulness and response of fleeing the city would assure their deliverance. These were part of the signs and instructions given to “this generation [which] shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled” (Luke 21:8-32; Matthew 24:4-34). Matthew’s and Mark’s admonitions to those on the housetops and in the fields to flee were to preserve their physical lives.

On the other hand, Luke 17:31-33, using the same figures of one on the housetop and one in the field not entering back into the home for possessions has a different purpose in mind. Luke’s use of these situations is metaphorical and twofold. One cannot seriously believe that here the Lord had in mind the idea of people fleeing from His coming in universal judgment. There would be no place to flee. What then does He intend to convey? First, there is the need for one to have the proper attitude toward the value of one’s soul versus the value of material possessions. Luke’s gospel clearly stresses this teaching from Christ (cf. 12:15-21; 14:26-33; 16:19-31). When Christ comes again not one material possession will mean anything. Second, there are the implicit warnings of watchfulness and admonition for preparedness in the metaphor. One who is thinking properly about “that day” will be living with focused attention upon the spiritual treasures one can lay up in heaven and have his/her heart given daily to such efforts (Luke 9:23; Matthew 6:19-21). Watchfulness and readiness are also frequent in the second coming of Christ sections of the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24:35-51).

Verse 32 – The additional admonition to “Remember Lot’s wife,” ties these thoughts together. While she was warned about the judgment to come upon Sodom, she could not free her mind from the material blessings of life there, so she looked back in regret of losing it all and lost much more than her physical blessings. This event admonishes us to look ahead, beyond the things of this world, to the blessings that God has prepared for those who are faithful to His call to be separate from worldly things (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1). When Christ comes, we are to be ready to go with Him, leaving all behind for greater rewards.

Verse 33 – This verse supports the interpretation above and proves that Luke 17 cannot be discussing the destruction of Jerusalem. “Whoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whoever shall lose his life shall save it.” This passage cannot have literal reference to the fall of Jerusalem, for in that event the disciples were given signs and admonitions to flee in order to “save” their physical lives from that judgment. However, Luke’s context is related to proper attitudes toward receiving final salvation, not escaping judgment on Jerusalem. One who fills his/her life with obtaining material things, excluding a proper relationship with God, might enjoy physical life now, but the final judgment will bring loss of eternal life.

The first half of the verse emphasizes physical preservation, the second half spiritual preservation. The two halves are laid out in contrastive parallelism so that the second clearly says that a relationship with God defines life. In the end, the one who identifies with God will suffer for it. Seeking to avoid persecution will lead to a lack of commitment ultimately to God....It is a costly choice either way. God does not promise immunity from death and suffering, but he does promise abiding life with him to the one who survives this judgment by the Son of Man. As [Luke] 9:25 says, it profits little to gain the world but lose one’s soul. (Bock 2:1436)

Thus, Matthew's application of one on the housetop dealt with one's proper attitude toward material possessions that would help that one preserve his/her physical life (24:16-18), while Luke's point is the proper attitude towards one's physical goods which leads one to the gaining of eternal life (17:31-33).

Verses 34-36 – See the comments on verses 26-30. Verses 34-36 are also related to the ideas in Matthew 24:40-41 regarding Matthew's section on the second coming. These are not part of the so called problem verses King alleges we must deal with if we divide Matthew 24.

Verse 37 – The question of the disciples asking, "*Where, Lord?*", is related to the coming "*day when the Son of man is revealed*" in the judgment upon the world (verses 30-36). The request for a specific location was not provided by the Lord, for the universal judgment of the world can hardly be pinpointed to a particular location. Christ's statement, "*Wheresoever the body is, there will the eagles be gathered,*" makes it clear that when the time comes, "His presence will be clearly indicated, just as the presence of carrion [dead bodies] is clearly indicated by the gathering of vultures overhead" (Marshall 669). But there is more to this proverb than visibility. Vultures feeding on the flesh of men is also a sign of judgment (Deuteronomy 28:26; 1 Kings 14:11; 16:4; 21:24; Jeremiah 7:33; 15:3; 16:4; 19:7; 34:20; Revelation 19:17, 21). The saying here is a maxim or proverb which could be applied to any situation which fits the meaning of the proverb (Fitzmyer 2:1173; Green 636; Nolland 2:862-863). Similar sayings were common in the ancient world (France 342). Like a common saying today, "Where there is smoke, there is fire," the maxim can have a wide range of applications.

Judgment will be visible, universal, and permanent. Once separation occurs, there is no turning back. Vultures gather to feed off dead bodies....This point that once judgment is rendered it is final seems the most likely sense. In effect, Jesus is saying, do not worry about where the judgment will occur, for once it comes, it will be too late and all will see it. As such, the point is not the correctness of the judgment...but its finality when it becomes visible. All will see the judgment's horrific finality....The graphic and emotive image of vultures is a warning that the return will be a grim affair. The return of the Son of Man saves some but permanently condemns others. The return will be what was longed for in 17:22, but when it comes it will mean ultimate judgment for those who are not prepared. This is a classic day-of-the-Lord warning to the unprepared. (Bock 2:1440)

Thus, one should not wonder that the same image of judgment could be used by Matthew 24:28 to describe the A. D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem, and by Luke 17:37 to depict the final judgment of all mankind upon the face of the whole earth (cf. Luke 21:35).

Some attempt to make the word "*eagle*" (KJV) in Matthew 24:28 and Luke 17:37 refer to the image of the eagle on the battle flags of the Roman armies. However, the Greek word here *aetos* can refer to either the eagle or the vulture. Both birds "*tear flesh with the beak.*" The use of *aetos* in these two passages refers more properly to vultures which feed on dead flesh (Bock 2:1440; Nolland 2:863). Eagles generally do not eat already dead flesh, but prefer to hunt; nor do eagles "*gather together*" like vultures do (Van Broekhoven 2:1-2). Therefore, there is no tie to the Roman army between Matthew 24:28 and Luke 17:37. Rather, this is a proverb or maxim easily applied to any kind

of fatal judgment, perhaps spoken by the Lord on more than these two occasions, but used of both the destruction of Jerusalem and the final judgment of Christ's second coming.

Conclusion

We have shown that there is **not one statement** in Luke 17:20-37, that has common language also used in Matthew 24:4-34, that relates to the same judgment event. The two sections were spoken on different occasions and have different contexts; Luke referring to the final judgment at Christ's second coming and Matthew describing the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

Neither Max King nor any other advocate of the A. D. 70 doctrine can properly place Luke 17:20-37 into the Olivet Discourse. Neither can A. D. 70 doctrine advocates incorporate Matthew 24:35-51 and its parallels in Mark 13:31-37 and Luke 21:33-36 into the destruction of Jerusalem. All of these passages refer to the yet to be second coming of Christ, at which time He will render judgment and reward everyone according to their works. Luke 17:20-37 harmonizes with the latter half of the Olivet Discourse, but is separate from it. These passages are warnings to be watchful and prepared for the second coming of Christ, for which no signs were given (Matthew 24:35-25:46).

Jesus will come again, without warning! Perhaps it is better to say that Christ warned that He will come again without warning! That unfulfilled prophetic utterance should motivate unbelievers to obey the gospel and encourage Christians to watch the way we live, remaining faithfully ready for "that day" (Matt. 24:42, 44). The A. D. 70 Doctrine, by removing these prophecies from the role of future events, removes the warning and motivation God intended for them. The A. D. 70 doctrine is false and damnable teaching in the twenty-first century, just as it was in the first century (cf. 2 Timothy 2:16-18).

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ANTI-ISM

Perry B. Cotham



About the author...

Perry Cotham was born to Christian parents January 5, 1912. He was baptized at an early age began preaching soon after in 1929 at the age of 17. He entered Freed-Hardeman College (then a junior college) in September, 1929 and graduated in June, 1931. He then entered college at his hometown of Murray, Kentucky and graduated from Murray State University in June of 1934. While attending college he preached for several of the area churches and conducted meetings.

October 1934 Perry began full time local work with the church in Shawnee, Oklahoma. He had a prosperous work, with a new congregation being established. While there he did much radio preaching and conducted meetings in the area. This he did in other places later in local work.

Perry was married to Teresa Overby (the daughter of a well known gospel preacher) in Muskogee, Oklahoma on June 25, 1936. The Overby family was formerly from Murray. (Teresa passed away January 7, 1998). Brother Cotham has two sons and one daughter, eight grandchildren and four great grandchildren.

After moving from Shawnee, Perry did local work in Oklahoma City and Wewoka, Oklahoma, Paris, Texas, Nashville, Tennessee, Duncan, Oklahoma and Grand Prairie and Big Spring, Texas, in that order. In 1972 he and his wife moved back to Grand Prairie so he could be engaged in full time, word-wide evangelistic work. Perry has preached in all of the fifty states of America and in all the inhabited continents of the world, including about 70 nations. He has held several debates, two of which are in print. He has written sixteen gospel tracts which have been widely distributed throughout the world. He has also helped to buy and distribute thousands of Bibles in different dialects, besides distributing his debate books on the Holy Spirit and miracles today. Perry continues to make his home in Grand Prairie and to do much preaching. He at times assists Brown Trail School of Preaching in teaching some special classes, but his main work is to preach and distribute tracts and Bibles in all parts of the world. Many thousands have been baptized during his many years of ministry.

Anti-ism Defined

The word “anti-ism” is not found in the dictionary, but the word “anti” is found and defined as (adjective) “opposed to a given proposal, policy, etc.” The word means being against something. There are many words with the prefix “anti,” such as “anti-Christ” [meaning an opponent of Christ] (1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 John 7). anti-Christian, anti-slavery, anti-Biblical, etc. (*Webster’s* 115.)

In the religious realm, two words are often used with opposite meanings, namely, “liberalism” and “anti-ism.” These words mean going to an extreme, either to the right or to the left. Jehovah God commanded Joshua, the new leader who took the place of Moses following his death, to *“Be strong and of a good courage...that thou mayest observe to do according to all the Law...turn not from it to the right hand or to the left...”* (Joshua 1:6-7, emph., PBC). “liberalism” is going *beyond* God’s Word and adding to it (2 John 9); whereas, “anti-ism” is *making laws* for God and *opposing* that which the Lord allows. A simple illustration of both extremes would be that of driving a car on the road. There is a ditch on both sides, to the right hand and to the left. To go off the road on either side is dangerous and could cause a wreck.

Of course, the church has always had her problems with teaching strict obedience to God’s will in all things. This was true in the early days of the church (cf. Acts 15:1-34; Galatians 2:4-5). It is likewise true today. Swinging from the extreme side of “liberalism” (going beyond God’s Word in

certain things), some have gone to the extreme side of “anti-ism,” or “radicalism” (making man’s opinions and customs equal to the Scriptures). As is always true, the tendency of a reaction is to go too far, whether it be extreme “liberalism” or extreme “anti-ism” or “conservatism.”

In keeping with the general theme of this lectureship of being “ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh” a question regarding our faith and practice, we will notice some examples of “anti-ism” in the body of Christ and of its harmful effects. But first, we need to note who is the head of the church and has all authority.

Christ All Authority

Scripture emphasizes that the Lord’s church is the “called out,” or “the saved” (Acts 2:46; Matthew 16:18), and that *Christ* has “all authority” (Matthew 22:18, ASV) and is the only head of the church, “which is his body” (Ephesians 1:22-23). Also, the church is to be “subject unto Christ” (Ephesians 5:23-24) in all things, according to His divinely revealed will in the New Testament (John 16:13; Jude 3; Revelations 22:18-19). But Christians are to learn that our personal preferences and opinions may not necessarily be the precepts that others are to live by and promote. Our teaching (preaching) is authoritative only to the extent that it is supported by a proper use of the Holy Scriptures. It is easy for false teachers to come into congregations and persuade some members to believe and practice things in contrary to the will of Christ. This happened to some of the brethren in Galatia, according to Paul’s language: *“I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ”* (Galatians 1:6-7). So, whatsoever we do in the word or in deed, we are to *“do all in the name—[by the authority - PBC]— of the Lord Jesus...”* (Colossians 3:17). Now we need to note some things about God’s commands and “anti-ism.”

Generic And Specific Commands

The Lord’s commands are both *generic* and *specific*. A generic, or general, command is one that authorizes a certain action but does not give the details as to *how* that command shall be obeyed. A specific commandment is one that not only authorizes a certain action but also gives details as to how it should be carried out. Furthermore, a commandment may be mixed, that is, partly generic and partly specific.

Briefly note a simple Biblical example, which will make these distinctions clear. God told Noah to build an ark, specifying the dimensions and the kind of wood to use as gopher wood (Genesis 6). Noah built the ark according to the Lord’s directions (Hebrews 11:7), he obeyed God. Had God said make the ark out of “wood”—generic—any kind of wood would have been acceptable, but since the Lord specified “gopher wood,” it would have been wrong for Noah to have used any other kind of wood, or some other wood in addition to gopher wood.

However, the command to build an ark of gopher wood, according to the dimensions, included any tool—hammer, ax, saw, etc.—at Noah’s convenience for building the ark. A commandment authorizes everything essential to obeying that commandment. Therefore, God’s command to Noah was generic in reference to the tools to be used in the construction of the ark, but specific in reference to the kind of wood to be used.

Moreover, the Lord teaches by three methods: (1) direct command or statement, (2) approved (apostolic) example, and (3) necessary inference. To illustrate: repentance is a command (Acts 17:30; Luke 13:3). To eat the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week is an approved (apostolic) example (Acts 20:7). Since Jesus came "up out of the water" at His baptism (Mark 1:10), it is a necessary inference to say that He first went down into the water (cf. Acts 8:36-39; Romans 6:4).

Examples of Anti-ism

With this background study, we are now better prepared to note some examples of "anti-ism" among believers in Christ.

1. *Anti-Sunday-Bible-School classes*, either before or after the regular general worship assembly. In giving what is commonly called the Great Commission, Christ gave to His disciples four command: (1) "go," (2) "teach," (3) baptize, and (4) teach the baptized (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16). These are all generic commands. The word "go" is generic with respect to means of travel to be used. One can go by walking or riding. If he rides, he can use a donkey, a boat, a car, a train, or a plane. He can use any means available to him that seems expedient, for that part is optional. In fact, a way of travel may be scripturally right, but not expedient (cf. Acts 8:28, 31; 38; 27:2). All should carefully mark the difference between the essentials and the incidentals. The Lord did not specify as to how the teaching of the gospel was to be done. The gospel must be preached—that is the essential thing. The ways of teaching/preaching, in small groups or large audiences, publicly or privately, in classes arranged by age groups, by oral or written means, by radio or television, are purely optional. Various ways were used in apostolic days. The Sunday-morning-class method of teaching comes under the command to teach. The anti-Sunday-Bible-School faction is an example of brethren treating a matter of opinion as a matter of faith. Division of the church is the result.

2. *Anti-individual communion cups in observance of the Lord's Supper*. The command to assemble and worship God is found in passages as Hebrews 10:25, 1 Corinthians 11:18, and Acts 20:7. Yet the Lord does not specify the kind of place or the hour of assembly. No one is authorized by Jehovah God to make a law to tell Christians where to meet to worship or at what hour on the "first day of the week" to worship. The very command to assemble for worship authorizes some place and some hour for the meeting. In worship, the partaking of the "cup" (which is "the fruit of the vine," grape juice, Matthew 26:27-27, 1 Corinthians 11:25), it is not unscriptural to take the "cup" out of one vessel (although it might not be sanitary), neither is it unscriptural to take "the fruit of the vine" out of several containers. The number of the containers used would depend, of course, upon the size of the congregation. But to say that the "cup" must be taken out of one container, and only one, by the whole congregation, is to make a human law where God has not made one. In the communion, one does not partake of the literal "cup"—container, whether it be a glass or a mug, but of the contents, the fruit of the vine. There is only one "cup."

Faith is based upon the Word of God (Romans 10:17), but expediency means that which is advantageous, or that which is wise in a given situation. Expediency has to do with generic or general commands. Under generic command man has liberty, and there may be diversity in practice. Here is where many people get confused. It is just as great a sin for man to make optional matter (a matter of opinion) binding as it is to make a required matter (a matter that is essential) optional. Therefore, since "the cup" in the Lord's Supper is "the fruit of the vine," Christians have no choice as to the element to be used, for that has been specified. If they should add fried chicken or ham to the Lord's

table, that would be sinful—going beyond that which is written (2 John 9). There is no need to have a direct statement in the bible saying “Thou shalt not add chicken or ham to the Lord’s Supper.” The law of exclusion forbids their use. The law of exclusion forbade Noah from using hickory, pine, etc., as wood to the building of the ark.

However, the number of containers for “the fruit of the vine,” or “the cup,” has not been specified. Therefore, this choice has been left to the wisdom and judgment of man, for in respect to the containers, the law of expediency would apply. Individual communion cups can be used.

Likewise, Christians are commanded to sing in worship to God (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; 1 Corinthians 14:15; Hebrews 2:12). Whether song books, seats, or lights are used is a matter of expediency. If they are used, we still just sing — doing what God commands. But if we use mechanical instruments of music, along with singing, we have added another element of the same class, playing on an instrument. The specific command to sing excludes all other kinds of making music. Instrumental music, therefore, becomes an addition to what God specified and is wrong. Hence, there is no authority for the use of instruments of music in worship to God. But using song books does not add to what the Lord commanded, that is, sing “psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,” as the New Testament authorizes.

3. *Anti-orphan homes and homes for the aged to help care for the orphans and the elderly.* James wrote: “*Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this: To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world*” (James 1:27). The early church assisted those in need (Acts 6:1-6; 11:27-30; 1 Timothy 5:16). Helping the needy is a matter of faith; the *how* to do this work is in the realm of human judgment. Since there are no specific, detailed methods outlined in the New Testament, god has given man freedom to choose his own means of benevolence. The means and methods of this care for orphans, widows, the aged, etc., are optional for the local congregation.

Some use James 1:27 to teach that the church cannot, in any way, support orphans in what is called an orphans’ home, that the Scriptural way to care for orphans and widows is for each individual to take them into his private home. It is not wrong for Christians to take widows and orphans into their homes, but it is wrong to say that this is the only way such benevolence must be done. (cf. Romans 15:25-27; 2 Corinthians 8 and 9).

4. *Anti-church cooperation in doing evangelistic work for the spreading of the gospel.* Every church has a work to do in proclaiming the good news of man’s salvation to the whole world (cf. Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; Philippians 2:15-16). The church is “*the pillar and the ground of the truth*” (1 Timothy 3:15). In the execution of this general command, when no specific methods are bound, each congregation is left free under God to make its own choices in the methods used to expedite the command. The elders of the church have the oversight of the work of that congregation and, in matters of judgment, can make necessary decisions for accomplishing the Lord’s will. Elders do not have charge of two or more congregations—*only one* (Acts 14:23). since this is true, any organization larger or smaller than the local church is without Scriptural authority. However, the Scriptures teach that another congregation, or churches, may of their own free will give assistance to a church to aid in the accomplishing of the work of preaching the gospel, or in any specific, scripturally authorized work. Churches cooperated in apostolic times in preaching the gospel.

The church in Jerusalem sent Barnabas to Antioch in Syria to help this young congregation (Acts 11:22-24). The church at Antioch later sent out Paul, Barnabas, and John Mark on their first

missionary journey (Acts 13:1-5). the church at Antioch also sent out Paul on his second and third journeys, and on these journeys other congregations at times helped support him (2 Corinthians 11:8). After several years of traveling and preaching, Paul addressed the good church at Philippi with these commendable words concerning their help: *“How ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the Gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica, ye sent once and again unto my necessity”* (Philippians 4:15-16). This surely implies that even at that time, when the church at Philippi helped sustain Paul in Thessalonica, other churches could properly have had fellowship with Paul in preaching the gospel if they had so desired. Hence, two or more churches, if need be, may cooperate in the work of evangelism.

The churches in Galatia, Macedonia, and Achaia gave for the relief of those who were in need in Jerusalem (2 Corinthians 8 and 9; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2). These churches exercised choices in the matter of their giving: *“...they were willing of themselves”* (2 Corinthians 8:3, 8, 10). The church in Jerusalem, after the conference concerning the question of circumcision, sent Judas and Silas to the church in Antioch, along with Paul and Barnabas, with a letter to help teach the church in Antioch, as well as other brethren (Acts 15: 22-32). So there was cooperation of churches in teaching.

Thus, the New Testament has given these examples of cooperation in the work of evangelism: (1) one church supporting one evangelist; (2) one church supporting more than one evangelist; and (3) more than one church supporting one evangelist. In the work of benevolence, the examples are: (1) one church contributing to more than one church to relieve the needy and (2) more than one church contributing to only one church to relieve the needy. But how best to cooperate, with which church, and with which project, are all matters of opinion and are left entirely to the decision of each local church. Hence, no one should elevate his own opinions to the level of law...*and divide the body of Christ*. This surely is the teaching of Scripture concerning congregations cooperating in doing the Lord's work.

Some Important Lessons

From this study on “anti-ism,” we may draw some important lessons:

1. In the sphere where God has made specifications, one must heed them. When the Lord gives a command which includes the method, then the method is part of the command. All that the Lord says on any subject, nothing more, nothing less, and nothing different, we must do.
2. When the Lord has not legislated, man has no right to legislate. Man errs by adding to God's Word in making opinions the law of Christ. It is just as sinful to make matters of opinion matters of faith, as it is to make matters of faith matters of opinion. In the work of the church, when God has made no specifications, Christians should not make them and try to bind them on others. We are *“to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints”* (Jude 3, ASV, emph. supplied), and *not our opinions*.
3. When the Lord gives a command without specifying its methodology, then man must discharge it with the best means and methods available in obeying His will. Various circumstances and conditions will determine this.

All who are interested in teaching the gospel and promoting pure, New Testament Christianity, should

keep these rules in mind. The pioneers of the Restoration Movement had a very apt saying which clearly expressed the teaching of the Scriptures: "In matters of *faith*, unity; in matters of *opinion*, liberty; in *all things*, charity."

Conclusion

"Anti-ism," as it applies to the work of the church, is man making laws where God has not made them and trying to bind them on others to the divisions of the body of Christ. All must have a zeal for God, but it must be according to knowledge (Romans 10:2). Indeed, each follower of Christ must be governed by the Bible. But sometimes some become opinionated and divide congregations, completely oblivious to the fact that some sound thinking and logical reasoning, in harmony with the Holy Scriptures, would avert division and strengthen unity in brotherly love.

Knowing and defending the gospel of Christ is of utmost importance; but at the same time, there is no place for harsh, abusive, and intemperate words and deeds in connection therewith. for, as Paul wrote to Timothy: *"...the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth"* (2 Timothy 2:24-25). Some, however, seem to find it much easier to denounce those who differ from them, than to support their own opinions by sober Scriptural reasoning and practice (cf. Romans 16:17-18).

"Let brotherly love continue" (Hebrews 13:1). "Anti-ism" has over the years driven many into the "liberal" movement. One extreme is just as wrong as the other. Brethren need to be aware that the pendulum can also swing to the other end of the spectrum, "loosing where God has bound," ignoring the true *pattern* God has given in His Word (2 Timothy 1:13, ASV). The great threat now to churches of Christ seems to be not "anti-ism" but "liberalism." May the churches remain true to the teaching of the Bible. The times are critical.

Works Cited

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