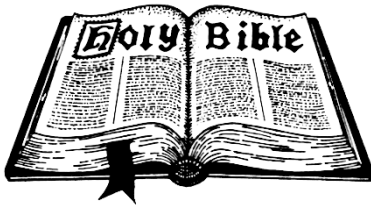


Third Annual  
**TRUTH IN LOVE**  
LECTURESHIP

Theme:  
**Fundamentals  
Of The Faith**



*May 12-16, 1993*

PAUL SAIN, DIRECTOR

Hosted By The  
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# INTRODUCTION

This is our Third Annual Lectureship. The theme for the first series was: "Stedfast, Unmoveable, Always Abounding." The theme for the second series was: "Soberly, Righteously, and Godly." These first two series of lessons enjoyed significant success, for which we are thankful.

The elders of the East Hill church have always been sincerely concerned about faithfully fulfilling their responsibility of overseeing and feeding the flock, over whom they have the charge from the heavenly Father. This grave responsibility is intensified especially in light of false teachers and doctrines existing all around. While they recognize the autonomy of each congregation, it has also been their desire to encourage, participate with, and provide solid faithful material and lessons for all Christians throughout our area.

The elders at East Hill decided to conduct and host a lectureship here, believing it would be an appropriate way to teach and stand for that which is right in the sight of God, and oppose the false ideas and ways being advocated by men among us today, in the brotherhood, and from those in the world.

The theme for the lectureship this year is: **"Fundamentals Of The Faith."** Various thoughts are needed to convey the reason for this twenty-one lesson overview of many of the basic truths of the gospel of Christ. There is always a need to teach, reteach, and teach again the wonderful truths of the gospel (II Tim. 2:15; II Peter 3:18). From days of old, to this very generation, it is a fact that many are "destroyed for a lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6). Especially we must be

faithful in teaching our children the **fundamentals of the faith** (Eph. 6:4; Prov. 22:6; Deut. 6:6-7). It is of vital importance that we teach frequently and faithfully about Jehovah God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, God's Word, His glorious church, His faithful followers and their lives, etc.

Our attitude toward **TRUTH** must be reflected in – receiving the Word with all readiness (Acts 17:11); hungering and thirsting for the way of righteousness (Matt. 5:6); meditate in its truths all the day (Psm. 119:15,97); our handling aright the Word of God (II Cor. 4:2); standing fast and holding to the Word (II Tim. 2:15); not adding to, nor taking from it (Rev. 22:18-19; Prov. 30:5-6; Deut. 4:2); understanding it (Eph. 3:3-4); studying and searching it (II Tim. 2:15; Acts 17:10-11); remembering (II Peter 3:2); handling it in the right way (II Tim. 2:15); abiding in (II Tim. 3:14); contending earnestly for it (Jude 3); not perverting it (Gal. 1:8-9); partaking of the milk/meat of the Word (I Peter 2:2); respecting the inspired (God-breathed) truths (II Tim. 3:16-17); not just hearing, but doing what God has spoken (James 1:22-25); doing the will of the Father (Matt. 7:21f); proving our love by keeping (doing) His commands (John 14:15).

At any moment in history, the church is only one generation away from complete apostasy. Satan is always busy and striving to destroy faithful followers of Christ (I Peter 5:8). He has servants who live among us today, who pervert the gospel of Christ (II Cor. 11:23f; Gal. 1:6-9). It is absolutely necessary that Christians today must stand for right (Eph. 6:10f; Phil. 2:16), and defend the faith (gospel) (Jude 3; Phil. 1:7,17).

The Lord and His faithful servants, after the church was established, named the false teachers

and troublers in the church. May I give a few examples of this action: Scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 16:6,12); Scribes (Mark 12:38-40); Herod (Luke 13:31-33); Nicolaitanes (Rev. 2:6,15); Herodians and Pharisees (Matt. 22:15-22).

Christ was not unloving, nor unkind to take this action – and neither is it so today. In fact, we are commanded to “mark” (draw attention to) the ones who cause division and offences contrary to the doctrine of Christ (Rom. 16:17-18). One who teaches “another gospel” is an enemy of the cross of Christ (Phil. 3:18). Faithful Christians MUST stand for the right, and oppose the wrong (Eph. 6:10-18; Phil. 1:7,17).

### **Appreciation Expressed**

May I express my appreciation and thanks to each one who makes its possible for such an effort to be possible. I must specifically express love and appreciation to: (1) the elders of the East Hill church, Hugh Cooper, Louie Fuqua, Eldridge Woodard and their families, for faithful and sacrificial service through the years; (2) the family of God at East Hill, for many long and sacrificial hours of work; (3) the many visitors, friends, and co-laborers in the kingdom of God, who represent over 130 congregations and/or cities, who have supported this work with their prayers, attendance, and vocal encouragement; and certainly not least, we convey our sincere love and gratitude to (4) the speakers and their families, who share their time and talent so willingly in writing the lessons for this book and then the actual presentation.

Only eternity will determine the good that has been accomplished in the presentation of these lessons. It is our sincere prayer that God receive the glory in ALL we do that is right.

Paul Sain  
Lectureship Director

# "TRUTH IN LOVE"

Under the sponsorship of the East Hill eldership, **Truth In Love** is now in its sixth year of existence.

It has been our exclusive purpose to go back to the Word, study and teach the Word, plead with others to learn and obey the Word of God. The **Truth In Love Lectureship** was developed from these same desires and purpose. May God help us to fervently teach and spread the glorious gospel that has the power to save us from our sins (James 1:21-25; Rom. 1:16), in every scriptural way possible.

As of the current issue, we publish over 20,000 per issue. Our major thrust is in the Giles County area, with almost 11,000 copies mailed to individual homes. Over 150 bundles are mailed to congregations in almost 40 states and seven foreign countries. Six issues are published each year. This 16 page periodical is provided (free upon request) to the brotherhood.

# DEDICATION

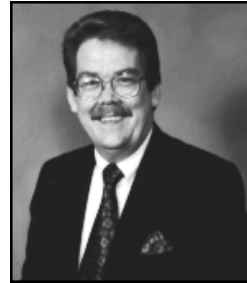
Over five years ago the elders of the East Hill church hired Paul Sain as the preacher for this family. He and his family moved here in December, 1987.

During the time that Paul has served as the preacher of the East Hill church, he has shown his dedication to God. He has always been prepared when teaching or preaching God's Word.

We at East Hill are very fortunate to have a man on whom we can depend to always follow the "old paths."

When the decision was made by the eldership to have a lectureship, we asked Paul if he would direct it. He not only was willing to accept the responsibility, but has done an outstanding job with it. We feel we have one of the best in the brotherhood.

The elders at East Hill are indebted to Paul for his endless work and dedication. We appreciate him, his fine wife and girls.



Thanks Paul for helping make the oversight of the East Hill church much easier.

For the faithful stand for the truth, and outstanding service given, we, the elders of the East Hill family, dedicate this book to our gospel preacher and co-worker, Paul Sain.

Hugh Cooper  
Louie Fuqua  
Eldridge Woodard

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**A Study Of  
Basic  
Fundamental  
Truths**



## *Chapter One*

# **God – His Existence And Nature**

*Garland Elkins*



Garland graduated from Freed-Hardeman College, Middle Tennessee University and University of Tennessee • Born in Woodbury, TN • Preaching first sermon in 1949 • Co-authored numerous **Spiritual Sword** lectureship volumes • Presently teaches at Memphis School of Preaching, and preaches throughout the brotherhood.

How awesome is the subject of God! How weak and insufficient are my qualifications to discuss the lofty subject of the Great Almighty God of heaven and earth! However, I cannot conceive of a fish, however small and insufficient, complaining of the vastness of the ocean.

### **The Existence Of God**

God himself is eternal, having neither beginning nor end. The psalmist wrote of God:

Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God (Psm. 90:1-2).

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In contrast with the error of the evolutionists, the Bible begins with the precise statement which makes clear how everything, other than God, Himself, came into being. God is self-existent.

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth (Gen. 1:1).

The Bible also says,

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 (Exod. 20:11).

And God said,

... Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them (Gen. 1:26-27).

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made (Gen. 2:1-2).

Three times in the King James Version we read about the "Godhead," which is

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equivalent to "Deity." These scriptures are:

Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device (Acts 17:29).

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: (Rom. 1:20).

For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily (Col. 2:9).

God who transcends the universe and all things therein, is to be distinguished from angels, from men, and from His creation, is the foundation of moral absolutes, is the source of man's redemption, and is the source of truth, and the revealer of Himself and of the truth to man. The truth enables man to have the hope which is anchored beyond the veil (Heb. 6:18-20). This was made possible by Christ who took on flesh to do God's will (Heb. 10:9), in whom "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9). Christ was highly exalted (Eph. 1:20-23), and His name is above every other name, and apart from which, none can be saved (Acts 4:12). It is through His blood, redemption is made possible (Heb. 2:9; 9:22; Eph. 1:7).

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## **God Is Spirit**

Jesus informed the woman at Jacob's well that "God is a Spirit" (John 4:24). There is but one Divinity, or Godhead, the Godhead exists as three persons. There is but one humanity, but there are many persons. The three persons in the Godhead are God the Father, Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit. All three persons are included in the annunciation of the birth of Christ.

And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God (Luke 1:35).

Likewise all three persons of the Godhead were present at the baptism of Christ.

And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased (Matt. 3:16-17).

Each of the three members of the Godhead is called God. The first member of the Godhead stated, "He shall cry unto me, Thou art my Father, my God, and the rock of salvation" – there is one God, the Father (I Cor. 8:6).



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The second member of the Godhead is called God. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1).

The third member of the Godhead is called God. He is the "Spirit of God" (Matt. 3:16); when "Satan filled thy (Ananias') heart to lie to the Holy Spirit," he did not "lie unto men, but unto God" (Acts 5:3-4).

### **The Attributes Of God**

God said, "**I AM THAT I AM**" (Exod. 3:14). God has always existed, and if He had not existed, then **nothing** would have existed. What are some of God's attributes?

**1. God is eternal, self-existent.** Everything which was created was created by God through the Word (John 1:1-3). God exists necessarily. He does not depend upon anyone or anything for His existence.

**2. God is infinite.** God is unlimited or absolute in all of His attributes. If God were less than absolute in even one attribute, He would be less than God. Therefore He is infinite in power, in goodness and love, in knowledge and wisdom, and in all attributes He is perfect.

**3. God is omniscient.** God knows everything which is subject of being known in dealing with what He knows (Job 24:1,23; 28:10; 34:21-25; 36:4,5; 37:16; Psm. 33:13-

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15; 44:20-21; 94:9-11; 103:14; 104:24; 139:1-24; 139:1-24; 147:4-5; Prov. 3:19-20; 5:21; 15:3; Isa. 29:15; 40:27-28; 41:4; 42:9; 46:10; 48:5-6; Jer. 23:24; 51:15; Ezek. 11:5; Matt. 6:4-6; 6:18; Acts 2:23,15; Rom. 11:33; I Cor. 2:7, 9-11). God knows whatever it is possible to know. He knows perfectly the past, the present, and what to man is the future. God knows what will happen, and even though He knew that Adam and Eve would fall into sin, that by no means follows that God was responsible for it. They were free moral agents and so, the responsibility for their sins was theirs, and not God's. God had a plan to save man once he fell, and that plan was in the eternal purpose of God (Eph. 3:10-11). Christ was known as a lamb slain before the foundation of the world (I Peter 1:17-20; Titus 1:1-3; Eph. 3:10,13). God created the world in His infinite knowledge, wisdom and love. God planned for man's life on earth to be a probationary period which ends at the moment of his physical death. Therefore, both the world and man's life in the world are very significant. It is during man's life in this world that he can make the decision to turn to God in obedience from his heart, in order to be saved.

**4. God is a God of justice.** God is infinite in love and goodness, and therefore He will do what is right. He will always act in harmony with His own perfect nature.

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Therefore, it must be noted that while God is full of love for the sinner, He has a righteous hatred of the sins when men commit. God and Christ love the sinner but hates his sins. Somewhat like a doctor who loves his patient but hates his cancer. Christ said to the church in Ephesus, "But this thou hast, that thou hatest the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate" (Rev. 2:6). So, both the hatred of sin and the love of the sinner have a place in the character of God. There is absolutely no antagonism between the two of them, God's love of the sinner, and His hatred of sin, are set out throughout the Bible.

God is perfectly good and just. God demands performance of obedience, and when man is disobedient, then God must impose the proper penalty. God's perfect integrity demands that He cannot lie. He cannot deny Himself. His perfect holiness will not permit Him to wink at sin. His perfect justice requires that He cannot forgive the sinner without an atonement. This atonement is found in Jesus Christ, the Son of God (John 2:1; I Tim. 2:5; Heb. 9:11-10:4).

**5. God is omnipotent.** God can accomplish whatever is subject to power. However, God will do only that which is in harmony with the absolute perfection of His nature. God is infinite in power, but He uses that power in harmony with His divine nature.

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**6. God is perfect in goodness.** God loves all good and hates all evil. However, though He hates sin, He loves the sinner. The prophet Habakkuk said of God, "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst look on iniquity" (Hab. 1:13).

**7. God is omnipresent.** God is not limited as to place. God cannot be contained within bounds of either time or space. David wrote,

Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee (Psm. 139:7-12).

**8. God is perfect in love.** God is perfect in His power, wisdom, and in His love. Presently we are discussing His love. Paul wrote, "But God commendeth His own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). The love of God was spontaneous. There was no power above God to make Him love us, and no

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person below Him was lovable, and yet He loved us.

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 (I John 3:1).

His love was timely, i.e., it was expressed in due season, when mankind was on the verge of ruin (Gal. 4:5-6).

His love was unparalleled. "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die." Great love is required to die for friends. Jesus did this when He died for the disciples. Greater love is required to die for the indifferent. Jesus did this when He died for Pilate and others like him. However, greatest love is required to die for enemies and Jesus did this when He died for the "ungodly."

Christ's love was a condescending love. He died, for sinful humanity (Rom. 1:18,23). The love of Christ is an uplifting love (II Cor. 5:14).

The love of Christ is a forgiving love (Isa. 1:18; 55:6-7; Acts 2:36-38; 8:20-22).

God's love is great beyond all comparison.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we

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are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:35-39).

## *Chapter Two*

# **Jesus Christ – The Preeminent One**

*David Sain*



David is the preacher for the Wood Avenue church of Christ in Florence, Alabama, where he has been located since August, 1977 •• He has done extensive radio and television preaching since 1967 •• He is also the speaker on numerous video tapes produced by the Way Of Life •• He has written various books and tracts.

Jesus Christ is an absolutely unique person. No other person is like Him, or can compare to Him.

The way that He came to earth...the way that He lived on earth...the way that He left this earth...and the way that He has influenced people century after century is unequalled by any other man before or after His time on earth.

### **Jesus Was God In The Flesh**

The word, "God," is the name of the divine nature. There is one divine nature, but there are three persons who possess that one divine nature, and all three persons are called God. There is God, the Father (I Cor. 1:3). There is God, the Son (John 1:14). And there

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is God, the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3,4).

God, the Son became flesh. Through power beyond our comprehension (Eph. 3:20-21), Jesus became a man.

While on earth, Jesus was both divine and human. He was born of woman (Gal. 4:4), and therefore was human. (Never in the holy Scriptures is He said to be begotten of man.) He was conceived of the Holy Spirit, and therefore was divine.

But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost (Matt. 1:20).

And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God (Luke 1:30-31,34-35).

Being both God and man makes Him the perfect one to serve as our High Priest (Heb. 4:14-16), and the perfect one to judge all of

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mankind (John 5:26,27).

### **Jesus Has Preeminence**

Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. 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. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven (Col. 1:13-20).

This scripture presents seven facts about the one who has preeminence:

*1. Jesus was before all things (Col. 1:17).*  
He preceded every thing. He existed before all things. He was not created.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was

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God. The same was in the beginning with God (John 1:1-2).

2. *Jesus is the creator of all things (Col. 1:16)*. Notice the plural pronoun in this well-known scripture:

And God said, Let **us** make man in our image... (Gen. 1:26).

Also, note these affirmations of the work of Jesus in the creation:

All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made (John 1:3).

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

3. *Jesus is the image/fulness of God (Col. 1:15,19)*. The full essence of deity resided in Jesus. He is the sum total of all divine power and attributes.

Being God in the flesh, Jesus answered the question, "If God were a man, what would He be like?" He was the full demonstration of what God is like, and the epitome of what man should be like.

Jesus said,

...he that hath seen me hath seen the Father... (John 14:9).

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4. *Jesus is the firstborn of all creation (Col. 1:15).* This is not a reference to time, but to place or status. It declares that Jesus is first in rank and importance.

Of all the people who have ever been, or will be, born, He is the most important one. He has priority over all!

5. *He is the firstborn from the dead (Col. 1:18).* Obviously, Jesus was not the first person raised from the dead. During His early ministry – before He was crucified on the cross and raised from the grave – He raised Lazarus (John 11), the daughter of Jairus (Matt. 9:23), and others (Matt. 11:5; John 7:22).

As in the declaration that He is the firstborn of all creatures (verse 15), this statement that Jesus is firstborn from the dead is not a reference to time, but to place or rank.

The truth affirmed in this scripture is that, of all who have been, or ever will be, raised from the dead, Jesus is the highest and most important!

It should be remembered that the resurrection is a central part of the gospel. It was the core of Peter's message on Pentecost (Acts 2:22-32). And it was the heart of message after message by the apostles as the gospel was spread further throughout Jerusalem (e.g., Acts 3:15; 4:2; 4:33).

On Mars Hill, Paul told those in Athens

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that the resurrection is our assurance of the righteous judgment by Christ (Acts 17:30-31).

Remember, also, that it is our faith in the resurrection upon which our salvation is based. We are saved if we believe with all of our hearts that God has raised Jesus from the grave (Rom. 10:9,10).

In fact, if the resurrection did not happen, our faith is vain and we, of all people, are the most pitiable (I Cor. 15:12-19).

6. *Jesus is the head of the church (Col. 1:18)*. Paul declared that God,

...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 (Eph. 1:22-23).

Jesus promised to build the church (Matt. 16:18). He purchased it with His blood (Acts 20:28), and He is the head over that glorious body of redeemed people!

When issues and questions arise in the church, it is essential that we remember to whom the church belongs. And such a consideration should evoke the attitude, "It is His church. Let Him be the head! Let His will be done!"

That should be the resolution of all people regarding matters which are presently troubling the Lord's church.

To illustrate this, consider:

**It does not matter** what you and I think or desire regarding divorce and remarriage. What matters is what the Lord has said (Matt. 19:3-9).

**It does not matter** what you and I prefer or think acceptable regarding music in worship. What matters is what the head of the church has decreed. If we are going to allow Him to be the head of the church, we must do only that for which we have divine authority (Eph. 5:19).

**It does not matter** if you and I see absolutely no wrong in women having leadership roles in the church. Until the King changes His decrees, the citizens of His Kingdom must submit to what He has said (I Tim. 2:1-9).

7. *We are reconciled to God through the blood of Jesus (Col. 1:20).* Through His gracious and loving sacrifice of Himself, we are returned into favor with God, the Father.

We are severed from God by our sins (Isa. 59:1-2). Away from God, we are hopelessly lost.

That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world (Eph. 2:12).

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Thanks be to God for His marvelous grace which He bestowed upon us in giving Jesus, the propitiation for our sins (Rom. 3:25; I John 2:2).

Man is the sinner, the one responsible for estrangement from the heavenly father, but God took the first step in the reconciliation.

For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:7-8).

### **Jesus Is Preeminent.**

In Colossians 1:18, the apostle Paul declared that God made Jesus to be the head over the church, and declared Him to be the firstborn from the dead, that **in all things** He might have the **preeminence**.

The word, *preeminence* is translated from *proteuo*. It is found nowhere else in the New Testament, being used only in regard to our Savior and Lord.

Our study of Colossians proclaims emphatically that God has highly exalted Jesus, giving Him preeminence over all creation and over all creatures.

Furthermore, on Pentecost, the apostle Peter preached about the preeminence of Christ,

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This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:29-33, 36).

Also, by the Holy Spirit, Paul wrote a powerful and provoking scripture about the exaltation of Jesus in his letter to the Philippians.

Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:9-11).

### **Practical Conclusions**

There is a clear and practical application that we should make of these scriptures and this study.

As God has exalted Jesus, we, too, must exalt Him.

We must exalt Jesus as the only begotten Son of God (John 3:16).

We must exalt Him as the Lord and Savior

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(Acts 2:36).

We must exalt Him as the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6).

We must exalt Him as the head of the church (Col. 1:1).

We must exalt Him by the words we speak. We must exalt Him by our conduct on earth. We must exalt Him in our worship. We must exalt Him in our preaching and teaching.

The hard truth is that you will honor Him as Lord and Savior – sometime.

...at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:10-11).

Friend, if you do not acknowledge Jesus as the Lord and Savior now, I assure you that you definitely will when He returns to judge the world!

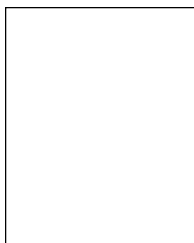
Which shall it be: exalt Him now (while you have a choice), or exalt Him later (when it is too late)?



## *Chapter Three*

# **Holy Spirit – Guide To All Truth**

*Robert McAnally*



Robert attended Athens Bible School, Florida Christian College, and Harding University •• He began preaching at the age of 15 •• He has been with the South Florida Avenue church, in Lakeland, Florida, for thirteen years •• They have lived in Florida, Alabama, Tennessee and Michigan •• Bob and Evelyn have three children.

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).

### **Introduction**

Perhaps there is no subject about which there has been more confusion, misunderstanding and religious error than on the subject of the person and work of the Holy Spirit. This is not because of any lack of instruction in the Word of God. There is abundant teaching on this important subject. In fact the subject is so vast and the material so great that we cannot hope to give more than a cursory examination in the limited time available. While

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there are many other aspects that could profitably be considered, our plan of study will be to talk briefly about the Godhead, particularly the nature and personality of the Holy Spirit, to notice His work in the Old and New Testaments, His work in conversion, miracles and tongues, and the indwelling of the Spirit today.

### **The Person Of The Holy Spirit**

There has been a tremendous amount of confusion and in many cases outright superstition about the nature and personality of the Spirit. There are three persons in the Godhead – they are God, the Father; Jesus Christ, the Son; and the Holy Spirit, the Comforter.

Notice several passages in this connection. In Acts 17:29, Paul said,

Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that **the Godhead** is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man' s device.

Notice the phrase "the Godhead."

For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily (Col. 2:9).

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: (Matt. 28:19).

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and

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the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen (II Cor. 13:14).

Note that in these last two passages, God, Christ and the Holy Spirit, the persons of the Godhead are specifically named.

These members of the Godhead – God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit – may and should be termed the persons of the Godhead. Each is a Divine personality. Each possesses the Divine nature. There is one Divine nature, but three personalities.

Notice the qualities ascribed to the Spirit that only can apply to a person. He *teaches* (John 14:26). He *reproves* (John 16:8). He is a *guide* (John 16:13). Also, He is affected as a person by being vexed, grieved, lied to, resisted and rejected.

The term "Holy" very fittingly expresses the character of the Holy Spirit. He is the very embodiment of holiness. And though the King James Version translates "*pneuma*" sometimes as *spirit* and sometimes as *ghost*, it is important to recognize that the word ghost has taken on additional meanings across the years. In 1611 when the King James translation was first published, the word ghost meant much the same thing that spirit does today, but by the time the American Standard translation appeared in 1901, the word ghost had lost its earlier meaning and had acquired

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the meaning of a spook or spector, thus no longer giving the true meaning of pneuma. The ASV translators uniformly translated it "spirit." The Holy Spirit is a Divine being, an intelligent speaking personality. He is not a ghost in the sense of being some kind of a spook, clouded in mysticism.

Another error made by some Holiness groups is in trying to distinguish between "Holy Spirit" and "Holy Ghost," claiming that one can have the Holy Spirit and later "get" the Holy Ghost. Such claims are ridiculous. No such distinction can possibly be made inasmuch as both phrases are translated from the same word in the original language. In fact, in one passage, John 7:39, it is translated **both** ways, as ghost and spirit. In both cases, the word translated is pneuma. Trying to make any distinction is absurd.

### **The Holy Spirit In The Old Testament**

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light (Gen. 1:1-3).

Here in the beginning, in the second verse of the Bible is the first mention of the Spirit of God. He was present in the creation of man

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when God said let us make man in our image (Gen. 1:26). The Spirit is mentioned numerous times in the Old Testament. Job said, "By his Spirit he hath garnished the heavens" (Job 26:13). In Psalms 139:7-10, David said,

Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or  
whither shall I flee from thy presence? If  
I ascend up into heaven, thou art there:  
if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou  
art there. If I take the wings of the  
morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts  
of the sea; Even there shall thy hand  
lead me, and thy right hand shall hold  
me.

He is the great revelator. Both the Old and New Testament Scriptures were revealed by the Holy Spirit. Peter said,

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.

He is referred to as the Holy spirit, Spirit of truth, the Comforter, and the Spirit of God.

### **The Holy Spirit In Conversion**

The subject of the Holy Spirit in conversion has been a tremendous battleground for debate. All agree that the Spirit works in conversion; the question is **how**? It is not a question of what He has the power to do; but how He has chosen to work in conversion.

What is conversion? It is the new birth, regeneration, the process by which one is redeemed by the blood of Christ and reconciled unto God.

Every responsible person on earth needs to understand this subject. Paul said, "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). Man has become alienated from God because of His own sins. Christ promised to send the Holy Spirit to the apostles to do His work in conversion. He said,

And when he is come, he will reprove  
the world of sin, and of righteousness,  
and of judgment: (John 16:8).

This work was accomplished through the word, the gospel, revealed by the Holy Spirit to the apostles.

To see how the Spirit works in conversion, look at some examples of conversion in the New Testament. Notice the case of Lydia recorded in Acts 16. If ever the Spirit just came on a person directly and miraculously to save him or her, then surely this would have been one of the times. This was during the miraculous age of the church. There was not a gospel preacher on the entire continent of Europe where Lydia was. She was a devout Jewish business woman who attended prayer meeting on the river side even though she was hundreds of miles away from her home.

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Since there was no preacher of the gospel within hundreds of miles, why did not God just have the Spirit convert her directly? The truth is, the Holy Spirit never operates directly on the hearts of individuals separately and independently of the gospel.

God caused Paul to see a vision in the night.

And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us (Acts 16:9).

All this was God's way of getting the necessary means for salvation. A gospel preacher was using the instrument of God's power, the gospel of Jesus Christ, in order that Lydia might be converted. Verse 14 says,

And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: **whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul** (Acts 16:14).

How did God open her heart? Through the instrumentality of the gospel, which is the power of God to save (Rom. 1:16). She heard, believed, and obeyed the gospel of Christ and was saved.

Three thousand souls were saved on the first Pentecost following the resurrection of our Lord. But we must not confuse the

circumstances with the means of salvation. It was not the baptism of the Holy Spirit that saved the 3,000. The baptism of the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles only and was for the purpose of enabling them to preach the gospel in the native languages of all these people. How did the Spirit change the hearts of these thousands? Through the preaching of the Word. After Peter preached Christ to them, they were cut to the hearts and said, "Men and brethren, what must we do?" Peter told them to repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins. The Bible then says,

Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls (Acts 2:41).

What means did the Spirit use in their conversion? Luke said that it was the word. "They that gladly received the word." Later Paul wrote,

Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever (1 Peter 1:23).

The gospel is God's power to save.

### **Miracles And Tongues Today**

But what about the miracles, the gifts of the Spirit, are we to expect such manifestations today? It is important first to understand the

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special needs of the early church and the purpose for which miracles were given.

*1. They caused men to believe.*

Nicodemus said to Jesus,

The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him (John 3:2).

*2. They confirmed the word.* Paul wrote,

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 also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will? (Heb. 2:3-4).

*3. They were for a limited time.* In I Corinthians 12 Paul names nine miraculous gifts of the Spirit. In chapter 13 he tells how long they were to last and in chapter 14 he gives rules governing how they were to be used while they did exist. They were to be done away "when that which is perfect is come" (I Cor. 13). Some believe they were for all time, asserting the "perfect" in this passage refers to Christ. Note however it says not "when He which is perfect," but "when that which is perfect." When the perfect law of liberty, the written Word, was completed, that which was

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in part was no longer needed. (1) The Word itself caused men to believe; (2) it had already been confirmed; and (3) the limited time had expired (John 20:30; Heb. 2:3; I Cor. 13:10).

Someone may claim that "that which is perfect" refers to heaven. But if miracles were to last till the end of time, I ask, why would Paul use three illustrations to support his argument if he is to be understood as saying the gifts will conclude at the end? Such a statement would need no support. Yet he uses the illustrations of (1) "when I was a child, now that I am a man"; (2) seeing "through a glass darkly," and (3) "I know in part, then shall I know even as I am known." Paul is putting forth these arguments to convince the reader that the age of miracles will end, not at the end of time – anyone would conclude that – but that they would end when the revelation of God was complete, "when that which is perfect is come."

### **The Spirit Within Us**

There are three positions taken by various individuals concerning the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. They are as follows:

1. That the Holy Spirit as a person dwells in the physical body of the Christian and that the Spirit's indwelling transcends the printed page, that somehow the Christian is given additional power and incentive to overcome

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sin in a manner and to a degree not provided in God's Word alone.

2. That the Holy Spirit as a person actually indwells the physical body of the Christian, but that He does not make His presence known through any inner leadings or in any way separate and apart from the Word of God.

3. That the Holy Spirit dwells in the Christian through the Word and ONLY through the Word. This is the position to which I subscribe. I believe the other positions are erroneous, the first position being far more dangerous than the second.

The Bible teaches that all three persons of the Godhead, God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit dwell in the Christian (II Cor. 6:16; Eph. 3:17; Gal. 4:6; I Cor. 6:19). They dwell in our hearts through the Word.

Apart from the Word of God, no one could even know that there is a Holy Spirit.

Apart from the Word of God, there has never been a case of conversion.

Apart from the Word of God, no person can through his five senses know the Spirit dwells in him.

We know the presence of the Spirit in the same way we know the presence of God and Christ. This is not by feelings and experiences, but by faith based on the Scriptures.

### **Conclusion**

What is our relationship with the Holy Spirit in this present age? The Spirit instructs, guides, and influences us by means of the Written Word of God. The Word of God is the Sword of the Spirit. Everything that the Holy Spirit does in guiding, instructing, and influencing us is also said to be done by and through the Word of God.

It is a mistake to expect the Spirit to guide us by some other means, separate and apart from the Written Word. The book of God thoroughly furnishes the man of God to all good works (II Tim. 3:16-17).

## *Chapter Four*

# **The Scriptures – Inspired, Inerrant**

*Lester Kamp*



Lester graduated from David Lipscomb College • Presently, he works with the Madisonville, Kentucky church • He has preached full time for over twenty years • He serves as Editor of the publication, **In Word And Doctrine** • He is known for his love for truth • Lester and Lillian have two children.

The Bible is the **inspired, inerrant** Word of God.

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 (II Tim. 3:16-17).

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 (II Peter 1:20-21).

It is my purpose today to offer evidence for believing that the Bible is inspired of God and is therefore inerrant.

Let us begin by defining the two key

terms. "Inspired" is a translation of a Greek term (theopneutos),<sup>1</sup> found only once in the New Testament in II Timothy 3:16, which means "God breathed." It simply means that the Scriptures are a product of God. A parallel idea is found in Jesus' reference to that which is written in Scripture as "every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4; cf. Deut. 8:3). The Scriptures (i.e. "all Scripture" in II Tim. 3:16) are "the product of the creative breath of God." **The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language** defines "inerrant" as "making no errors; unerring." Thus, I propose to show that the Scriptures have as their source, or origin, God, not man and that as a result the Scriptures are totally without error of any kind.

### **The Bible Is Inspired**

#### B. C. Goodpasture observed:

The question of inspiration is vital. If the Bible is not of divine origin, we cannot rely upon its statements of fact; we need not bow to its claims of authority; and we cannot derive hope and comfort from its promises. If it represents only the efforts of uninspired men, we may view its contents of little or no concern. On the other hand, if the Bible came from God, its authority is unquestionable and its statements are infallible.<sup>2</sup>

Not only is the question of inspiration

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vital, but also our concept of inspiration is critical. Simply because a person acknowledges belief in the inspiration of the Bible does not necessarily indicate that the person recognizes the authority of the Bible. How a person conceives the idea of "inspiration" will determine that person's attitude toward the Bible and toward the necessity of obedience to the instruction of the Scriptures.

Of those who would suggest that they believe in the "inspiration" of the Bible, there are those who would suggest that the Bible is "inspired" in the same way we consider Shakespeare, Beethoven, or Milton inspired works. This concept of "inspiration" is erroneous; this might be called genius, or unique talent, but not inspiration. Wayne Jackson wrote concerning this concept:

Such a notion must be immediately rejected for: (a) It makes liars of the Biblical writers who claimed the **Holy Spirit** as the ultimate source of their documents (cf: II Sam. 23:2; Acts 1:16), and (b) it leaves inexplicable the mystery of why modern man, with his accumulated learning, has not been able to produce a comparable volume which has the capacity to make the Bible obsolete!<sup>3</sup>

Others would suggest belief in the "inspiration" of the Bible and believe that only the great principles and ideals came from God

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and are inerrant while the details came from man and may or may not be true. This is sometimes called partial inspiration. This concept of "inspiration" takes the authority away from Scripture and gives man the role of determining which parts of the Bible are "great principles and ideals" and which are mere "details." In other words, such a concept of inspiration would allow man the privilege of deciding for himself from the contents of the Bible what is obligatory and what is not.

Similar to this is the concept of thought inspiration (i.e. that God inspired the thoughts but not the exact words). Alan Highers made the following observations regarding the error of this concept:

According to the theory of thought inspiration, God gave the **thoughts** to men and allowed them to write them in their own words. This would **demand** that the writers or speakers would have to understand the **thoughts** thus given by God in order to record them. They certainly could not record in their own words that which they themselves did **not understand at the time**. It is said that the prophets searched their **own** writings trying to discover the full meaning of the great truths which they recorded (1 Peter 1:10,11). Consequently, it must follow that God had given them the words to say, but had not in fact given them the thoughts in a complete



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form at all! Furthermore, in the matchless message of Peter on Pentecost, he set forth with clarity the principle that would admit Gentiles to the kingdom (Acts 2:38-39). But he himself had to be convinced later by miraculous power of that which he had earlier spoken (Acts 10:44-48; 11:17-18). Therefore, God had given him the words to say although he did not fully possess the thought of his own language.<sup>4</sup>

The true concept of the inspiration of the Bible can be seen in the attitude of Jesus toward the Scriptures. Jesus' view of the Scriptures is that they are verbally inspired. Jesus' concept was that the inspiration of the Scriptures was plenary (i.e. full) and verbal (i.e. word-by-word). This does not suggest "mechanical dictation" which is nothing more than an attempt by liberals to change the focus of attention away from the real issues involved to something few, if any, believe. Verbal inspiration includes the idea that the "various books of the Bible reflect their writers' personal characteristics in style and vocabulary, and their personalities are often expressed in their thoughts, prayers, fears, etc. However, ... God directed the process so that **all** words that were used were equally inspired of God."<sup>5</sup> Let us then notice some specific examples from the statements of Christ which reflect His view of inspiration.

In Matthew 5:17-18 Jesus said,

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled (Matt. 5:17-18).

The "jot" referred to here is the smallest Hebrew letter, and the "tittle" is a tiny accent mark on certain Hebrew characters. Even the smallest letter and accent marks were significant to Jesus in His view of Scripture.

A. B. Bruce noted:

Jesus expresses here in the strongest manner His conviction that the whole Old Testament is a Divine revelation, and that therefore every minutest precept has religious significance.<sup>6</sup>

Notice the reasoning of Jesus in Matthew 22:32 on the tense of the verb. The implication being that since God said in Exodus 3:6, "I **am** the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" and since these three were dead at the time of the statement therefore there is an existence beyond the grave. To Jesus even the tense of the verbs used was significant. Again in the same context (Matt. 22:41f) Jesus notes the statement of David in Psalm 110:1, "The Lord said unto my Lord..." In this discussion Jesus again emphasizes a single word from the text

and draws significant conclusions therefrom. Had Jesus not viewed Scriptures as verbally inspired such reasoning would have been pointless. In Matthew 19:4-5 Jesus quotes from Genesis 2:24. In the Genesis record the verse follows immediately after a statement from Adam and no indication is given that these words were spoken by God.

In fact, the words seem to be more of an authorial or narratorial comment by Moses, the author of the Pentateuch. Yet Jesus attributes the words to God. In other words, God is the author. The passage is not a **record** of what God said; it **is** what God said.<sup>7</sup>

Jesus promised to His apostles that the words of the gospel message would be given to them.

But when they deliver you up, be not anxious **how** or **what** you shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour **what** you shall speak (Matt. 10:19, emp. mine).

It should be obvious that what is involved in "how or what you shall speak" is more than thoughts; Jesus refers to the fact that the very words that they would speak would be provided by the Spirit of God.

Compare this view of inspiration by Jesus with the remarks of Paul in I Corinthians 2.

For what man knoweth the things of a

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man, save the spirit of man which is in him?(i.e. you cannot know what I am thinking unless I reveal that to you in some way, LK) even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God (i.e. you cannot know what God has in His mind unless He reveals it to you in some way, LK) ... Which things also we speak, not in the **words** which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing ("combining" ASV) spiritual (words) things with spiritual (I Cor. 2:11-13).

"There is not a more comprehensive statement of verbal inspiration to be found elsewhere in the Holy Writings. The mind of God has been made known by means of the inspired words of those representatives whom He chose for that noble task."<sup>8</sup>

The conclusion is obvious:

... the original documents of the Bible were written by men, who, though permitted the exercise of their own personalities and literary talents, yet wrote under the control and guidance of the Spirit of God, the result being in every word of the original documents a perfect and errorless recording of the exact message which God desired to give to man.<sup>9</sup>

Before looking at some of the evidences for the inspiration of the Bible, one additional point needs to be made. The following

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paragraph will be adequate for this purpose:

"But suppose," someone wonders, "the Bible was verbally inspired initially. Hasn't the transmission of the text across the centuries caused a corruption of the original documents, so that verbal inspiration has been virtually destroyed?" No, not at all. For the text of the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, has been remarkably preserved. For example, after many years of scientific research in connection with the text of the O.T., Professor Robert Dick Wilson, who was thoroughly acquainted with **forty-five languages**, could state that "we are **scientifically certain** that we have substantially the same text that was in the possession of Christ and the apostles..." (**A Scientific Investigation of the Old Testament**, Harper & Bros., New York, 1929, p. 8). And evidence for the textual reliability of the N. T. is no less impressive. Scholars are now in possession of some 5,378 Greek manuscripts (in part or in whole) of the New Testament, and some of these date to the early part of the second century A.D. It has been estimated that textual variations concern only about 1/1000th part of the entire text (C. R. Gregory, **Canon and Text of the New Testament**, Scribners, New York, 1907, p.528). Transmission, therefore, has not destroyed verbal inspiration.<sup>10</sup>

Still another has written:

It seems strange that the text of Shakespeare, which has been in existence less than two hundred and eight years, should be far more uncertain and corrupt than that of the New Testament, now over eighteen centuries old, during nearly fifteen of which it existed only in manuscript ... With perhaps a dozen or twenty exceptions, the text of every verse in the New Testament may be said to be so far settled by general consent of the scholars, that any dispute as to its readings must relate rather to the interpretation of the words than to any doubts respecting the words themselves. But in every one of Shakespeare's plays there are probably a hundred readings still in dispute, a large portion of which materially affects the meaning of the passages in which they occur.<sup>11</sup>

Therefore, as long as accuracy of translation is maintained we have an inspired Bible today, a reliable guidebook to lead us from earth to heaven.

### **Some Evidences Of The Inspiration Of The Bible**

Let us first notice some of the evidence for the inspiration of the Bible which is found within the pages of the Bible itself. These facts would be called the INTERNAL EVIDENCE. In the space and time allowed, it would be impossible to exhaust the supply of this kind

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of evidence. It should be abundantly clear to any objective person based on the evidence available that the Bible is the Word of God.

First, **the Bible claims to be inspired.**

There are certainly other books which claim to be inspired which are not (e.g. *The Koran*, *The Book of Mormon*, *Science and Health With a Key to the Scriptures*, etc.) so a mere claim is not conclusive evidence. However, it would seem ridiculous to set out to prove that a book is inspired which does not even make such a claim for itself. The Bible claims to be verbally inspired of God in no uncertain terms frequently. Within the pages of the Old Testament "more than 3,800 actual claims of inspiration are made ... There are some 175 claims in Psalm 119 alone."<sup>12</sup> A look at a few of these will be helpful:

1. "And God spake all these words, saying..." (Exod. 20:1).

2. "And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord..." (Exod. 24:4f).

3. "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue" (II Sam. 23:2).

4. "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God..." (I Thess. 2:13).

Another evidence for the inspiration of the Bible is **unique unity of the Scriptures.**

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The only plausible explanation for the unity of the Bible is the inspiration of God. Suppose we were to select ten authors, all from the same occupation, all in one place, all with one language and give them the assignment of writing on only one controversial subject. What kind of book would we expect to result? A conglomeration of vastly different writing! Exactly! But the Bible was written over a period of 1600 years, by more than 40 writers, some of which could be classified as "unlearned and ignorant men" (Acts 4:13), from the most diverse walks of life, in various localities, separated by hundreds of miles and hundreds of years, even speaking different languages. Some of these writers were kings, herdsman, fishermen, even one was a physician. A great variety of writing types exist within the pages of the Bible. Yet there is a marvelous unity throughout all sixty-six books. These sixty-six books

... form a meaningful and purposeful whole, as they convey the progressive unfolding of the theme of the Bible in the person of Christ. The law gives the *foundation* for Christ, history shows the *preparation* for Him. In poetry there is an *aspiration* for Christ and in prophecy an *expectation* of Him. The Gospels of the New Testament record the historical *manifestation* of Christ, Acts relates the *propagation* of Christ, the Epistles give



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the *interpretation* of Him, and in Revelation is found the *consummation* of all things in Christ.<sup>13</sup>

This unity exists not only in general theme but in every detail of its contents. Wayne Jackson has accurately observed and concluded:

There are countless instances of minute agreement between the Biblical writers in matters of history, culture, geography, biography, etc., for which there is absolutely no explanation save that there was a **divine oversight** involved in the production.<sup>14</sup>

Brother Jackson offers some examples of what he calls "undesigned and seemingly insignificant ... agreement":

(1) Shortly before the institution of the Passover, Jehovah inflicted plagues on Egypt, the 8th of which was hail which destroyed the *blooming flax* (Ex. 9:31). Forty years later (Josh. 4:19), when the Israelites entered Canaan, it was near harvest time (3:15), and at Rahab's house the spies had been concealed under the *drying stalks of flax* on the roof (2:6). (2) In the NT we learn that large quantities of "myrrh" were used in the preparation of dead bodies (Jn. 19:39). Now Egypt was renowned for its embalming (Gen. 50:2,26). We are not surprised to learn, therefore, that myrrh was imported by caravans into Egypt (Gen. 37:25). (3) In Egypt Joseph was

placed in the prison where the king's captives were "bound" (Gen. 39:20), and the Psalmist informs us that Joseph was chained and fettered (105:18). (4) When Jesus fed the 5,000 he seated them upon the "green grass" (Mk. 6:39), for as another writer tells us, the Passover feast was near (Jn. 6:4) which is in the springtime. Thousands of these coincidental agreements are in the Bible; not once do we find the tiny slips of disagreement which commonly afflict the most skillful of writers. This is assurance of inspiration!<sup>15</sup>

The **flawless accuracy of the Bible** further evidences its divine inspiration. Men do not write this accurately no matter how painstakingly or scholarly the authors. When the **Encyclopedia Britannica** was first published, for example, there were so many mistakes within its volumes regarding places in America that a competitor published a pamphlet exposing the blunders contained therein. The Bible contains no such inaccuracies. Because of its accuracy in terms of geography and history, the Bible is often used by archaeologists to locate particular places. Even some who have set out to disprove the accuracy of the Bible have discovered that the Bible is accurate in every detail. Sir William Ramsey sought to disprove the historicity and accuracy of the book of

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Acts. After years of digging and other research he was forced to conclude that Acts was historically accurate. J. W. McGarvey in **Lands of the Bible** notes hundred of instances in the Bible where even the compass references and topographical references can be checked and verified. He concludes that "in not a single instance of this kind has any of the Bible writers been found at fault." Men have been mistaken about such matters, but there are no mistakes in the Bible. Once the critics pointed to the references to the Hittites (Gen. 23:10) as a mistake, but now archaeologists have unearthed other evidence of their existence.

Another evidence of the inspiration of the Bible is the **unusual style** in which it is written. Let us notice a few characteristics of the style of the writing found in the Bible which distinguishes the Bible from the writing which is characteristic of men. Here is, therefore, another indicator that the Bible is God-breathed.

Compare the **brevity of the Scriptures** to the way men write. Notice that God tells us of the creation of the universe and the origin of man, animals and plants in the first thirty-four verses of Genesis. "The average sports reporter takes more space to tell about a high school basketball game."<sup>16</sup> **Reader's Digest** each month uses more words than God's book

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used to tell of the first twenty-five hundred years of man's history on earth"<sup>17</sup> in the fifty chapters of the book of Genesis. Consider the brevity of such accounts as that of the transfiguration, an event which involved two individuals who had long ago departed life on earth returning to discuss the kingdom with Jesus in the presence of Peter, James and John. This event further involved God's vocal declaration from heaven suggesting the superiority of Christianity over the law of Moses. Yet, the inspired account of the transfiguration takes only eight verses. Those occasions of the appearance of Christ following His resurrection were among the most significant events mentioned in the New Testament; yet, Matthew tells only of two of these appearances, Mark tells of three, Luke of only three, and John only of four. Men simply do not write like this.

It is also important to observe regarding style that there are significant **omissions displaying restraint from human curiosity** demonstrating Divine authorship of the Bible. This can be seen in the absence of details "about the identify of Cain's wife, about the place of Moses' burial, about the eighteen silent years of Jesus' life, about His personal appearance, about the words which He wrote on the ground, about Lazarus' experiences during the four days of death, and about Paul's

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paradise trip..."<sup>18</sup> The curiosity of men would have prevented such omissions. An ancient work, **The Gospel of the Infancy**, devotes fifty full chapters to giving a highly imaginative description of the first twelve years of the life of Jesus. The Bible is not the writing of men, but of men guided in their writing by God.

There is also an amazing **calmness** in the Scriptures which is uncharacteristic of the writings of mere men. Notice the accounts given of the transfiguration, the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus' walking on the water, the raising of Lazarus from the dead, and the crucifixion. Where are those terms like: amazing, unbelievable, unprecedented, stupendous, colossal, unparalleled,...? They are completely absent! Men simply do not write like this.

While considering the style in which the Bible is written, notice finally the **complete impartiality** with which the characters of the Bible are described. Uninspired men tend to leave unmentioned things which are not complimentary or sinful regarding those whom they respect and set forward as examples. In the Bible, Moses is the most highly honored character of the Old Testament, yet included in the Old Testament is that sad story of his disobedience at the rock and his prohibition from entering the land of promise. The sins of Abraham, the father of the faithful, are

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mentioned without attempts to explain them away or justify his behavior. The adultery, deception, and murder committed by David, the "man after God's own heart," are included in the record of the Old Testament.

There are no apologies for Peter, no reproaches for Judas, just the facts. Had men been writing in the ordinary manner they would have ignored some of the flaws, especially of the leaders of God's people, or at least they would have tried to explain away some of these obvious faults.<sup>19</sup>

**Predictive prophecy** is unique to the Bible and offers further evidence of the Bible's inspiration. Especially of interest are the prophecies made and fulfilled regarding the Messiah. Rex Turner wrote,

Predictive prophecy is the highest evidence of divine revelation. The one thing that a mortal man cannot do is know and report future events in the absence of a train of circumstances that naturally suggest certain possibilities, but even then that person is dependent upon the constancy of the cause and effect from which he has based his predictions and/or conclusions.<sup>20</sup>

To this Isaiah offered this challenge to the advocates of idolatry in his day,

Let them bring them forth, and **show us what shall happen**: let them show the

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former things, what they be, that we may consider them, and know the **latter end of them; or declare us things for to come** (Isa. 41:22), emp. mine).

Predictive prophecy was and is proof of divine guidance; predictive prophecy is evidence of the inspiration of the Bible.

Predictive prophecy often involved minute specifications, dealt with remote times, and people or kingdoms which did not even exist at the time of the prophecy. For example, the good work of king Josiah (even his name is given) was prophesied more than three hundred years before it was fulfilled (I Kings 13:2; II Kings 23:15-16). King Cyrus of Persia is spoken of by name and his decision to allow the Hebrews to return to Jerusalem more than 150 years before the king was born (Isa. 44:28; 45:1).

Of the more than 800 prophecies in the Old Testament, more than 300 deal with the coming of the Messiah. Included among the details given in these Messianic prophecies are these: (1) **His lineage**. He would be born of woman (Gen. 3:16), of the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10), a descendant of David (II Sam. 7:12), and virgin born (Isa. 7:14). (2) **The time of His coming**. He would come in the fulness of times (Gal. 4:4), during the days of the Roman Empire (Dan. 2:44). (3) **His betrayal, death, and resurrection**. He would be betrayed by

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a friend (Psm. 41:9), the price received for the betrayal would be thirty pieces of silver (Zech. 11:12), His hands and feet would be pierced (Psm. 22:16), and He would be raised from the grave the third day (Psm. 16:10; Matt. 12:40). There are more than 300 of these prophecies!

A mathematician has made an attempt to estimate the probability that **just eight of these Old Testament prophecies** would occur in one person accidentally, that is by chance. His conclusion was 1 in  $10^{17}$ .  $10^{17}$  means a one followed by seventeen zeros. Then he suggested how we might understand that huge number. He said,

Suppose we take  $10^{17}$  silver dollars and lay them on the face of Texas. They will cover all of the state two feet deep. Now mark one of these silver dollars and stir the whole mass thoroughly, all over the state. Blindfold a man and tell him that he can travel as far as he wishes, but he must pick up one silver dollar and say this is the right one. What chance would he have of getting the right one?<sup>21</sup>

That is the likelihood of 1 in  $10^{17}$ . What an outstanding proof of the Divinity of Christ and the inspiration of the Scriptures.

When we looked at the flawless accuracy of the Bible, reference was made to archaeology. Archaeology is, in fact, one of the EXTERNAL EVIDENCES for the inspiration

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of the Bible.

It can be stated categorically that **no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a Biblical reference.** Scores of archaeological findings have been made which confirm in clear outline or exact detail historical statements in the Bible (emp. mine, LK).<sup>22</sup>

The **great influence** of the Bible is another external evidence of its inspiration.

The Bible has been translated into more languages, been published in more copies, influenced more thought, inspired more art, and motivated more discoveries than any other book in history.<sup>23</sup>

Further, the Bible is **indestructible**, in spite of the many vicious attacks made against it over the centuries. Many have launched campaigns to destroy the Bible and its influence. But as Jesus said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Mark 13:31).

This by no means is an exhaustive list of evidences for the inspiration of the Bible. This list is only a small portion of that which could be given. Dr. Bert Thompson, for example has published an excellent booklet in which he gives **Scientific Evidences of the Bible's Inspiration.** In this material he gives evidence for the Bible's inspiration from the fields of astronomy, oceanography, physics, medicine,

biology, geography, and archaeology.<sup>24</sup> (The reader would do well to secure a copy of this and read it thoroughly).

### **The Bible Is Inerrant**

To say that the Bible is inspired of God, I believe, is to say that the Bible is inerrant. Since God is the source of that which is written in Scripture and since God does not lie (Titus 1:2), then the Bible is true and does not contain errors. William Woodson offers these additional comments:

The Bible never deceives nor misleads, is wholly trustworthy and reliable; it is wholly true. To say the Bible is inerrant is to say that all its teaching is the utterance of God who cannot lie (Titus 1:2), whose word when spoken abides forever (I Peter 1:23-25; Psm. 119:89), cannot be broken (John 10:35; Luke 16:17; Matt. 5:18) and is to be trusted completely. The Bible is affirmed to be infallible and inerrant because God is infallible and inerrant; consequently the inerrancy of the Bible is simply the inerrance of God speaking.<sup>25</sup>

The inerrancy of the Bible applies to all statements found in the Scriptures whether dealing with incidental matters, scientific matters, geographical matters, or historical matters. If there were mistakes in these areas and the Bible proved unreliable in these, then the Bible would be unreliable also in matters

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pertaining to salvation. Even if the Bible were right about some things and wrong about others, the Bible would be no different from those books written by men. But, as we have noted earlier, the Bible's unparalleled, flawless accuracy in all of its contents points to its inerrancy and therefore to its authority in matters eternal.

Let us therefore believe the Bible to be the inspired Word of God and let us be obedient to all of its teaching. Jesus said, "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32).

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# Notes

## *Chapter Five*

# **The Bible Only Makes Christians Only And The Only Christians**

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When Paul, Timothy and Silas came to Troas, Paul received a vision in the night of a man from Macedonia, saying, "Come over into Macedonia, and help us" (Acts 16:9).

Paul and his party, which now included Luke, set sail for the seaport of Neapolis. From Neapolis the mission-driven Paul descended to the marshy plains where Philippi lay. The road was treacherous, strewn with shattered rocks caused by the frequent earthquakes in that area. Along the way perhaps Paul witnessed the many shrines to Dis, the god of earthquakes, as the faithful apostle made his way to the Roman colony. It was here that Antony and Octavian fought their deciding

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battle against Brutus and Cassius. It was here, one might argue, that the Roman Republic died, or the Roman Empire was born.

When Paul, Silas, Timothy and Luke came into Philippi, they sought opportunity to preach Jesus to the citizens of that city. Luke records,

And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither (Acts 16:13).

One of the women present that day was a businesswoman named Lydia who sold the purple dyes for which Thyatira was famous. Lydia and her household were open and receptive to the great gospel message preached by the apostle, and in response to their faith Lydia and her servants obeyed the gospel, putting the Lord on in baptism for the remission of sins.

When Lydia came from the watery grave of baptism, what was she? One would respond that Lydia was a Christian. But what kind of Christian? Was she a Baptist-Christian, a Mormon-Christian, or some other type of hyphenated Christian?

Also, of what church was she a member? There are hundreds of churches (denominations) in the world today. Of which one of these churches was she a member? Was it the case that she was a member of all



churches or not a member of any church?

The answers to these questions are vital. Their importance cannot be relegated, because they truly determine whether one is saved or lost. They further identify the relationship one sustains to Christ and to those who belong to Christ. They identify the nature of the kingdom and terms of acceptance into that kingdom.

As children of God, we must wear the names that God wants us to wear and we must be identified within the sphere of fellowship that God has established. That sphere of fellowship must not exclude anyone whom God includes, and neither must it include those whom God has excluded.

### **The Bible Only**

How may we determine who is a Christian, and who is not a Christian? What criteria will answer the many questions associated with this issue and give us the answers so desperately needed – answers that are true and absolute and that derive from God, who cannot lie?

Paul in II Corinthians 5:18-20 commands humans to be reconciled to God. This is the case because man sinned and thus alienated himself from God. Man left God. God did not leave man. God through Christ has been able to bring about the terms of reconciliation. The terms of reconciliation are clearly set out in

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the New Testament, and if mankind is reconciled to God, it can only be accomplished by complying with the terms set out in Holy Writ.

The Scripture is all-sufficient and supplies all that humanity needs to obey all of God's will, thereby appropriating the grace of God by gospel obedience. Sanctification occurs by means of the Word of God (John 17:17). We are saved by receiving "the engrafted word which is able to save our souls" (James 1:21).

Paul describes the all-sufficiency of the Scripture:

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness (II Tim. 3:16).

The Scriptures, Paul says, are profitable (valuable), for doctrine (teaching in all the matters that man needs in order to enter a saved condition and remain saved); for reproof (to be found guilty of error); for correction (restoration of those in error back to God's way); for instruction in righteousness (to be training in righteousness, so that the man can be completely supplied in the knowledge needed to obey all of God's will).

The object of this inspired Scripture is "that the man of God may be perfect (mature, having completely developed those characteristics essential to a Christian life),

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thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

Notice that through the Bible humanity is completely furnished unto every good work, not partially furnished, but totally furnished. The Bible is the verbally inspired Word of God. It is inspired (God breathed) and since God cannot lie (Heb. 6:18), the Bible is totally true and is the only revelation that mankind has from God. The Bible is verbally inspired, which means that the Holy Spirit gave the very words of the Bible, and not just thoughts. The inspiration is in the words themselves because God gave those words through the Holy Spirit to inspired writers. Exodus 20:1 says, "And God spake all these words, saying..." Peter affirms inspiration in II Peter 1:21,

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 (II Peter 1:21).

The Bible then is verbally inspired, and it contains God's scheme of salvation for mankind. The terms of reconciliation are set out in the New Testament. No man can be saved who is not reconciled to God, but no man can be reconciled to God without studying the Bible, which states the terms of reconciliation. One of the essential elements of reconciliation is faith, but faith is derived only by knowing God's words (Rom. 10:17).

The Bible therefore is our only standard

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or criterion to answer the questions pertaining to life and godliness. Thomas Warren has well said:

5. It is clear, therefore, that the Bible claims to be the true objective standard; that is, the Bible claims to be the source of right answers to religious questions. The conditions with which sinners must comply in order to be saved are the conditions which the Bible sets forth (II Tim. 3:16,17; John 12:48). No one can be saved if he does not comply with the conditions set forth therein (II Thess. 1:7-9; Acts 2:38; Mark 16:15,16). All who practice what is not authorized by the Bible sin in so doing (Lev. 20:1,2; I Chron. 15:1-15; II John 9-11).<sup>1</sup>

We cannot turn to human creeds or to human philosophies for the answers because both of these are the product of fallible human thought and veracity.

The **Discipline of the Methodist Church** well illustrates the great dichotomy between God's inspired Word and human doctrines. Article 62 says this:

62. The Son, who was the Word of the Father, the very and eternal God, of one substance with the Father, took man's nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin; so that two whole and perfect natures, that is to say, the Godhead and Manhood, were joined together in one person, never to be divided; whereof is one Christ, very God and very Man, who truly

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suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried, to reconcile his Father to us, and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for the actual sins of men.<sup>2</sup>

Article 62 of the Methodist manual has God being reconciled to man. This is exactly opposite of what the Bible teaches in II Corinthians 5:20 where Paul says,

Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God (II Cor. 5:20).

The Methodist manual teaches that God is to be reconciled to man, but the Bible teaches that man must be reconciled to God. Obviously, the Methodist manual is false and contradicts the Word of God.

Therefore, our trust must be in the Bible, the inerrant and infallible Word of God, the only authoritative standard that God has given us and therefore the only source of knowing God's will for mankind.

There are many today who teach that it is not necessary for one to understand very much about the purpose of baptism in order for his baptism to be acceptable to God. The advocates of these views say that if one understands a reason for baptism, this will suffice.

Since the Bible, as we have demonstrated, is our only authoritative standard in answering

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these questions, we need to examine the Bible in order to answer these matters.

### **What Must One Know In Order To Become A Christian?**

Let it be noted that for baptism to be acceptable, there must be understanding. Paul stated,

So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God (Rom. 10:17).

Vine says concerning this word "hearing" that it is "the receiving of a message, something more than the mere sense of hearing."<sup>3</sup> Therefore, it becomes obvious that the "hearing" of Romans 10:17 involves within itself an understanding capable of producing real faith. A person must have understanding, but the question still remains as to what must be understood.

It is obvious in light of Acts 19 that a person may be immersed in order to obey God and in order to receive the remission of sins and still not have fulfilled everything involved in God's plan for baptism. Those twelve men of Acts 19 were baptized with John's baptism, which was a baptism for the remission of sins, and yet they were not Christians. No one could doubt their honesty and sincerity, but they had been baptized by the wrong baptism at the wrong time, and this

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made their baptism invalid. It was therefore necessary for them to be rebaptized. Therefore, it is possible that, in spite of complete honesty and sincerity, a person by reason of faulty understanding at the time of his baptism might invalidate his baptism.

That one must understand what he is doing is forever settled by Romans 6:17:

But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you (Rom. 6:17).

We must obey from the heart, and that precludes valid obedience predicated upon ignorance.

Finally, the issue is settled by an understanding of what was understood by those folks who were baptized on the day of Pentecost. Those penitent believers in Acts 2 **knew** that they were lost, because they asked Peter and the rest of the apostles what they had to do to be saved. They **understood** that their baptism was by the authority of Jesus, because they were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. They undoubtedly **understood** that the purpose of their baptism was for the remission of sins or for the salvation of their souls from past sins, because Peter told them so. They were not ignorant of the purpose of baptism. They were **knowledgeable** enough to have acceptable faith; this can speak of

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nothing else but understanding. They **knew** that they were to be baptized to have their sins washed away.

When a person boldly declares that it is not necessary for a person to know that he is being baptized for the remission of sins in order to have a valid baptism, he is teaching false doctrine. Those early Christians knew that they were being baptized for the remission of sins.

To teach that a person does have to understand that baptism is for the remission of sins is to teach a doctrine that leads to faulty understanding of baptism's purpose. In Acts 19 a faulty understanding of New Testament baptism invalidated the baptism of those twelve men. To teach that one does not need to understand that baptism is for the remission of sins is to teach a doctrine that leads to a faulty understanding of New Testament baptism today. A person with this faulty understanding cannot be baptized acceptably.

### **Who Is A Christian?**

It is indeed wonderful that we do not have to rely upon human wisdom to answer this vital question. God in the New Testament clearly tells us what one must do in order to become a Christian and to remain faithful to God.



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Only those who obey the gospel of Jesus Christ will be saved. Paul affirms this in II Thessalonians 1:8,

In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (II Thess. 1:8).

When one obeys the gospel, one puts on Christ and simultaneously becomes a Christian, a child of God.

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. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:26-28).

We enter a family by the natural process of birth. In a similar way, we enter the church, the family of God, by spiritual birth. This was the very thing that Jesus spoke of when He addressed Nicodemus:

Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God (John 3:5).

This new birth is a spiritual one, which results in an individual becoming a Christian, and thus being added to the Lord's kingdom, the church (Acts 2:41,47).

What is involved in this process of spiritual birth, or as the Lord termed it, "being born again"? The answer to this question is important, because it tells us exactly how to become a Christian.

In order to obey the gospel and thus become a Christian (child of God) and enter a saved condition, one must first have faith in God and Jesus Christ as the Son of God. A person must believe the biblical terms of reconciliation and be willing to obey those terms. The Hebrew writer said,

But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him (Heb. 11:6).

Our belief in Jesus as God's Son is absolutely essential in order to be saved.

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).

Faith is derived from a knowledge of God's verbally inspired Bible.

So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God (Rom. 10:17).

Further, one must repent of his past sins in order to be saved. This was the very instruction that Peter gave to those believers

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on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2:38:

Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:38).

Additionally, one must confess Jesus as God's Son and recognize Christ as Lord and Savior.

For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation (Rom. 10:10).

Finally, one must be immersed in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins in order to be saved. Then Peter said unto them,

Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:38).

Peter speaks of the saving power of baptism in I Peter 3:21:

The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

This baptism is an immersion in water for the remission of sins. Only the individual

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who is a penitent believer is qualified to be baptized. Since baptism is from the heart (Rom. 6:17), this precludes valid obedience by a person who is ignorant of God's Word or who complies to baptism for improper motives.

When a person obeys the gospel according to God's Word, he puts on the Lord and, as we have seen, becomes a Christian. At the very moment this individual becomes a Christian, he becomes a member of the church of Christ. This is the case because God adds him to the church (Acts 2:41,47). One cannot join the church. One can only be added to the church by God, and no one can be added to the church who has not obeyed the gospel.

### **What Kind Of Christian?**

In the introduction to this lesson, the question was raised in regard to Lydia as to what kind of Christian she was. That is not a question that would have been raised by Lydia nor by anyone else in New Testament times. This is because everyone understood that when one became a Christian, he was a Christian and a Christian only. There were no denominations then. One could not say, "I am a Baptist Christian" or "a Methodist Christian." That type of nomenclature was totally foreign to people in Paul's day. Even the leaders of the Roman Empire did not talk about different kinds of Christians because even they

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understood that there is only one kind of Christian.

Robert Taylor, in an excellent article entitled "The Only Christians," addressed this matter in this way:

The eminent lexicographer, Henry Thayer, defines a Christian as a "follower of Christ." This is its uniform usage in the three passages wherein it occurs. Never in the Bible is it employed as a synonym for one who is partly a Christian and then partly something else – that something else being a religious affiliation never so much as mentioned within Holy Writ. There were Pharisees in the New Testament but no Christian-Pharisees; there Sadducees in the first century but no Christian-Sadducees; there were Essenes in the first century but no Christian-Essenes; there were the various Roman religions and the Grecian religions but no Christian-Romans and no Christian-Grecians in the sense of a mixture of Roman and Grecian religions with that of pure or unadulterated Christianity. In the latter part of the first century there arose the Gnostic error but no New Testament writer ever says there were Christian-Gnostics. Can anyone imagine John's calling Cerinthus, a first century heretic of Ephesus, a Christian-Gnostic or a Christian-Cerinthian Gnostic? No New Testament writer ever affirmed that there were devout, sincere, and knowledgeable Christians scattered

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among all the Jewish, Roman, Grecian, Gnostic, and Ebonite religions of the first century. There were no hyphenated Christians then as some claim there now are. There is positively no case in all the New Testament of where any person was added to the Lord's church and at the same time joined something human in origin.<sup>4</sup>

### **Of What Church Is One A Member?**

The inspired apostle Paul taught in Ephesians 1:22-23 that the church of Christ is the body of Christ (Col. 1:18). Additionally, we learn from Paul that there is only one body (Eph. 4:4-6). There is therefore only one authorized body (church) and this one authorized body is the church that Christ died for and purchased with His blood on the cross (Acts 20:28).

The church and the church alone contains all of those who are being saved (Acts 2:47). It is therefore the case that every saved person now living is a member of the church of Christ.

Additionally, the church has been purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ (Acts 20:28). No one can be saved who does not appropriate the blood of Christ by gospel obedience.

In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins,

according to the riches of his grace (Eph. 1:7).

The salvation that comes as a result of appropriating Christ's blood in gospel obedience is in Christ.

Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory (II Tim. 2:10).

To be in Christ, however, is to be in His church, because the church has been purchased by the blood of Christ and no one can be saved who does not appropriate that blood in gospel obedience. To be saved apart from the church would be like saying that one could be saved apart from the blood of the Saviour.

We never read of but one church in the New Testament, and that church is the church which belongs to Christ, because He died for the church and purchased it with His own blood.

Paul teaches that mankind is reconciled unto God in the one body, which is the church of Christ.

And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby (Eph. 2:16).

Reconciliation to God is essential to salvation but this reconciliation can only occur by

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obeying the gospel which results in being added to the church, and thus reconciliation occurs in the church.

Christians are therefore those individuals who have obeyed the gospel and who have been at the same time added to the one true church which Jesus purchased with His own blood which, as we have seen, is the church of Christ.

Therefore, the Bible only makes Christians only, and these Christians are all members of the church of Christ. There are no God-approved "hyphenated Christians" and there are no God-approved "Christians" outside the church.

### **The Only Christians**

We have seen that the penitent believer who is baptized into Christ for the remission of sins enters Christ and becomes a Christian while at the same time being added to the Lord's church. There is one Divinely authorized church, and all others are counterfeit. Therefore, there is no Divine authorization for the existence of any denomination. All who enter a denomination sin in so doing, and, if they continue there until death, will be damned.

Only individuals who have been scripturally baptized are Christians. Only those who have been added to the church of Christ



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are Christians only who are saved by gospel obedience, which means that they have been scripturally baptized.

Those who have been scripturally baptized into Christ are Christians, and, as we have seen, are Christians only. Those who are Christians are members of the church of Christ, because this is the only God-approved church in the world. Therefore, all Christians are members of the church of Christ, and only those who are members of the Lord's church are Christians. There are absolutely no Christians who are not members of that church. The only individuals on this earth who are Christians are those who are members of the blood-bought church of Christ.

Roy Deaver, in an editorial entitled "The Only Christians," has well said,

But the New Testament clearly teaches that one enters the church by being baptized in the name of Christ. The church is the Lord's spiritual body (Col. 1:18). "He is the head of the body, the church." Thus, to be in the church is to be in the Christ. But, one gets into the Christ by being baptized into him (Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:27). If the church and the kingdom are the same divine institution, and if one enters the kingdom by the birth of the water and of Spirit, and if "except" means there is no other way for one to enter the kingdom (the church), and if one is baptized to get

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into the church, then – clearly – the birth of water and of Spirit, and baptism into Christ mean exactly the same thing. And, in which case John 3:5 teaches that: (1) all who are scripturally baptized enter into the church; (2) no person who is scripturally baptized is outside the Lord's church; and (3) one enters the church IF and ONLY IF he is scripturally baptized.

All the scripturally baptized persons are in the church. Only the scripturally baptized persons are in the church. No scripturally baptized person is outside the church. The person who has truly been baptized into Christ is a Christian, and ONLY those who have been truly baptized into Christ are Christians.

Further, the record says: "And the Lord added to the church daily those that were being saved" (Acts 2:47). According to this passage, the process by which one comes to be saved is the process by which the Lord adds that person to his church. The saved person is added by the Lord to the Lord's church. ALL the saved persons are added by the Lord to the Lord's church. ONLY the saved persons are added by the Lord to the Lord's church. There is no such thing as a saved person outside the Lord's church. But, the person who has been added by the Lord to the Lord's church is a Christian, and ONLY those who have been added by the Lord to the Lord's church are Christians.<sup>5</sup>

Brother Warren offered a powerful and

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tender appeal in his book **The Bible Only Makes Christians Only And The Only Christians:**

We plead with every one to realize that he can be **just a Christian** (not some so-called "hyphenated-Christian" – a member of some denomination, and that he can **know** that he is a Christian, a member of the body of Christ (the church for which Jesus died, Acts 20:28). There never has been a need for any denomination. There is no present need for any one to be a member of a denomination.

Every penitent believer in Jesus Christ can be baptized in the name of Christ, and, when he does, he can know that the Lord will have added him to his church (Acts 2:41,47). Obey the gospel of Christ (the "seed" which is His word, Luke 8:11; I Peter 1:20-25), as a penitent believer being baptized unto the remission of your sins, and you have the assurance of God (as set out in His word) that you will be a member of the church for which Jesus died – in short, you will be **"just a Christian,"** not a "Lutheran-Christian," a "Methodist-Christian," or any other kind of so-called hyphenated "Christian."<sup>6</sup>

### **Conclusion**

N. B. Hardeman was one of the greatest preachers ever to live. Brother Hardeman offered an excellent statement concerning

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these matters long ago.

There is but one church built on Jesus Christ, and that is the church about which you read in the Bible and of which every Christian on earth is a member. With this we ought to be content. When you become God's child, let the matter there stop, so far as affiliation with organizations religious are concerning; for, be it remembered, there is no scripture, there is no authority other than human, for the existence of denominations. (Vol. II, p. 245).<sup>7</sup>

Let us all strive to be Christians only, recognizing that if we have truly obeyed the gospel, we have been added to the Lord's body. There is only one body (one church), and all the saved are members of that one church. The only Christians that exist are those who are members of the church of Christ.

### Endnotes

1 Warren, Thomas B., **The Bible Only Makes Christians Only And The Only Christians** (National Christian Press, Inc.: Jonesboro, AR, 1986), p. 24.

2 **Doctrines And Disciplines Of The Methodist Church** (The Methodist Publishing House: 1940), p. 39.

3 "Hear, Hearing," W. E. Vine, **An Expository Dictionary Of New Testament Words** (Fleming H. Revell Co.: Old Tappan, New Jersey, 1966), II, p. 206.

4 Taylor, Robert R.. "The Only Christians," **Gospel Advocate**, March 7, 1985, p. 145.

5 Deaver, Roy, "The Only Christians," **Firm Foundation**, July 9, 1985, p. 402.

6 Warren, p. 155.

7 Hardeman, N. B., **Hardeman's Tabernacle Sermons** (McQuiddy Printing Co.: Nashville, 1923), Vol. II, p. 245.

## Notes

## *Chapter Six*

# **Christians – Actions And Characteristics**

*Edwin S. Jones*



Edwin was born in Atlanta, GA • Presently an instructor and Academic Dean for the East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions • An elder with the Karns church in Knoxville • Has been preaching for twenty-four years • Holds degrees from Alabama Christian School of Religion • Edwin and Sarah have three children.

In my formative years I spent a considerable amount of time living with my grandmother. My grandmother was a feisty Irish woman who loved me like a son and was determined that I would eventually amount to something. I well remember how she would lecture to me and conclude by saying, "Edwin, I want you to be somebody!"

I knew very well what my grandmother meant. I tried to get by with going through the motions of obedience to her wishes, only to lapse into old habits when she was not looking. However, such outward sporadic efforts were not what she wanted. Mrs. Leonie Sullivan Bryant was determined that I would not settle for anything less than the development of true character.

I have often looked back on those days and the encouragement that that relentless, caring lady drilled into my heart. As a Christian I especially appreciate the value of her very biblically based lesson. Our God, too, wants us to be somebody. This desire cannot, however, be fulfilled with mere "eyeservice" as "menpleasers," it must be from the heart.

Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men (Eph. 6:5-7).

Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men (Col. 3:22-23).

Therefore, in order to fully understand the role of Christian characteristics and actions, we must look to the character of our God who enjoins on us the responsibility and privilege of reflecting His holy nature. It is a look to God that will orient us to a proper view of ourselves.

God, Himself, is the very standard for our

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own character. What He is in character we must strive to imitate (Lev. 19:2; Matt. 5:48). God's holiness is internal, what He lives by is not a list of rules outside of Himself; His standard is His own nature. The rules of moral conduct reflect God's essential being, an essence He can no more violate than He can cease being what He is (Heb. 6:18; II Tim. 2:13).

This point is one that needs to be understood well. Many have chosen to explain certain accounts of God's actions by saying, "He is God, He can do whatever He wants to do." This, however, cannot be true. "Will not the judge of all the earth do what is right?" (Gen. 18:25). God is bound by His nature to be what is right and therefore do what is right. Sin cannot be forgiven without a price being paid (Rom. 3:26). Covenants cannot be broken because God is no liar and His Word is His bond (Heb. 6:18). Therefore, we must come to see that righteousness in its purest most godlike form is internal and part of what we truly are in the heart.

This then demands that we further understand two aspects of Christian character: what we are to do and how we are to do it. In short, the spirit and the truth of the thing (John 4:24).

To illustrate the point, consider one person who grudgingly keeps some commands,

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another person who has a good attitude but does not know what to do and a third person who knows what to do and does it in the right spirit. Clearly, only the latter example would be correct. There are many reasons why people might perform the right action, but there is only one right motivation that God will accept.

For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again (II Cor. 5:14-15)

If false doctrine is spoken against and the motivation is to make a name for one's self, pride has been the unacceptable motivation. If one enjoys finding the fault of others and turns the discovery of error into a "jolly good time," then self-righteousness rather than true indignation or concern is behind the action (Matt. 23:4; Rom. 2:21).

If we manufacture the case against those in error by making something bad seem even worse than it is or if we fail to be completely honest in our appraisal of the actions of those in error, then we are not acting like God, but like Satan. Truth does not need an unethical assistance that is no real assistance at all.

If we disassociate our character from our actions we become as guilty of wrong as those

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we oppose. In that way, Satan will try to discredit our opposition to error by giving those we oppose way to defuse the force of our otherwise just protest.

In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you (Titus 2:7-8).

With this in mind, there are certain key points to establish when considering a people of true character and appropriate actions:

1. We must love the lost in such a way as to take no delight in their fall (II Peter 3:9; I Tim. 2:3-4).

2. The truth must be held to with a zeal that cannot be silent in the face of error (John 2:14-17; Eph. 5:11).

3. The desire must always be present to do the right thing no matter what might be the cost (Matt. 5:6,10; Psm. 15:4).

4. We must realize that true biblical holiness revolves around a broad agenda that encompasses the whole of life and not just a few things (Mark 12:28-34).

5. Doing all we can to be at peace with all men by seeking every honorable means to helping them find salvation will characterize our lives.

For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel' s sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you (1 Cor. 9:19-23).

While we might easily list various other key items of a Christian character, these are chosen because they especially address areas that are often overlooked in the heat of the battle when a distorted sense of pragmatism, rather than truth, seems unusually tempting. We must remember that those who take the defense of the truth seriously are more likely to fall in the areas we have just mentioned.

Another very important lesson to learn about Christian characteristics and actions is not a lesson for the polemic arena. On the other end of the spectrum is the stage of normal everyday life where we are found most often and where we will usually touch more lives.

And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing (I Thess. 4:11-12).

Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread (II Thess. 3:12).

Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth (Eph. 4:28).

Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven (Matt. 5:13-16).

Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man (Col. 4:5-6).

See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil (Eph. 5:15-16).

In life's ordinary pathways we learn more about our faithfulness and sense of resolve than in any other setting. Life from day to day is where we must be ever vigilant so that "self" will not rule and God's way will not be forgotten.

Now let us step back for a moment to recap. To this point we have observed the value of being changed from within and how motives and actions in either confronting error or living from day to day are essential to Christianity. But how can I bring these truths into the practical reality of my life? How might I truly develop proper characteristics that will in turn lead to correct actions?

Let me suggest two passages of scripture that, although seeming quite different on the surface, illustrate the fundamental procedures for true and lasting change of character and actions. The passages are Isaiah 6:1-8 and Luke 5:1-11.

In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did

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fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.

Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me (Isa. 6:1-8).

And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret, And saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets. And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon' s, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship. Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night,

and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net. And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken: And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men. And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him (Luke 5:1-11).

In the diversity of these two passages we find a sameness that is most instructive. In Isaiah's exalted vision of Jehovah high and lifted up we find the prophet: saw God in His holiness, saw himself in his undone state, was cleansed of his sin and then, in thanksgiving and through forgiveness, was eager to serve.

In Peter's very down-to-earth encounter with deity in a wet fishing boat full of flapping fish the apostle: saw the incarnate God in His holiness, saw himself most clearly as a sinner, was reassured by Jesus and then left all to follow Jesus.

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For all the theological excesses of our liberal brethren and for all the foolishness they propose, they have hit a nail on the head when they say that we need to renew our awe over the reality of God's holiness. The source of the admonition must not cause us to rationalize the general truthfulness of it away.

As we reflect on the holiness and wonder of God, much as did those who wrote the Psalms, we find our selfishness giving way. Today, because of the coming of Christ, we can relate to this even more clearly than did the Psalmists. We, of all men, in all ages, have reason to stand in awe of God (Heb. 2:1-4).

In seeing God, we see ourselves all too clearly. Our littleness and pettiness are exposed from behind the garments of self-righteous rationalizations to reveal that the emperor is wearing no clothes.

Only in our shame and sense of need will we seek the true source of rescue and find the joy of forgiveness and acceptance (Rom. 5:1-8).

Having escaped the utter hopelessness of our previous condition we now are filled with a heart of thanksgiving (Luke 7:47) that compels us to want to serve (II Cor. 5:14-15).

In many ways, we, at times, have veiled the lessons we have just observed. We are not so much ignorant of them as we are guilty of looking more toward Madison Avenue

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techniques of salesmanship and marketing than to the Word and to the testimony. Biblical illiteracy has brought the ignorance of God. We dropped the ball not because of liberalism but because of apathy. The liberalism we all now abhor would never have sprung up as successfully if a void had not been left by Christians who lost their zeal for service.

We cannot go back in time to do a better job, but we can learn a lesson and retrace the path of Isaiah and Simon Peter to renew our zeal now!

The fact that the actions of many brethren are increasingly secular should tell us that Christian character must be restored. We have learned how to divorce, be materialistic and generally ignore the Bible from those of the world. The time has come to rekindle the fire that once burned in our bones that would not let us hold in the truth so that we might again teach the world.

The Bible gives patterns to guide our renewal. Josiah's great restoration movement of II Kings 22-23 should inspire us as a people to arise and reaffirm the truth. The admonition to put off the way of the old man to take up the ways suited to our new birth must instruct us individually to overcome our spiritual lethargy and become strong once again in the strength of the Lord (Eph. 4:17-32; Col. 3:1-17).

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Brethren, we truly stand at a crossroads. Some 100 years ago the church in almost identical fashion so stood. The losses then were horrific because many brethren were lulled into a false sense of security that bred complacency in the area of personal commitment to living the Word. We must do all we can to keep history from repeating itself. If we will allow the Word to once again rule in the heart and do God's will, God's way, then our characteristics will be those of a godly character and our actions those of a people of the Book.

## Notes

## *Chapter Seven*

# **Fellowship – Joys And Limits**

*David P. Brown*



David has been preaching the gospel for almost thirty years • Was born in Camden, Arkansas • Recently began work with the church in Spring, Texas • Has served as director of the Southwest School of Biblical Studies • He received his B.A. and M.Ed. degrees from Oklahoma State University • David and Joann have four children.

### **Introduction**

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin (1 John 1:7).

Any faithful child of God may fellowship any person that the apostles Peter, Paul and John would fellowship! In the above text of 1 John 1:7, John instructs us that fellowship is "in the light." Fellowship, therefore, involves everyone who is "in the light." As long as I "walk in the light," I can fellowship all others who "walk in the light." Such persons can have the same association and relationship with me that fellowship implies. On the other hand, I must withhold fellowship from everyone who

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has never been "in the light" or who has ceased to "walk in the light." Hence, the importance and sobering seriousness of the subject of fellowship is quite evident.

### **The Meaning Of Fellowship**

The English word "fellowship" is the translation of the Greek word "koinonia." It means sharing, communion, partnership, joint-participation.

"Koinonia" is translated by the following terms: "communication," "contribution," "distribution," "to communicate," one time each term. It is translated "communion" in four places and "fellowship" in twelve places.

"Koinoneo" is translated in one place "to be made partaker" and in another "distribute." In four places it is translated "to be a partaker" and in two other places "communicate."

"Koinonos" is translated in one instance "companion" and in another "to have fellowship with." In three places it is translated partner and in five other places "partaker." Hence, we see the Holy Spirit's use of this word family 38 times in the New Testament.

### **God's Laws Of Inclusion And Exclusion**

It must be understood that these two laws directly relate to man's fellowship with God and man's fellowship with man. Not all unity is acceptable to God and not all division is

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sinful (Matt. 10:34; II Cor. 6:17). The fellowship among men that is acceptable to God comes only when unity among men is accomplished by said men doing all things under the authority of Christ as revealed in the New Testament (Col. 3:17; Rom. 10:17; II Cor. 5:7; Phil. 3:16; I Cor. 1:10).

Let us examine **God's Law Of Exclusion**. Fellowship with God is attained when a believing, penitent person is baptized into Christ to obtain the remission of sins (Rom. 10:17; Mark 16:16; Acts 17:30; 2:38; Rom. 6:3-5; Gal. 3:26-27; Acts 2:47; 22:16; I Peter 3:21). When we speak of fellowship with God we may liken it to a vertical line extended from man to God and illustrative of the joint-participation and association that has been made possible by man's reconciliation to God by his obedience to the gospel (Rom. 1:16; I Cor. 15:1-4; Heb. 5:9; Rom. 10:16). Before said baptism one is not in Christ where God has located salvation (II Tim. 2:10; Eph. 1:3). Hence, such a one continues to be guilty of sin and remains a child of the devil.

Once this "vertical" fellowship with God exists **then and only then** is one in a position to extend (or to receive as the case might be) fellowship with all others who are in fellowship with God. This fellowship that Christians enjoy we will call "horizontal" fellowship. Hence, scriptural fellowship cannot be extended but

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from one faithful child of God to another. Just how could children of God scripturally extend family-type privileges to those who are children of the devil??

Let us examine **God's Law Of Exclusion**. When the beliefs and/or practices of an individual member of the Lord's church endanger his own soul and/or unscripturally endangers the souls of others, then he is subject to the proper disciplinary procedure of the church revealed in the New Testament. If he refuses to repent of said beliefs and/or practices, then he must be excluded from the fellowship of the church.

Now that we have set forth God's laws of **inclusion** and **exclusion**, let us more closely examine what it means to "walk in the light." In other words we want to know what the apostle John had in mind when he used the phrase "walk in the light." Knowing that things equal to the same thing are equal to each other helps one understand clearly what John was thinking when he used the words "walk in the light." With this principle in mind, please study Acts 2:42 along with I John 1:7.

And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers (Acts 2:42).

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with



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another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin (1John 1:7).

Having read these two passages please consider the following true/false statements for the purpose of establishing the meaning of the phrase under investigation.

- T F 1. It is possible to "walk in the light" and NOT continue stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine.
- T F 2. It is possible to "continue stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine" and NOT "walk in the light."
- T F 3. It is possible (from God's point of view) to "have fellowship one with another" and not "walk in the light."
- T F 4. It is possible (from God's point of view) to "have fellowship one with another" and NOT continue "stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine."

Statements one and two are false. To "walk in the light" is to "continue stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine" and vice versa. Statements three and four are false. If, from God's point of view, fellowship exists between people **only** when they are in fellowship with Him, statements three and four must be

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FALSE. The conclusion is that to "walk in the light" is the exact same thing as continuing stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine (Acts 2:42).

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12). To Christians, John wrote:

That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full. This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth (1John 1:3-6).

As we notice the totality from the two previous passages (keeping in mind our study of I John 1:7), we come to understand that fellowship is produced by man understanding and obeying God's will. Fellowship exists with those through whom God gave His will. This fellowship is with the Father. It is also with His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. One may claim fellowship with God, but in reality not have said fellowship. If one claims fellowship with God, but he keeps on walking in the darkness, he is a liar, and does not the truth.

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Scriptural fellowship exists only between faithful children of God.

To have fellowship with God one must come into the light and continue to "walk in the light." Fellowship with others is predicated on my coming into the light and continually walking in the light. Anyone else's fellowship with me is contingent on my walking steadfastly in the light and his doing the same. We conclude that the faithful child of God's fellowship is with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the apostles and prophets (men who wrote the New Testament) and with each other. This fellowship is predicated on one's being in the light and walking in the light. To walk in the light is to continue in the apostles' teaching. To walk in darkness is to live contrary to the apostles' teaching.

All of us must take heed to numerous persons also (institutions) that would have us reject: (1) the distinction between children of God and children of the devil; (2) the distinction between the Lord's one true church and the denominations of men. At this time there is a concerted effort to bring "believers" in Christ into Christian fellowship, upon what is called "unity in diversity," rather than upon the basis of plain Bible authority.

### **Unity IN Or Unity AND Diversity**

The words "unity in diversity" is a

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contradiction of terms. Unity is defined "oneness" and diverse means "unlike" (**Webster's 9th New Collegiate Dictionary**). When the definition of these words are substituted for the words themselves, we have: "Oneness in unlikeness." We may as well say "dryness in wetness" or "goodness in badness." With these words taken in their normal usage and paired as we have done them, they are nothing more or less than so much nonsense.

In the words "unity and diversity," we are saying that God's word demands "oneness," "unity" and "sameness" in **obligatory matters**. By obligatory matters we mean those things authorized by God's Word by the various kinds of **direct statements, implication** and/or **examples** (patterns) contained therein. The Bible authorizes in no other ways than the aforementioned ones. And, we must have Bible authority behind every thought, word and action or we sin (Col. 3:17). In fact, whether we realize it or not, in our own communication with one another, direct statements, implications and/or examples (patterns) are the only means whereby any language communicates.

In I Corinthians 1:10 Paul said:

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

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be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment (I Cor. 1:10).

However, this same Paul had such a difference (not the same mind or judgment) with Barnabas over whether to take John Mark on their second preaching tour that they parted company (Acts 15:36-41). Is this the same Paul who wrote the Corinthian brethren and begged them not to divide and to "be perfectly joined together in the same mind and the same judgment"? Did Paul preach one thing and practice something different? The answer is, OF COURSE NOT!

Paul was begging the Corinthian brethren to be one in **matters of obligation** (those things authorized by God, Col. 3:17). Paul and Barnabas did not differ over matters of obligation, but over **optional matters** (different choices available to accomplish what God in His Word has authorized). Unless there is authorization, there is no obligation. Where there is no obligation, there can be no options. Without options, there can be no expeditious choice(s) available to man from which he may choose.

In local church business the elders are to make the final decision in **optional** matters (Acts 20:28; Heb. 13:7, 17; I Peter 5:1-3). Elders, therefore, must know the difference in obligatory and optional matters. Elders **must**

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understand that in choosing which option(s) is best that they are seeking the option(s) that is most **expedient** in getting done what God in His authoritative Word has obligated the church to do. To expedite anything is to discharge the obligation in the quickest and best way possible. Hence, when we speak of "in the quickest and the best way possible" we are speaking of the element of **advantage**. The option settled upon by the collective decision of the eldership does not expedite the discharging of the obligation unless there is the element of advantage inherent in the option(s) chosen.

Regarding the "sharp contention" that resulted in Paul and Barnabas parting company, there is no evidence that either one of these two great servants of God sinned in motive or action (I John 3:4; James 4:17; Gal. 5:6). In fact, after their separation the church in Antioch of Syria backed them (Acts 15:40). Out of their disagreement over whether it was or was not the most expedient (advantageous) optional choices to take John Mark, two preaching tours emerged. Hence, unity, oneness or sameness **must** exist in all matters of obligation AND diversity or difference is **allowed** in those matters where God did not specify who, where, when and/or how the thing authorized is to be done. When elders do not understand these principles or ascertaining

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Bible authority only confusion can result. We hasten to sadly say that the church today evidences that many elders have no idea, or at best they have a corrupted view of the key area in which they function and how it affects the church. If the elders have very little or no idea of their sphere of operation and how to discharge it, what does the average member understand about the work of elders?

Today, those who advocate "unity in diversity" are trying to teach doctrines that are designed to treat obligatory matters as if they were optional. They teach that you can "opt" to observe the Lord's Supper on Sunday or any other day. If it violates your conscience or if it is against your tradition to observe the Lord's Supper on Thursday night, then do not do it, but do not divide the church over your differences. If you cannot use mechanical instruments of music in worship to God, that is fine! But just do not separate yourself from those who do. In fact, just about everything that God has obligated man to do has been dealt with in the above erroneous manner. The result is that false doctrines are taught which loose men from what God in the Bible has bound upon them (various forms of liberalism) and bound men with what God in His Word has not bound upon them (various forms of "anti-ism"). This is nothing more or less than the basic premise that undergirds

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and perpetuates denominationalism.

There can be no God-approved unity, or true unity, or fellowship that is not founded on and sustained by Bible authority. We readily see the need of properly constituted authority in the everyday affairs of life. How much more so is such true and necessary in matters pertaining to our eternal destiny (John 12:48; 14:15).

To treat obligatory matters as optional, or vice versa, results in "a unity" as well as "a division" that is not authorized by the Bible. We, therefore, find ourselves fellowshiping persons not in fellowship with God and vice versa. Hence, the tremendous importance of why men **must** learn and employ the principles of "rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Tim. 2:15).

### **Fellowship Or The Lack Of It Between Churches**

The churches under consideration are not human denominational churches. We are considering the Lord's church. There are three usages of the word "church" in the New Testament. The word "church" is used by the Holy Spirit to refer to the one institution of the saved (Matt. 16:18; Acts 2:47; 20:28; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4; Col. 1:18). It is also employed to identify the largest of the saved in any geographical location (Rom. 1:7; I Cor. 1:2;



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Gal. 1:2; Eph. 1:1; Rev. 1:4). Sometimes it is not so designated (Rom. 16:16). Finally the word "church" is used in an assembled sense (I Cor. 11:18,20,33; 14:19,23,26,28). Of course, the word "church" in its assembled sense is referring to the "local" church assembling or coming together. The words "church" and "congregation" are synonymous. However, in the United States we have tended to use the word "congregation" when referring to a "local" church. We shall use both the words "church" and "congregation" in referring to the "local" church.

Each church in any geographic location is **autonomous**. By this is meant that each church runs its own affairs, with Christ as head, through the organizational structure for each church revealed in the New Testament (Phil. 1:1; Acts 10:32). As studied earlier, Christ has delegated to the elders (bishops, shepherds, presbyters) of each "local" church the authority to get done, in the quickest and best way possible, the work He has authorized (obligated) the church to do (Acts 20:28; I Peter 5:1-4). Again, we emphasize that the authorized fellowship existing between and among Christians is made possible ONLY by their faithful adherence to the doctrine of Christ (Eph. 1:3; Gal. 3:17; II John 9-11; Col. 3:17; I Cor. 4:6, ASV; I John 1:7).

The first church of Christ on the earth

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was the church in Jerusalem (Acts 2). **All others came into existence after it!** Was the Lord's church in Jerusalem authorized by the Scriptures to extend the fellowship enjoyed between its members to other churches such as the church in Antioch of Syria (Acts 13:1)? May one church **extend** fellowship to another church without giving up its own autonomy or usurping the autonomy of the other? If so, **where is the New Testament authority for such?**

Any fellowship between churches **MUST** respect and adhere to the authorized organizational structure of each church as revealed in the New Testament (Col. 3:17). Therefore, one church's elders cannot dictate and control another churches elders and, thereby, rule said church. Under the authority of Christ exercised through the teaching of the New Testament, each eldership **sets the policy of the church they oversee or superintend.**

Please consider the following example. Church "A" has been in existence for 30 years. In a neighboring community, there is no church. Over the years the few Christians that have been in the town have had their membership with congregations in nearby communities. In time, through conversions and faithful brethren moving into said town, the Christians residing in the area decide to form

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a congregation according to the New Testament pattern. This they do. We shall call it church "B."

Is church "A" authorized by the New Testament to extend fellowship to church "B" and vice versa, because each church is walking in the light of God's truth (I John 1:7). By this it is meant that churches "A" and "B" are continuing "stedfastly in the apostles doctrine" (Acts 2:42). Both churches are abiding in "the doctrine of Christ,"; thereby they have "both the Father and the Son' (II John 9). Each one is practicing the principles implied by the direct statement of Colossians 3:17.

It is obvious that it is impossible for Christians in different congregations to have the close, intimate fellowship with one another that Christians of the same congregation enjoy. They are separate by the autonomous structure of the church, and thus, a close personal association and involvement with each other. Also, the expeditious efforts determined by the elders of each congregation in discharging the obligations for which God holds the church responsible vary from church to church. Hence, it is impossible for Christians who submit to the elders of the church in which they are members to be as involved in the works of another church with a different work program set out by a different eldership.

Does this mean that there is no fellowship

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between members of different congregations? ABSOLUTELY NOT. All this means is that Christians MUST respect and abide by the New Testament teaching concerning the organization and autonomy of the church. Does this rule our cooperation (fellowship) between autonomous congregations? Of course not. If one Christian can assist another Christian in doing what the Bible designates to be the responsibility of each Christian which is peculiar to and done ONLY because one is a Christian, a congregation (a multiplicity of Christians) may do the same. Please study the following scriptures regarding this matter (Col. 3:17; Acts 2:42; Phil. 1:5; 4:16,18; Rom. 15:30,31; I Cor. 16:1-3; II Cor. 8:18,19,23,24; 9:1-15; James 1:27).

When fellowship is extended from one church to another, for the scriptural reasons already noted, it is a "once in fellowship, always in fellowship" relationship regardless of the false doctrine one of the churches may come to believe, practice and propagate? Remember the Only reason that fellowship can exist between congregations in the first place is that each congregation (the persons comprising said churches) were first of all in fellowship with God by their faithful adherence to God's word. If such had not been the case, a faithful church would never have had the biblical authority to extend said

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fellowship (Col. 3:17).

The biblical rule or principle that authorizes individual Christians within a church to fellowship each other is the same rule that allows sister congregations to be in or out of fellowship with another. Again, we affirm that what is done by a Christian that is peculiar to and done only because one is a Christian is that which may be done by a congregation of Christians. Would someone attempt to prove from the scriptures how the organizational structure of the church makes null and void the New Testament principles regarding fellowship? If so, I suppose that the church of which I am a member continues to be in fellowship with the Independent Christian Church. After all, "they used to be us and we used to be them." The passing of time has no bearing on any principle of truth. If, therefore, it is a sin for one church to disfellowship another church, then the implications is that the church of which I am a member continues to be in fellowship with the Independent Christian Churches.

Faithful persons cannot be in fellowship with unfaithful persons whether individually or collectively. If faithful church "A" (a multiplicity of members of the body of Christ) that is faithful to God, may remain in fellowship with unfaithful church "B" (a multiplicity of members of the body of Christ) that is

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unfaithful to god, just where is the New Testament authority for doing so? In discharging their responsibilities to those they superintend, faithful elders must lead, guide, and direct the church concerning who is in fellowship with God and who is not. We would think a shepherd wise who would isolate a sick sheep from his own flock lest they become infected by its disease. Would we call that same shepherd wise if he knew that another shepherds flock was spiritually sick, but having no jurisdiction over his fellow shepherd's flock he concluded that he must do nothing to keep his sheep away from the sick flock.

The organizational structure of the one universal church into autonomous churches in various geographic locations with a plurality of elders over each church does not nullify the the teaching of the New Testament concerning the extending or withdrawing of fellowship.

That which implies a false doctrine is itself false. Truth implies truth. Hence, to teach that church "A" cannot withdraw the fellowship it once extended to church "B" because said church was faithful to God, is to teach a principle that permits the faithful to fellowship the unfaithful. By implication such a view is affirming that faithful church "A" if forever in fellowship with church "B" regardless of what

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church "B" believes or practices! In other words, church "A" may extend fellowship to church "B" solely on the basis that church "B" is faithful to God, but church "A" may not withdraw fellowship from church "B" because church "B" has become unfaithful to God. Who can believe such a thing?

The next logical question would be, how does one know that a congregation is out of fellowship with God? The answer is, when a congregation with deliberate purpose of forethought engages and willfully persists in anything that is contrary to the doctrine of Christ, said congregation does not have God in the doing of it (II John 9-11). When those who set the policy of the church (the elders, or where there are no elders, the men) deliberately with willful forethought guide the church into unauthorized acts, they sin in so doing and cause those who follow their false policies also to sin. If they refuse to be corrected by the Bible, they are not fit for fellowship with God, nor, therefore, His faithful people. Such is made clear by our Lord's letters to the seven churches of Asia and Paul's letter to the Corinthians (Rev. 2,3).

Paul commanded, "A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject" (Titus 3:10). Would someone please attempt to explain why this would not apply to a plurality of heretical elders or the people

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under their oversight? It makes no difference whether the members are in agreement with them or not. Some people do not have enough spiritual concern for what is right and wrong to fill a thimble, and thus, they just go right along with whatever the elders feed them.

Someone may say, "We have no example in the New Testament of one church withdrawing fellowship from a sister congregation; therefore, we are not authorized to do such." An example is not the only way the scriptures authorize! Thus, there is no merit whatsoever to such an argument. Remember, the scriptures not only authorize by example, but also by direct statements and implication. That which proves too much proves nothing. The Bible no where teaches anything that would authorize an individual Christian or a scripturally organized multiplicity of individual Christians to be in fellowship with an unfaithful child of God or an organized or unorganized multiplicity of unfaithful children of God. If someone thinks otherwise, show us the Scripture that directly says it, implies it and/or is an example of it.

For those who are still not convinced that one church may withdraw fellowship from a church to which they have extended fellowship, please consider the following situation. We know of at least three church buildings that house at least two congregations



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in each building. In each one of the buildings there is one Anglo congregation and one Hispanic congregation. The only connection that the Anglo churches have with the Hispanic churches is that the Anglo churches support the Hispanic preachers and own the buildings where they meet. If one of these churches in the same building begins to teach a false doctrine, and neither one can withdraw fellowship from the other, then they both could remain in the exact same relationship they had when both believed and practiced the same thing. Knowing that we must have Biblical authority for everything that we believe or practice (Col. 3:17); and certain brethren believe one church may not withdraw fellowship from another church, just how would the faithful brethren in this case scripturally deal with the unfaithful brethren? Remember, that which implies a false doctrine is itself false. In other words, that which is true cannot imply that which is false.

### **Conclusion**

Faithful children of God **may** fellowship anyone that the apostles John and Paul would fellowship. Faithful children of God **may not** fellowship anyone that the apostles John and Paul would **not** fellowship (II Thess. 3:6).

# Notes

# **TheChurch ThatJesusBuilt**



## *Chapter Eight*

# **The One True Church That Christ Built**

*Perry B. Cotham*



Perry has preached in every state in America and on all inhabited continents of the world (over 60 nations) •• A graduate of Freed-Hardeman College and Murray State University •• Began full-time local work in Oklahoma in 1934 •• World-wide evangelistic work since 1972 •• Perry and Teresa live in Grand Prairie, Texas.

In the later part of our Lord's personal ministry He came into the area of northern Palestine, near the city of Caesarea Philippi, and while there He asked His disciples, "Whom do men say that I the son of man am?" After receiving various answers, He then asked them personally, "But whom say ye that I am?" Simon Peter answered confidently, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:13-16).

And Jesus answered and said unto him, 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).

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The purpose of this lecture is to describe and identify the one true church that Jesus built. Many today are confused on this subject, others are in doubt. Let us study the Scriptures and learn what they teach concerning the church that Christ established. No mere man ever had Divine authority to originate a church

### **Marks Of Identity Of Christ's Church**

First, we must know the **time** and the **place** of the beginning of the Lord's church. When Jesus made the statement to Peter, recorded in Matthew 16:18, the church had not been built. "Will build" is future tense.

The Scriptures teach that the church began on the day of Pentecost, following the resurrection and ascension of Christ, in the city of Jerusalem. Before the day of Pentecost, the church or kingdom is always spoken of in Scripture as being in the future. For example, during the ministry of John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ, His message was, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:2). Jesus in His ministry preached the same:

From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand (Matt. 4:17).

And,

Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the

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gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel (Mark 1:14-15).

What time? **The time prophesied by the prophets** of old regarding the time and place of the beginning of the Lord's church or kingdom here on earth. Daniel had said concerning the world kingdoms, that in the days of the fourth kingdom, or world empire (which was the Roman Empire), "the God of heaven" would "set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed ... it shall stand for ever" (Dan. 2:44; cf. Heb.12:28). The prophet Zechariah, speaking of Jerusalem and the beginning place of the church, declared for the Lord: "My house shall be built in it" (Zech. 1:16). "My house," the "house of God ... is the church of the living God" (I Tim. 3:15). Isaiah and Micah likewise prophesied that "the word of the Lord" would go forth "from Jerusalem" (Isa. 2:2-3; Micah 4:1-2). Jerusalem was to be the beginning place. Thus the Lord taught His disciples during His earthly ministry to pray, "Thy kingdom come" (Matt. 6:10).

When Jesus, during His personal ministry, sent out the seventy, He told them to say, "The kingdom of God is come **nigh** unto you" (Luke 10:9). Too, He told his disciples that the kingdom would come with power, and

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would come during the lifetime of some of them:

And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power (Mark 9:1).

Later, after His resurrection and prior to His ascension, He said to His disciples, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you" (Acts 1:8), and also for them to tarry "in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47). This was fulfilled, as Acts 2:1-4 records that the Holy Spirit came to the apostles on the day of Pentecost, while they were waiting in Jerusalem. That was when the power came, and also when the kingdom came. Therefore, it was in the right place, Jerusalem; upon the right foundation, Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:4; I Cor. 3:11); with the proper preachers, the inspired apostles; and with the gospel message, "repentance and remission of sins" (Acts 2:38), the church, the kingdom of our Lord was established.<sup>1</sup>

Then after Pentecost, the church is always spoken of as being actually in existence, the saved being added to it (Acts 2:47). From this time on we read in the Bible of the church being in different localities, as in Jerusalem, in Philippi, etc. While recounting his reasons



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for going and preaching to the Gentiles, Peter, some eight years after Pentecost, referred to this great day as "the beginning" (Acts 11:15) – the beginning of the church of Christ, the church we read of in the New Testament.

Thus, any church, or religious organization claiming to be the Lord's church, that had its beginning at some other time or place or upon some other foundation or with some other person cannot be the true church of our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ promised to build only one church. He said: "I will build my church," not churches. Therefore, He purchased only one church with His blood (Acts 20:28; Eph. 5:25).

**Second, the terms of membership** in the Lord's church are so important. The membership of the church is composed of only the saved.

And the Lord added to the church daily,  
such as should be saved (or, those who  
were being saved, NASB) (Acts 2:47).

The Lord added all the saved, and none but the saved. The church of Christ is the saved, the body of baptized believers (Acts 2:36-41). The word "church" means "the called out of God,"<sup>2</sup> people who are called by the gospel (II Thess. 2:14). When the gospel was preached and men heard it, believed it, and obeyed it, they were then members of the Lord's church.<sup>5</sup> The same acts that made them saved, children of God, made them at the

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same time church members. There is no such thing taught in the New Testament as one becoming a saved person, a Christian, and then later, by some other formal act, becoming a member of the church.

The church is not a part of the saved, as people often speak of a denomination. The Lord's church is not a denomination. Christ's church is revealed in the New Testament but human denominations are not once mentioned there. So, one does not "join" the church. When a person obeys the gospel the Lord saves and adds him to the church, that is, Christ's church, not a denomination.

There is no such thing mentioned in the Bible as infant church membership, or infant baptism. Infants cannot fulfill the conditions of church membership. There is no Bible authority for infant baptism. Furthermore, only immersion in water, to a penitent believer, for the remission of sins, constitutes scriptural baptism (Mark 16:15-16; Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 2:38; 22:16; 8:35-39; Rom. 6:3-4). Sprinkling water on an innocent body and calling that baptism is unauthorized in Scriptures. They have no sins to be forgiven (Matt. 19:14).

In most religious organizations founded by men, salvation is taught to be by "faith only" and people are oftentimes urged to have some kind of a "religious experience" by which they may know that they are saved. But Jesus

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taught otherwise. He commanded that the gospel be preached throughout the whole world, and said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). Some teach salvation by "grace only," but the Bible teaches that one is saved by the grace of God when he, by faith, meets the Lord's conditions of salvation (Eph. 2:8). God's grace does not cancel out man's obligation to obey (Heb. 5:9; Matt. 7:21; Rev. 22:14).

The true church teaches the same terms of salvation and church membership today as taught by Christ and His inspired apostles. It practices the "one baptism" (Eph. 4:5) as taught in the New Testament, immersion in water for salvation or remission of sins. It teaches that it is essential to be a member of the Lord's church to be saved; that Christ is the Saviour of mankind (Matt. 1:21), and the realm in which salvation is found is in Christ or His church. Paul wrote:

Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory (II Tim. 2:10).

Paul, to the Ephesians, said that "all spiritual blessings" are "in Christ" (Eph. 1:3), and that "Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body" (Eph. 5:23). So if Christ is the savior of the body, the church, then it is necessary for one to be in

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the church in order to be saved. Today, any church that does not teach faith, repentance, confession, and baptism (immersion in water) for (unto) the remission of sins, and that membership in the Lord's church is essential for salvation, cannot be the one true church that Jesus built (cf. Acts 8:12).

**Third**, the simple **creed** of the church Jesus built contains one article of faith, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (Matt. 16:15-16; John 1:49). Peter preached this wonderful message to the thousands on Pentecost (Acts 2) and to the household of Cornelius (Acts 10); Philip preached it to the Samaritans and to the Ethiopian officer (Acts 8); Paul preached it to the Corinthians and to many others (Acts 18:1-8; I Cor. 2:1-3; Rom. 15:18-19).

In the early church there were no human law-making bodies such as denominational synods, conferences, etc., drawing up human creeds and binding them on people. The early disciples "continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine" (Acts 2:42). The Holy Spirit guided the apostles into "all of the truth" (John 16:13, ASV), and they left us a record of it (John 20:30-31; Eph. 3:3-5). Peter wrote that the Lord "hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (II Peter 1:3). Therefore, Jude, near the end of the first century, urged Christians to "earnestly contend for the faith

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which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3).

If a creed should contain less than the Bible, it would not contain enough; if it contained more than the Bible, it would contain too much; and if it contained what the Bible says, we do not need it. So why write creeds? Paul declared:

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 (II Tim. 3:16-17).

The New Testament is all of the teaching necessary for the church throughout the ages. It is the only Divine rule of faith and practice.<sup>4</sup> This system of teaching is in that sense the "creed" of the Lord's church, the "creed" that will never need revision, for it is eternal truth (Matt. 24:35). The true church is directed by the Bible.

**Fourth, the organization and government** of the church, clearly stated in the Scriptures, upholds Christ as the head of the church, not some mere man (Eph. 1:22; Col. 1:18). In the apostolic days each local congregation was an independent unit, governed by men called elders (presbyters), or bishops (overseers), or pastors (shepherds) (acts 20:17,28; Eph. 4:11; Titus 1:5,7). In his

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letter to the Philippians, Paul saluted "all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons" (Phil. 1:1). When fully organized, elders were ordained "in every church" (Acts 14:23). Paul addressed the elders of the church at Ephesus, admonishing them:

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 (Acts 20:28).

These spiritual shepherds of the local congregation were to feed, lead, and guard the flock of God (cf. I Peter 5:2-4; Heb. 13:17). The Holy Spirit required certain moral and spiritual qualifications for these men to possess before they were selected by the congregation and appointed as elders (I Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-11).

The deacons were special servants of the church. Their work was more of a temporal nature. Their qualifications are given in I Timothy 3:8-13. In Acts 6:3,5 mention is made of "seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom," being selected to attend to the daily ministrations of the widows. Deacons serve under the oversight of the elders of the church.

There is no scriptural foundation

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whatsoever for an episcopacy, or an ecclesiastical hierarchy, with earthly headquarters, giving directions to the local church. In the New Testament, each church was separate and apart from every other congregation in its government, although there was voluntary cooperation and assistance at times (Acts 11:27-30; II Cor. 8:19,23). Each eldership had authority in its own congregation, and in no other. They made decisions in matters of expediency for the church, as they served under Christ.

However, there came a "falling away" (II Thess. 2:3-9), or departure "from the faith" (I Tim. 4:1-3). Boniface III was declared to be the Pope or head of the church in A.D. 606, which was definitely a change in church government from the New Testament (cf. Acts 20:29-30). There were further digressions when denominations came. Denominations are religious organizations unauthorized by the teaching of the Bible, and many of their doctrines are contrary to the Word of God. Their church government bears not the slightest resemblance to that of the church that Jesus built. Practically all man-made churches have some form of super-congregational church government.<sup>5</sup>

In our efforts as a people, devoted to following the Divine pattern and restoring the true church of Christ today in all parts of the

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world, there has been a motto dear to our hearts:

**Where the Bible speaks,  
we speak, and  
where the Bible is silent,  
we are silent.**

The true church that Jesus built, when fully organized, will have qualified men functioning as elders and deacons in each local congregation. This is one of the identifying marks of the true New Testament church.

**Fifth**, the **worship** of the true church that Christ built was "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). The Jerusalem church "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine (teaching, ASV) and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). The church at Troas, having been taught by inspired men, came together on the first day of the week "to break bread" (Acts 20:7). They come for the purpose of observing the Lord's Supper and to worship on "the Lord's day" (Rev. 1:10). After that Paul preached unto them. The Lord's Supper is a commemorative ordinance that was observed by the early Christians every first day of the week. It looks backward to the cross. Jesus plainly said, "This do in remembrance of me" (I Cor. 11:24). At the



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same time, the supper looks forward to Christ's second coming. Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come (I Cor. 11:26).

No church can be the true New Testament church today that neglects to follow this apostolic example. Christians must partake of this memorial feast in a worthy manner, "discerning the Lord's body" (I Cor. 11:27-29). So, each member of the church, in partaking of the bread – emblematic of the body of Christ – and of the fruit of the vine – emblematic of Christ's shed blood – thinks of how much His own redemption has cost (Matt. 26:26-28); but he also thinks of the time of the Lord's glorious return, when Jesus will take His faithful disciples to that eternal home of the soul (John 14:2-3; cf. I Cor. 10:16).

Giving was another item of worship. To the church at Corinth, Paul instructed:

... as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him ... (I Cor. 16:1-2).

A Christian is to contribute to the Lord's work of his money, cheerfully, as he has been blessed in his labors, motivated by the fact that Christ died on the cross for his salvation (II Cor. 8:9; 9:7; Rom. 5:8).

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In worship, the Lord's church sang "praises and hymns and spiritual songs" (Col. 3:16). After Christ had instituted the Lord's Supper, He and His disciples sang "an hymn" and "went out into the mount of Olives" (Matt. 26:30). Paul and Silas, in jail at Philippi, at midnight, "prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them" (Acts 16:25).

Mechanical instruments of music were never used as a part of New Testament worship. Christ did not authorize them, no apostle ever commanded them, and there is no example of any apostolic church that ever used them. The melody was made from the heart to the Lord. Paul declared:

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

Mechanical instruments of music began to be introduced into the worship of some of the congregations in the seventh century, A.D. As time went on, they gradually became more popular. But Christians are admonished not to add to God's Word or go beyond that which is written (I Cor. 4:6, ASV; II John 9; Rev. 22:18-19). They are to walk "by faith, not by sight" (II Cor. 5:7), and "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17; cf. Col. 3:17).

God has always expected man to obey

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Him in all things, including worship. When God tells us what to do, that automatically excludes everything else. The Old Testament teaches by the example of Nadab and Abihu that one must not use in worship that which the Lord has not authorized. They offered on the altar "strange fire before the Lord, **which he commanded them not**" (or, "which he had not commanded them, ASV) (Lev. 10:1). As a result of their disobedience, "there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord" (Lev. 10:2; cf. Rom. 15:4; Heb. 2:3-4). Since God specified singing, that excludes adding mechanical instruments of music. The writer of Hebrews instructed Christians:

By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name (Heb. 13:15; cf., in the midst of the church will I sing praise, Heb. 2:12).

Prayer was likewise vital to the worship of the Lord's church. "Prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for" Peter who had been placed in prison to be executed, and after James had been killed by Herod (Acts 12:5). Paul admonished Christians:

Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you (I Thess. 5:17-18; cf. I Tim. 2:8).

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Christians pray in the name of Christ (John 16:23-24), a "giving thanks always for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father" (Eph. 5:20, ASV). Prayer is powerful. James wrote:

The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much (James 5:16; cf. 1 John 3:22; 5:14).

Thus, the five items of worship of the church that Christ built, as mentioned in the New Testament, are (1) teaching and/or preaching God's Word, (2) the Lord's Supper on each first day of the week, (3) giving, (4) singing, and (5) prayer. These acts of worship constitute another one of the identifying characteristics of the true church of Christ. If a church does not follow this Divine pattern of worship it cannot be the Lord's church.

**Sixth**, we identify the Lord's church by its scriptural **names**. The church belongs to Christ, since He built it and purchased it with His own blood (Acts 20:28, ASV). It is proper to speak of the church as "Christ's church," or "the church of Christ," and the local congregations as "the churches of Christ" (Rom. 16:16). All of these congregations were of the same faith and practice; they were not different denominations; Christ built only **ONE** church, which is His body (Eph. 4:4; 1:22-23;

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I Cor. 12:20). "Church of Christ" is not a proper name, therefore, in that sense, but a descriptive term with a prepositional phrase showing ownership. Paul also referred to the Lord's people at Corinth as "The church of God which is at Corinth" (I Cor. 1:2; II Cor. 2:1; cf. Heb. 12:22-23).

The followers of Jesus, as learners or students, were first called "disciples" (Acts 6:1,7), and later "Christians."

And the disciples were called  
**CHRISTIANS** first at Antioch (Acts 11:26).

The name "Christians" was the "new name" given to the followers of Christ, in fulfillment of prophecy (Isa. 56:5; 62:2; 65:15); they were Divinely called Christians. King Agrippa said at the conclusion of one of Paul's great speeches,

Almost thou persuadest me to be a  
**CHRISTIAN** (Acts 26:28).

Peter wrote to the persecuted saints:

Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf (I Peter 4:16).

Three times the word "Christian" is found in the New Testament. The early followers of Christ did not wear human names (I Cor. 1:10-13). They were referred to as "saints," "believers," "disciples," "children of God," "Christians," but never by any of our present-day denominational names. The church is one

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body, and individual Christians make up that body (I Cor. 12:14-27). The glorious name "Christian" expresses in a beautiful way the believer's relationship to Christ. He is "one of Christ's." If a person truly loves the Lord, there is one name that he will want to wear and that is that Divinely appointed name that honors the Saviour – "Christian" – and he will speak of himself as being a member of "the church of Christ" (John 14:21, 23; I John 2:3-5). This is another one of the identifying marks of the true church which Jesus built.

**Finally**, the Lord gave to the church before His ascension a great **mission**. It was a world-wide program:

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 (Matt. 28:19-20).

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).

The Great Commission is the work of the church: teach, baptize, teach. The early Christians were intensively evangelistic. They "went every where preaching the word" (Acts

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8:4). No church can be a truly New Testament church today unless it believes in telling others the story of Jesus; it cannot be anti-missionary, or anti-evangelistic. The world is her great mission field. The church must take the message of Christ to the masses. The church is "the pillar and ground of the truth" (I Tim. 3:15). We are more able to do it than many realize (Eph. 3:20). The church of Jesus Christ is the greatest institution in the world, and her great mission is to lead men in the way of salvation, to eternal life.<sup>6</sup> Really, her mission is like Christ's mission to this earth. Jesus came "to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). During His personal ministry, he "went about doing good" (Acts 10:38; cf. 1:1). The work of the church, therefore, is three-fold in nature: (1) preach the gospel to alien sinners and baptize them; (2) then strengthen and edify the converts in the Lord's work so they can live righteous lives and finally go to heaven (I Peter 2:2; II Peter 1:3-11; 3:18; Rev. 2:10); and (3) help those in physical need by deeds of charity (Matt. 25:31-46; Acts 2:44-45; 4:34-45; 11:27-30; Rom. 15:25-26; Gal. 6:10). It is a work of evangelism, edification, and benevolence to the glory of God.

The church should teach men to live on a high plane of moral and righteous living (Rom. 12:1-2; I Cor. 6:9-10; Eph. 5:3-7; Titus

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2:11-12). We are living in a sinful world (I John 5:19). No church can be true to the Lord's command that does not uphold "all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27) in preaching the gospel, God's power to save (Rom. 1:16), to the whole world (II Tim. 2:2; 4:1-5).

### **Conclusion**

By observing these seven marks of the church that Jesus built, as described in the Bible, we can identify the one true church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful churches of Christ today are identical with – not similar to – the Lord's church as revealed in the Scriptures. If people will follow this Divine pattern in any place, at any time, they will have the same church which Christ established. The Word of God is the seed of the kingdom (Luke 8:11). If the same seed is planted in this century, as in the first century, it will produce the same one true church it produced in the beginning.

### **Endnotes**

1 The church was not built upon Peter, but rather upon the truth which Peter expressed – namely, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of God," Peter's confession. There are three Greek words in Matthew 16:18 that need to be carefully noted: (1) **Petros** – translated "Peter" – a noun, masculine gender, meaning a rock, a piece of rock; (2) **Petra** – translated "rock" – a noun, feminine gender, meaning the bed-rock, a massive rock; and (3) **Ecclesia** – translated "church" – a noun, feminine



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gender, meaning an assembly called together, here the word means the assembly of the Lord's people called out in a spiritual sense from the world, God's called-out people. The church is not a material building.

2 The word "church" is used in the New Testament in three different meanings: (1) The one universal institution (organism) of all the saved (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 1:23; 5:23); (2) the church in certain geographical locations, the aggregate number of baptized believers in any given place (Rom. 16:16; I Cor. 1:2); and, (3) the church in an assembled sense, an assembly of Christians for worship (I Cor. 11:18,20,22; 14:19,23,26,28,34,35); the Corinthian brethren came together "in the church," which literally means "in the assembly." J. H. Thayer says: "... the whole Corinthian church was accustomed to assemble in one and the same place ..." (**Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament** (New York: American Book Company, 1889), p. 196.)

3 Paul taught that **ALL** Christians have been baptized: "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (I Cor. 12:13). Therefore, in order to be saved one must be baptized, and there are no unbaptized Christians.

4 The first general creed was the Nicene Creed, A.D. 325.

5 For example, the World Council of Churches, based in Geneva, Switzerland, is the world's largest ecumenical organization. Its members include more than 300 Protestant and other orthodox denominations around the globe.

6 There are many fields today that "are white already to harvest" (John 4:35). The Lord has recently provided open doors in the former Soviet Union and

Eastern Europe (I Cor. 16:9). Asia is a great mission field. The printed page, radio, and television are the communication mediums of our generation.

## *Chapter Nine*

# **The Church – Unique, Aggressive, Militant**

*Jim Laws*



Jim presently works with the Getwell church in Memphis, Tennessee • Raised in Murfreesboro, Tennessee • He is vastly involved as a speaker for the International Gospel Hour • Associate Editor of the **Spiritual Sword** • Has taught in public schools in Tennessee, and at the Christian college level • He has two children.

The Bible, in a unique and wonderful way, discusses for us the church. When Jesus said, "Upon this rock I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18), He was using a word which carries with it special significance. That ancient Greek word, *ekklesia*, which is most often translated "church" in our English translations, is one which refers to people. It literally means "the called out" or "assembly." In ancient times the word had special reference to calling of certain citizens out of the total population to serve as juries in court cases. In order to prevent bribery and corruption the ancient juries were very large, often consisting of five hundred and one citizens. This large number would be called for jury duty. Later on, when Christianity was established, this important

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word would be used by Christ and the apostles to convey the idea that the gospel of Christ would be preached to the whole world and that those who responded to the Lord would become His church, His assembly, His called out body of people.

Therefore, the church is composed of people. The church is the people. The church cannot exist apart from people. As the church was established on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), the Bible says,

... And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved (Acts 2:47).

The Bible teaches that the church is composed of people and not mortar, brick, and stone.

And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things (Acts 5:11).

Obviously fear cannot come upon a building, or an organization, but only upon people. The Bible says of Saul,

As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison (Acts 8:3).

The church is composed of people and it is important that we never forget this important point.

It is also equally important to keep in

mind that the word church found in the New Testament is used in different senses. For instance, the word "church" carries with it a universal type connotation. As in the Matthew 16:18, Jesus is referring to all the saved in all the world (Eph. 5:23,25). The word is sometimes used to refer to a local congregation of people, for instance, the saved of one community. Paul's reference to "the church of God which is at Corinth" serves as an example of such (I Cor. 1:1-2).

From this brief introductory statement, the reader can see that this work is concerned with the church you read about from the pages of the Bible. It will take a biblical look at three very important characteristics regarding the church of the New Testament. It will look at the church of the New Testament as far as its **uniqueness**, its **aggressiveness**, and its **militancy**. It will encourage each one to be more like that church which we read about from the pages of our Bible.

### **The UNIQUENESS Of The New Testament Church**

There are some who would look upon the church as merely a type of human organization. Others look upon it as a type of social club. Some have the mistaken view that the church is a type of activist group to better organize themselves from their own political

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viewpoint. Then there are others who think that any type of religious group with a building and with religious trappings is to be accepted as "God's people." Such are false concepts of the New Testament church.

The church you read about from the pages of the New Testament is unique. When one understands this point correctly then they too will come to see just how important the church is to God and how important it ought to be to them. It is unique because of its origin. The church began in the infinite mind of God and not in the finite mind of man. No one on earth dreamed of establishing the church of the New Testament. It was God's idea and it was God's idea from the very beginning. Paul wrote,

Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: 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 (Eph. 3:8-11).

That "eternal purpose" as Paul describes it refers to the fact of the church's existence

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in the Divine mind of God from the very beginning and not in the mind of man. Man was lost and God set about the Divine plan for man's redemption. He selected Abraham and eventually the Hebrew race as the means of salvation. The old law was given as a schoolmaster to bring men to Christ. Christ lived and died upon the cross as God's only begotten Son. He was resurrected from the dead and reigns as King of His kingdom today. The church was established on the first Pentecost following the resurrection of Christ from the dead and men and women were added to it according to God's Divine plan. The church is unique. It is not merely a human organization. It is not an afterthought, as some would argue. It had a glorious beginning, in the mind of the Almighty and not in the mind of man.

The church of the New Testament is unique because it was Christ who made it possible. Jesus is described as the Divine builder of the church. Without the life, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, the church could never have been a reality. He is, indeed, the Divine builder (Matt. 16:18) of His church with God as its Divine architect (Eph. 3:10-11). Our Lord came fulfilling the law and prophets (Matt. 5:17), making possible the new and better covenant. He was introduced by John as the "lamb of God which

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take away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). His death brought about the remission of sins (Heb. 9:26). His death made justification possible (Rom. 4:25). After Christ ascended back to the Father (Acts 1:9), He sent the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-5; 2:1-4). With the coming of the Spirit came the promised power (Acts 1:8), and with the power came the kingdom (Mark 9:1). Consequently, the church, God's kingdom, was established.

Jesus is described as the foundation of the church. Isaiah writes of God laying in Zion a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation (Isa. 28:16), and Peter assures us of the fulfillment of that promise in Christ (Acts 4:11-12). Without Christ, the church would not be possible, as He is its foundation.

Jesus is described as the head of the church. He occupies this unique position. This was so appointed by God the Father, who,

... 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 (Eph. 1:21-22; Col. 1:18).

Jesus, as God's Son, is the only head there is for the church. He, as the head of the church, has all authority over the church (Matt. 28:18-20), thus, there is no room in the Christian service for any conferences, synods, councils, or papal dogmas to speak in an authoritative

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way for the Church of the New Testament. The Church of the New Testament is unique from modern day denominationalism.

The church of the New Testament is unique in that you can read about her from the pages of the Bible. As one looks across the religious scene of our day, he sees a proliferation of denominations, causing greater confusion for the individual asking, "How can I know which church is right?" Division and discord has caused this confusion. However, the Word of God holds the key. The church I believe in is well-defined in the Bible. We have only to turn to the Bible to read about the church which belongs to Christ. In so doing, we can be sure and certain of the course we are to follow.

The church of the New Testament is unique because of its biblical designations. It was described as the church (Matt. 16:18; 18:17), which refers to the relationship which this Divine institution sustains to the world – the "called out." It was designated as the kingdom (Matt. 16:19; Heb. 12:28), which refers to the government characteristic of this institution – a monarchy (Mark 9:1; Matt. 16:18; Col. 1:13). The Bible describes the church as the body, which refers to the unity which God desires be characteristic of this Divine body of believers. It functions in unity according to the direction of the one head, as

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is true of the human body (Col. 1:18,24; I Cor. 12:27; Eph. 4:12; 5:23). Such designations as the church of God (I Cor. 1:1; 10:32; I Tim. 3:5), the church of the Lord (Acts 20:28), as well as local congregations being called churches of Christ are terms referring to the same blood-bought heritage we know as the church.

The fact of the matter is that the uniqueness of the church of the New Testament is a study within itself. Look at the unique work of the church in preaching the gospel to the world. Its work of evangelism, edification and benevolence are studies within themselves. The unique plan of the organization of the church is a marvel to behold regarding both its simplicity and at the same time its great profundity. Consider its destiny. Christians are on a journey. We are going somewhere. Earth is not our home. The New Testament speaks of us being here just for a little while then we will be gone (John 14:1-3). The uniqueness of the church can be seen from the standpoint of its unique destiny, heaven the home of the soul.

The church is unique. It is not merely a human organization, though there is as has been shown, organization to it. Rather, it is a living organism, that is to say, it is a way of life. The church is not a social club, though there are social benefits to be received as a

member of the church for sure. The church exists not as a means of entertainment for its members though, but rather that its members may have an intimate relationship with Christ and God. It is not a political activist group, though, through the active work of its members in their community will influence that community to follow the teaching of Christ. The church of the New Testament is not just another religious group of people among other equally valuable groups. The value of a church in God's sight is not how large they may be nor the number of programs they may have, but the degree to which it believes and follows the Lord's teaching found in the New Testament.

Therefore, it comes as no exaggeration at all to say that the church of the New Testament is the greatest and grandest institution on earth. There is nothing equal to it. It is more important than any government, business, or fraternal order. May we never lose sight of its greatness as is seen through its uniqueness.

### **The Church – Aggressive And Militant**

As has been mentioned already, the great mission of the church is the salvation of the souls of men. When the Bible reader considers carefully the preaching of Christ and the apostles, he soon comes to realize this great fact. They were aggressive in their proclamation

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of the truths of God relative to salvation, life and godliness. Christ Himself said that His mission was to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10). The body of Christ (the church) has the same mission of seeking and saving the lost by making known the gospel of Christ. Because of the crucial importance of the gospel in the salvation of the souls of mankind, Satan could not afford to let this soul saving message go unchallenged. Throughout the course of redemptive history, Satan has done his best to thwart God's Divine plan for the salvation of man. The church of the New Testament is not an exception to this important fact. Just a few illustrations will clarify this position for us.

Jesus, as our supreme example of life and godliness, was at the heart of controversy continually. Throughout the entirety of His earthly life He faced such from those doing the work of Satan. In Mark 9:14, Jesus argues, that is, in a logical fashion, with the Jewish leaders of His day. This was done in the presence of a great multitude. Again in Mark 12:18-28, Jesus debated with the Sadducees on the resurrection (cf. Matt. 22:23-33).

Jesus debated with the Pharisees on whose son the Christ (Messiah) is...

While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, Saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They

say unto him, The Son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son? And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions (Matt. 22:41-46).

These are just a few of the instances which could be cited from the Scriptures. Jesus was the perfect defender of the truth. He saw the need to convince others of the truth of God so they might see the folly of error more readily. He drove the money changers out of the temple soon after He had been baptized by John at the beginning of His ministry (John 2:13-16). He rebuked the scribes and Pharisees, calling them hypocrites (Matt. 23). He would later rebuke the Pharisees again, calling them hypocrites, for paying lip service to God, but, in reality, teaching their own human doctrines (Matt. 15:7-9). Why did Jesus see that such was necessary? Hypocrisy was untenable in the mind of Christ. Truth and man's acceptance of it was vital so as to be pleasing in the sight of God. The doctrines of men were and are contrary to the doctrine of God. Disobedience of God's commands was unacceptable to the Christ. He was aggressive and militant in His proclamation and defense

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of the truth of God.

Paul, an apostle of Jesus, serves as an illustration of the early church and its aggressive and militant presentation of truth. Paul was, "set for the defense of the gospel" (Phil. 1:7,16). In Acts 9:29 he "disputed against the Grecians." That is to say, he debated with them over the issue of New Testament Christianity and they went about to slay Him (Acts 9:29). He "reasoned with the Jews..." that is, he gave a reasoned defense for what he was teaching (Acts 18:19). Paul "reasoned" or argued in the synagogue and in the marketplace every day (Acts 17:17). It was his custom to do so (Acts 17:2). Paul knew the truth and dedicated himself to its proclamation. Such a view toward life would naturally lead one to controversy as Satan cannot afford to allow such to go unchallenged. The early church was aggressive and militant in its spreading of the gospel.

The church of the New Testament is pictured in the Bible as a spiritual army prepared to fight the good fight of faith (Eph. 6:17; II Tim. 2:15). The Christian is to "contend earnestly" for the faith,

Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that **ye should earnestly contend for the faith** which was once delivered unto the saints (Jude 3).

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He is to be ready to make a well reasoned defense of Christianity (I Tim. 6:12). To do this we must put on the "whole armor of God" (Eph. 6:11). The Christian is to be prepared both to suffer hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ (II Tim. 2:3), as well as be willing to give his life, if need be, for the cause of Christ (Rev. 2:10).

If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple (Luke 14:26-33).

The early church went about their work

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of evangelizing the world with this type of unparalleled zeal. They were hated for it! Why? Because they were reaching the people with the gospel. They were hated because they were exposing error for what it really was, and because they insisted that the message of God was the exclusive message and not just another fine position to espouse if one wished to do so.

As Christians, our mission here is to exalt Christ in our lives; to preach the truths of New Testament Christianity as far and wide as we can. Millions continue to die daily without the forgiveness of their sins. Christ died for each and every one. Yet, His blessings go without reception in the lives of so many because they have never come to know the greatness of His church. May we continue to restore the unique, aggressive and militant church that we read of from the pages of the New Testament.



## *Chapter Ten*

# **The Church – Acceptable Worship**

*Jack Wilhelm*



Jack Wilhelm began preaching in 1945. He served as a Christian school administrator for twenty-three years. He was the president of Mars Hill Bible School in Florence, Alabama, for twenty-one years. Since 1985, he has been pulpit minister at the South College Church in Auburn, Alabama, which serves members and university students.

It is customary to begin discussion of a topic with a definition of what is being discussed, so why be different when we discuss “Acceptable Worship”?

### **I. DEFINING THE TERMS “ACCEPTABLE” AND “WORSHIP”**

Most of us have no trouble with the word **acceptable**. It means simply that something measures up to expectations. We want something to be “pleasing and welcomed by a receiver.”

The word **worship** is probably already well-established in our vocabulary also. We have heard the sermons and read articles that cite dictionary definitions of “worship” such as the following:

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... reverent honor and homage paid to God or a sacred personage, or to any object regarded as sacred.

We have heard preachers point out that there is "vain worship" (Matt. 15:9), "will worship" or "self-imposed worship," (Col. 2:23); worship offered in ignorance or "without knowing," (Acts 17:23), and true worship (John 4:21-24).

To save time (and space) to devote to some other matters that will help us put these two concepts together, can we **stipulate** by common agreement some mutually shared prior knowledge that we bring to this lesson? Can we agree already that there is a Supreme Being in whom we believe and that we accept Jesus as the Christ, His Son? Can we agree that worship is to be directed to God, not to idols, angels, other humans or even to *things* that we love? Most of us have studied lessons in which the key words *proskuneo*, *sebomi*, and *latreuo* have been identified and described. Those who count Scriptures have told us how often they have been used, and at times we have been reminded of how careless we have been in obeying what they suggest about worship. I do not want anything I say (or omit saying) to detract from their significance. Instead, I hope that by beginning at this point, that we can create a greater respect for all that is involved in acceptable worship as we build on things

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already understood.

Let us think about that word **acceptable** again, in connection with **worship**. The dictionary gives an additional meaning for the word *acceptable* that may scare us a bit: It can mean "meeting minimum requirements, barely adequate" and "capable of being endured; tolerable; bearable." Unfortunately, those bad connotations are what we often associate with worship!

A senior high school student once said to me, "If heaven is going to be like church, I'm not sure I want to go!" Brother Wendell Winkler once gave a couple of quotes in a lesson on worship, I believe from Vance Hanver: "Too many church services start at eleven o'clock sharp and end at twelve o'clock dull" and "The clock struck twelve at Sunday noon and the church gave up her dead." With our brethren, if we wanted to be poetic, we might rephrase it, "The dismissal prayer was said and out rushed the church's dead."

We all smile at such observations because we can identify with them! They are more common in our past and present experiences than we would like to admit. Unfortunately, the preacher gets blamed quicker than anyone else for worship services that do not excite us. He is teased that he should "put more fire in his sermons – or vice versa!" It is reported that one preacher was fired, primarily for three

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reasons: (1) In the worship services, he read from manuscripts when he preached; (2) when he read from his manuscripts, he read poorly, and (3) what he read was not worth reading. Yet even Babe Ruth struck out 1,333 times!

As preachers, we need to take our lumps, but all other worship participants need to take theirs, too. And one of the first places to begin is to realize our roles, because a lot more people are "worship participants" than we may customarily think.

We speak of worship as involving an *audience* and *participants*. The problem with that is that we always reverse the roles. We think the assembled worshippers are the audience and that the participants are the ones involved in conducting the service, such as those who speak, make announcements, pray, lead singing, usher, preside at the Lord's table or pass the Lord's Supper to the assembly. Biblically speaking, **God** is the audience and **all others assembled** are the participants. Read again John 4, where Jesus clearly explains that God is the Spirit whom we worship (John 4:24). John was reminded not to worship angels but to "worship God" (Rev. 19:10, cf. also Col. 2:18-23).

All of this means simply that **if worship is to be acceptable, God decides it – and only God decides it!** It is nice if our worship participation can do something for us, to stir

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our emotions legitimately and encourages us, but if we offer worship God accepts, we should be pleased even if we have not been emotionally stirred as we think we should have been. Further, if other worship participants are doing something that is acceptable to God, for us to subject them to vicious criticism is a contemptuous and presumptuous luxury that we have usurped! This means we may have to face a fact that makes us uncomfortable: If we "got nothing out of that worship service," though to God it would be acceptable, then the reflection has been on us – not God, not the church, and not the other worshippers.

The questions we need to settle, assuming that all other things are in order to "worship God," are (1) "Why is worship important enough for us to concern ourselves about its acceptability?" and (2) "What are the requirements we need to meet for our worship to be acceptable to God?" Let us explore these in more detail.

## **II. WHY IS WORSHIP IMPORTANT ENOUGH TO MERIT ATTENTION ABOUT ITS ACCEPTABILITY?**

**Worship is important because it has the potential to please or offend God.**

This is shown by the worship attempts of Cain and Abel (Gen. 4:1-16); Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:1-7), and King Saul, following his

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mission against the Amalekites (I Sam. 15). Research these matters further and give them careful attention.

**Worship is important because it has the potential to regulate our human relationships.**

As a matter of fact, human relationships are so important that they take precedence over whether our worship is acceptable. In Matthew 5:23, Jesus said,

Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee (Matt. 5:23).

**Worship is important because it has the potential to lead others who observe it to decide to serve God also.**

In the early church, Paul rebuked rather sternly the church at Corinth because of their immature jealousy and disorderly activities in the worship assembly. When they came together, the Lord's Supper was being improperly observed (I Cor. 11). In their use of the gifts God had provided so that they could have services that edified, some were guilty of malfeasance. He reminded them that someone who visited their assembly, by observing, could infer either that "you are out of your mind" or be convinced to "worship God and report that God is truly among you" (I Cor. 14:23-25). The impression and result

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were determined by how they acted in corporate worship. Do we face this same possibility as seriously, that the way we act in worship can affect visitors in our midst as well as us?

I think we have to be careful here, because we could use this to justify structuring public worship exclusively to "impress the visitors" instead of remembering that God is still the audience. Brethren who urge that "worship should be made more contemporary" to appeal to the unchurched baby boomers say that our stilted, archaic music is not entertaining and makes a bad impression.

One talented writer recently told of a survey in which people were asked to raise their hands to indicate their preferences for country, western, rock, acid rock and classical music. As might be expected, the preference for what was probably misnamed as "classical music" was small compared to all of the others. After all, society has been bombarded for years by a music industry that glamorizes celebrities who have the uncanny ability to generate loud sounds and piles of money while still keeping their talent hidden. Repetition creates recognizability and receptivity, while our exposure to more dignified music has been sparse.

It has been suggested that those who select music used in worship should therefore

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choose more exciting music. To justify that suggestion, he referred to a neighbor who visited one of our services and then was asked the next day for an evaluation of the service. The reply was, "Well, you won't be offended if I get honest? Where in the world did you get that weird music?"

I thought it was ironic because of experiences I have had and heard about from colleagues elsewhere. Congregations located where many academicians and professionals accustomed to dignified hymns visited have been asked the same question when services were conducted with a "contemporary religious" thrust! The writer had some commendable things to say that should not be too casually dismissed, but I think we need also to recognize some inconsistencies if we keep in mind the purpose of writing.

The time, the place and the structure of the service need to be taken into consideration, along with who composes the assembly and whether visitors are present. As long as the message of a song teaches truth, there should not be a problem with using songs that provide variety. But there can well be long-lasting consequences in the minds of those we are trying to reach. A retreat, a youth meeting, an informal devotional around a campfire, a home devotional, and a formal worship service when the whole church is

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come together are simply different regarding who is present and what their mind sets are. For the full assembly worship, it is better to avoid the extremes that do not detract from the nature of the God we are worshipping as we convey what He is like to a diversified assembly. Variables admittedly exist, so that all congregations will not suffer the same fallout from change. Some can effect legitimate changes more quickly than others. That is the point. We need to be smart enough to know when it would cause problems and not be stubborn in pushing for selfish preferences that have the potential to do harm. Neither should we allow stubborn prejudices to make us unfairly critical of permissible variations that are not inherently wrong.

**Worship is important because it has the potential to keep us encouraged and faithful.**

The Christian is a part of two families, God's family and his or her earthly family. In a busy world, earthly families go separate ways and get polarized. Pressures can build and sometimes alienation of affection occurs. Educators and sociologists have written about the scars left in children by absent parents or abusive parents. Strained relations and fatigue are always sad, especially if the result is a shattered family. These things can also happen in God's family, the church. Jesus saw the

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value of "two or three being gathered" in His name. When the "whole church comes together" and we "teach and admonish one another, or "bear one another's burdens," Christians will be stronger. As the early church did in coping with persecution, they assembled for prayerful symbiotic worship. As with so many of God's commands, though He is the audience and worship is directed to Him, a concomitant blessing does come back to the acceptable worshipper. Acceptable worship can really bind us together in love and lift up "hands which hang down, and the feeble knees" (Heb. 12:12), but not if we allow mechanics to anger us.

Brother Howard Norton recently described some sentiments that are worthy of thought:

It appears to us that our unity in the years ahead will depend to a great extent on whether we are committed to the idea of being careful about what we do in the public assembly. A consensus concerning what should not happen in the public worship assembly has been a strong unifying factor in churches of Christ throughout the twentieth century...

Although the flavor of the public assembly might differ from place to place, we knew that males would lead the worship and that the content of the assembly would predictably include a cappella music, prayers, the Lord's Supper, a biblical study and the giving

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of a financial gift to further the work of the kingdom ... the public worship assembly had the effect of unifying the worshipers as they praised God and remembered the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross ... Although members disagreed on a host of other issues, they could praise God in unity with brothers and sisters determined to maintain the pattern of first-century worship.

...the public worship assembly is critical to our unity as a brotherhood. It always has been. Because of this, we must be exceedingly careful when we tamper with it in any way. We are very resilient in churches of Christ when the issues on which we disagree fall outside the public assembly of the saints. When controversial practices enter the public assembly, however, everyone is affected; and the possibility for division and shattering is scary (Howard Norton, **Christian Chronicle**, Jan. 1993, C-16).

**Worship is important because it has the potential to introduce apostasy and cause God's people to lose their identity.**

Sometimes apostasy is introduced among God's people by design and sometimes it comes as an unwelcomed, unexpected by-product. In either case, it is costly and sad.

For example, when God's people were divided following the death of Solomon, Jeroboam led the ten tribes in rebellion. He later introduced gold calves and idolatrous

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worship intentionally to divert the loyalty of the people from God's way (I Kings 12:25-33; 13:33-34). This is scary when one notes today some admitted deliberate attempts to restructure the church.

On other occasions, people were prone to follow customs of the day or to accept what was popular and pleasing without giving thought to long range consequences.

As an example of "accidental drifting," go back and study about what Hezekiah records when God's people returned from captivity. They discovered that they had drifted and needed to re-establish the feasts and the priests in their order and the practice of dwelling in booths,

... for since the days of Joshua the son of Nun unto that day had not the children of Israel done so. And there was very great gladness (Neh. 8:17).

It was important enough to restore after a careless omission of roughly a thousand years.

Even when warnings are sounded, apostasy can still occur when people remain ignorant or choose to ignore the warnings.

### **III. WHAT DO WE NEED TO DO FOR OUR WORSHIP TO BE ACCEPTABLE TO GOD?**

**Worship must be directed to the right object in the right way.** We are taught to worship "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23-

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24). Nadab and Abihu were attempting to worship the right God, but in the wrong way. Assuming that we have a correct Bible knowledge about what worship is and what we should do to engage in scriptural activities of worship, there are still some other factors that affects its acceptability.

**We need to understand that for worship to be acceptable, it must be intentional.** We are taught to sing and pray with "the spirit and the understanding also" (I Cor. 14:14-16). Worship, by its nature, cannot be unplanned or accidental. Attendance may be habitual, and rituals may be perfunctorily and flawlessly executed without worship taking place. Every church has had the professional vagrants show up at the beginning of a service or the end of a service asking for a handout. They seem never to be able to stay for the service because they have to be at another church when they are dismissed. Some of these "attend church" more than we do, but who would say they have worshipped acceptably?

Preparation is a vital part of acceptable worship. This could include preparation of the facilities and the planning of activities. It especially includes preparation of our minds to go to the place of worship and to concentrate as participants rather than spectators, like the Psalmist who said, "I was

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glad when they said, Let us go into the house of the Lord" (Psm. 122:1). Preparation of our relationships with others is involved also (Matt. 5:23). Havner has been quoted as saying,

Which is more abominable: **idol** worship in heathen lands or **idle** worship in our fashionable meetinghouses?

**Acceptable worship must be reverently offered.** All service to God is expected to be with "reverence and godly fear" (Heb. 12:28). Sometimes distractions hinder a reverent mind set. Perhaps this is why we think the strangest, funniest things "happen at church." (Every preacher has his treasure chest of war stories on this that he will be glad to share with you!) The incongruity of the situations exists because we know that reverence is what is normal and expected for the worshipful setting. Some distractions are unavoidable; we need to be patient and understanding and try to make allowances according to the situation. There are some distractions, however, that are self-induced and could have been avoided by forethought.

**Acceptable worship must be scriptural and free of self-devised ritual.**

In Colossians 2, Paul deals with this fully. Read carefully Colossians 2:16-23. Paul was strong in his opposition to certain "religious traditions." He affirmed strongly the fact that Christians have freedom and liberty from

externally-imposed rituals. Jesus is viewed as having done the same during His personal ministry. No informed Christian denies this; we treasure our Christian liberty and freedom as a blessing.

But we need to be careful lest we trap ourselves as we revel in the liberty we have in Christ. A strange irony exists about how Jesus opposed the traditionalists of His day. Because of it, some want to depict Jesus as a popular young rebel who championed a cause parallel to the advocates of "contemporary" worship today. Jesus is viewed as approving "change" and sanctioning any novelty to justify treating "old fogie leaders" with contempt. It is true that Jesus was, in many ways, advocating change regarding the status quo. It should be noted, however, that he was not advocating "change for the sake of change." He never taught that authority for what we do in religion does not matter and that anything old is automatically suspect. Jesus **stood for some traditions that were older than the ones He opposed**. He was opposing error and tradition **that had been added** to the older authority that God expected them to respect. Though the "traditionalists" that Jesus opposed had done things the same way for a long time, antiquity was not what made their practices wrong. It was the **source** of their practices. They were wrong because

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they had abandoned **even older** practices than what they cherished – which “from the beginning” were still to be observed. In worship, or in doctrine that applies to any other activity Christians are to undertake, the older authority of God is to be upheld rather than any younger tradition that departs from it. Jesus challenged error and traditions added by men, not the more ancient Bible tradition that God had expected to be observed for all time (cf. Matt. 15:1-13; 19:3-12).

**Acceptable worship is to be eternally offered.** Do not misunderstand! I am not saying that “a worship service” must be eternal. We hear that “old preachers never die; they just go on ... and on ... and on!” Sometimes the shorter services may well be the most effective.

What I am saying is that God has **always been** and **always will be** worthy of worship. He is to be worshipped as “... the King eternal, immortal, invisible.” Paul added, “... to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen” (I Tim. 1:17). This was why Paul decided he was saved and it was a sentiment that we are convinced stayed with Paul for life and that he took into eternity with him. If we have the correct glimpse of God and His nature, worship will be unavoidable, but it will also be never ending. Perhaps that helps us understand what Paul said in

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### Ephesians 3:21,

Unto him be glory in the church by Christ  
Jesus throughout all ages, world without  
end. Amen (Eph. 3:21).

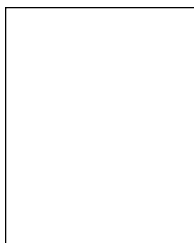
It is both a disturbing and a sobering thought to think that if we worship God today acceptably, we are doing something that can transcend time. Please review often all we have learned today. If we learn all that is involved in "Acceptable Worship," we have learned something we can do forever. If we do not learn it, we will have forever to regret it.

## Notes

## *Chapter Eleven*

# **The Church – Its Mission And Work**

*Eddie Whitten*



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The church of our Lord Jesus Christ is a singular entity. It is an institution unparalleled in the world. There is not another organization which claims equality with the church in character, charter or course.

Many influences and pressures have been brought to bear upon the church through the ages without success. It has been suppressed, it has been persecuted, it has been adulterated, but the true church stands as a beacon in the blackness of the world attesting to the power of God to keep His promise.

The Scriptures testify of the power and purpose of God to provide for His people a way of redemption from the sin into which man plunged in the world. He sent His Son into the world to be the propitiation for the

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sins of mortal men.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16).

The apostle Paul penned, by inspiration,

Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: 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 (Eph. 3:8-11).

In these verses is conveyed the purpose of God, through the Lord Jesus Christ, to establish the church through which men could be forgiven of sins.

When Jesus was on the earth, He made a promise to "build my church" (Matt. 16:18); to "seek and save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10), and to

... present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish (Eph. 5:27).

There is between the incarnation of God's

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wonderful gift to man and the culmination of His mission, a world in which man must live, work and worship. The finite mind has not been left to wonder what he must do, nor wander through the mist of sin without the guiding light of the Word of God. The Bible is God's compass for the earthly wayfarer. It directs him through all the straits of life, calms the angry waves of frustration, bridges the gaps of disappointment, lifts the bereaved and downtrodden, softly hushes the roar of the breakers of life to a mere whisper and brings him safely home in the heavenly harbor. It is the anchor of the soul (Heb. 6:19), and the hope of everlasting life.

In the pages of the Bible is found the recipe of redemption, the way to heaven. This way is the church which Jesus purchased at awful cost, His blood (Acts 20:28).

In this lesson, it is our desire to discuss "The Church – Its Mission And Work."

### **The Mission Of The Church**

The word "church" is used to describe the "called out of God," coming from the Greek "eklesia." This word means "the called out." Any group called out for a specific purpose is called "eklesia." However, with the Divine purpose intended, it takes on a special dimension. Now it becomes the "called out of God," and is properly translated "church."

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Other words can be translated by "eklesia" but unless the literal translation is used they are no more descriptive of God's people than the word so chosen.

Between the beginning of the church on the day of Pentecost following the resurrection of Jesus and the final day of judgment when Jesus comes again, there is a vast time in which man has lived. It has now been almost 2,000 years, and future time is unknown. No man can tell how long God will allow the earth to continue (Matt. 25:13). It is known, however, what must be done by human beings to find themselves in the proper relationship with God. The church has been provided by God for the benefit of men who are lost in sin. Being lost in sin is not just a lack of direction, it is being without hope of extrication from sin and the consequences of sin. The church provides escape from the pollution of sin. Therefore, it has a mission. The mission of the church is to be accomplished on the earth. It will cease to exist after the close of time. All earthly vestiges will vanish away and the eternal, the spiritual will take its place and the kingdom will be only in heaven for the endless ages of eternity.

What, then, is the mission of the church? The answer is simple, yet very complex. The simple part is that in it is the way mortal men may achieve immortality; the earthly can

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become heavenly. The complex involves the "how" – the simple can become a reality.

**First, the mission of the church is to remain true to its Creator.** God, through His Son, Jesus, purchased the church with the only sacrifice sufficient to propitiate for the sins of man. When the Son of God died on the cross of Calvary, He poured out His blood. Blood sacrifices had been the requirement of the Old Testament law, but they were not designed to take away the sins of men. They were designed to atone (or cover) for the sins of those who looked to the future for the Messiah which would completely and finally take their sins away. It took the ultimate sacrifice, the blood of the Son of God, to provide final forgiveness of sins of the truly penitent. Only after such a sacrifice could the church be established in which this sacrifice could be honored and revered.

Today, the will of man is tested to meet the will of God. God says man, the creature, must worship (adore) the Creator. God has no peers. He is not subject to time, space, energy, force or matter. He spoke these things into existence and made man subject to them. Therefore, man is subject unto God. It is not possible for man to challenge the wisdom, knowledge or power of God. He must acknowledge the presence of the supreme Being who keeps the world in the palm of His

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hand.

The church has not been cast into the frame of time to accommodate the imaginations of man. Man could not image the scope of the church. Man still does not comprehend the magnitude of the wonderful love of God. Only viewing the church in the perspective of spiritual value can the great love of God even begin to be fathomed and appreciated. Man does not have the mental and emotional capacity to totally grasp the greatness of God. His mind is not ours (Isa. 55:8-9), therefore we cannot understand His thoughts for us completely. We can understand what we need to understand in order to be pleasing to Him. It would not be in the realm of God's love to demand from us something of which we could not be aware.

It is completely possible, through the study of His Word (II Tim. 2:15), to understand what God wants us to do with regard to the church Jesus built. Paul wrote Timothy,

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 (II Tim. 3:16-17).

The apostle Peter stated in II Peter 1:3-4,

According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life

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and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue. Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

Thus, we can easily see that, in the church, we are not only completely furnished unto all good works, but that we have also escaped the corruption that is in the world. This is the just and reasonable conclusion if we are committed to keeping the church pure and true to the will of God.

**Second, the mission of the church is to affect the lives of all men.** When we refer to the church, we are necessarily making reference to the people who comprise it. The church is not a building of stone or clay; it is the souls of those who have obeyed the gospel of Christ (Heb. 5:9). Paul wrote to Philemon, addressing his letter to "the church that is in thy house" (Phile. 2). It would be ludicrous to believe that Philemon had a church building inside his house. It is always the case that the church has reference to the "called out of God," not a structure made with hands in which to assemble. Therefore, in order to affect the lives of all men, there must be a sterling quality evident in every Christian's conduct which exceeds the normal order of life. Jesus

stated in John 15:19,

If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

Since the physical appearance and natural law applies with equality to all men, there must be another quality which separates the Christian from the vagaries of the world. This is the difference noticed by the worldly element. Jesus considered this quality sufficient for His exhortation in the sermon on the mount:

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven (Matt. 5:16).

Paul admonished the Corinthians as he dealt with an evil context:

Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? (I Cor. 5:6).

The leaven of Christian conduct and character permeates the darkness and brings to light the lives of men and women. The church in the world is the difference between chaos and contentment. Without the church the world would have no restraints with regard to morals, honesty, dignity or righteous living. Humanity would live in complete degradation (as it does in places where Jesus is not known). The

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leaven of the Christian is seen in the laws of nations. The sense of right and wrong stems from Biblical principles. All human rights are based upon the principle of Matthew 7:12,

Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets (Matt. 7:12).

The golden rule! The church of our Lord should be the forerunner of the principles of humility and brotherly love which promotes and propagates this wonderful quality of life.

The effect of the church in the world should be a powerful motivation for every Christian to exercise his or her influence in every interaction with society. So many opportunities are lost because the church is not actively involved in doing its mission of affecting the lives of those with whom we have to do.

**Third, the mission of the church is to purify the souls of those who come into it.** One "gets into" the church through the process of submission to the gospel. Paul says Jesus is the "head over all things to the church, which is his body..." (Eph. 1:22-23). He also says one is "baptized into Christ" (Gal. 3:27). Therefore, if one is to be in the church, which is the body of Christ, he must be baptized into Christ. That which happens on the sweet occasion of baptism, predicated on

one's belief that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and repenting of his sins, is that all of his past sins are taken away forever. One cannot commit his past sins again. He can commit sin in the future, but all past sins are forever gone and in the mind of God, forgotten.

At the point of baptism for the right purpose and on the right premise, one stands in the state of sinless perfection. This does not mean he will be immune from sin or the temptation to sin in the future. It means that at the moment he "arises to walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4), he is free from the shackles of all past sins and is a new creature in Christ. He is a Christian! He is purified even to the inner man, or his soul. Peter observed,

Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever (I Peter 1:22-23).

Paul further exhorted,

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there

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be any praise, think on these things (Phil. 4:8).

Purity is a quality which produces contentment with self, with our fellow man and with God. Paul wrote in Titus 1:15,

Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.

The apostle John, in reference to the hope we have as sons of God, says,

And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure (I John 3:3).

This purity comes only to the Christian, the child of God, and is available only in the church which Jesus built (Matt. 16:18; Acts 2:1-4,47).

There is a danger ever present in this regard. For the church to be a purifying agent to the penitent, obedient Christian, it must, itself, remain pure. A perverted gospel will ruin a righteous church. It cannot entertain contradictory teaching, or doctrine. It will either be true to the Word of God, or it will depart from the truth. It cannot depart from truth and still be pure in the eyes of God.

Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God (Heb. 3:12).

Jesus said,

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon (Matt. 6:24).

Concentrated efforts are being pressed upon the church to depart unto the social and emotional mores of the people. These departures from the true worship of God cannot go unchallenged and be allowed to sweep the church into unbelief without vigorous opposition.

**Fourth, the mission of the church is to provide man a means to worship God.** Without the church it would be impossible to offer acceptable worship unto God. The worship of God is a spiritual blessing. Paul says "all spiritual blessings are in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 1:3). To have the exalted privilege of bowing in awesome wonder before the living God in worship is man's highest blessing. Therefore, if one must be a Christian in order to acceptably worship God, and if one must be in the church to be a Christian, then one must be in the church to worship acceptably. This is an inescapable, logical conclusion. It is nothing but foolishness to presume otherwise. If Jesus is going to present the church to Himself, as we have previously observed, then it is a foregone conclusion that

if we are to be presented to Jesus, we must be in the church.

Jesus discoursed with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well in Sychar (John 4:5-29). In the course of their conversation, Jesus told her,

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

Two elements are necessary for acceptable worship: (1) the proper spiritual mind or attitude; total submission of one's will, commitment of his trust in God (II Tim. 1:12), and (2) having Bible authority for what we do.

Truth is not as elusive as many would make it to be. It is not pleasing to the majority, as the majority chooses to worship in various ways not in evidence in the Bible. What we do in worship is expressed in the acts of teaching or preaching (II Tim. 4:2), giving of our means (I Cor. 16:2); observing the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7); singing (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16), and praying (I Thess. 5:17). How we worship is an individual responsibility. No one can regulate another's thinking. Our mind is going to be entertaining some thought of whatever occupies our fancy. It is probably not possible for the mind to be totally free of thought without medical intervention. What we do with our mind during the sacred time of worship is an individual responsibility, but it needs to be

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trained to concentrate upon the matter at hand, or worshipping God.

Therefore, the church is to provide sanctuary for the truly worshipful Christian. The attitude of how we worship, in respect, solemnity, awe, adoration and dependency coupled with the visible offerings of praise, the performance of what we do in worship, comprises the greatest privilege man has: to be able to worship God in spirit and in truth in the church of our Lord.

### **The Work Of The Church**

Closely related to the mission of the church is the work of the church. The work of the church is essentially expressed in the accomplishing of the mission of the church. How to get done what is needed to be done in the way God has authorized it to be done embodies the work the church is to do.

**First, the church is to go.** Jesus, before He ascended back to the Father, said to,

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 (Matt. 28:19-20).

Mark's account states,

And he said unto them, Go ye into all

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the world, and preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15).

The church is to be militant. It has a purpose and a message. This being true, it is to convey to the world the gospel which is able to save the souls of men from sin.

It is the work of **the church** to accomplish its mission. It does not fall in the purview of men to employ ways and means not approved in the Bible to do the work charged to the church to do. The appeal to the social, or emotional, side of man is foreign to the seriousness and sacredness of the sacrifice of the "man of sorrows." To lower the church to human levels in order to boast of "spirituality" is to cast the spear of disdain into the bleeding side of the crucified Saviour. The blood of the Son of man shed on a rough hewn cross deserves greater respect than the flippant arrogance of a "country club" atmosphere. Departure from true worship brings human judgment in contradistinction of the wisdom of God. It is God who has the power and authority to form the course of worship due Him, therefore it should be the joy of man to conform. Paul lamented the lot of Israel in Romans 10:1-3 when he stated:

Brethren, my heart' s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to

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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 (Rom. 10:1-3).

The work of the church is to go throughout the world preaching and teaching the Word of God to as many people as possible. The going is obligatory; the method of going is optional. The Word to be taught is not negotiable, it is the Word of the Almighty. Whatever we do, we must do in the name of (or by the authority of) our Lord Jesus Christ (Col. 3:17).

**Second, the work of the church is to teach men how to be saved.** As Paul told the Corinthian church,

For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect (I Cor. 1:17).

Baptism is the very act which completes the initial phase of salvation. Peter said "baptism doth also now save us" (I Peter 3:21), but baptism without proper motivation means nothing. Paul's purpose was not to see how many he could baptize. His purpose was to preach the saving message of God's Word, the gospel, and the baptisms which would follow would be the result of his preaching. Hearts would be pricked (Acts 2:37) by the

story of Jesus and, as he experienced on the road to Damascus, belief that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, would come producing genuine, or godly sorrow. "Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation..." (II Cor. 7:10). A penitent heart will demand baptism for the remission of sins. Thus, the work of the church is not to baptize, but to preach the Word of God. In doing so, lost souls will be obedient to the truth of the gospel, and will result in baptisms for the right and proper purpose, to wash away our sins (Acts 22:16).

It is unfortunate that in some men the need for truthful and Biblical teaching which produces baptism for the remission of sins, does not meet the criteria of human wisdom. Today, there are some who are teaching baptism can be for any reason; that baptism is not necessarily a requirement for membership in the kingdom of God; that membership in the Lord's church is not necessary, and that all denominational bodies embrace some Christians within their membership who are not required to come out of them in order to be saved.

The Lord Jesus died a horrible death to make it possible for men to be free from sin. Now, man comes along and blatantly denies the death of Christ was for the church He purchased in His death.

**Third, the work of the church is to**

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**edify one another.** The strength of any organization is in the bond which binds it together. A common cause is necessary for the life of any group whether it be a social club, a civic club or any viable organization. The church is no different in this respect. The tie that binds the church is much stronger than any other could ever be. It is the blood of Christ which binds us together. It is through the church that we have a common hope of salvation. It is in the church we have the courage and strength to withstand the fiery darts of the evil one. It is in the church we are able to study and mature and develop into full-grown Christians able to eat the strong meat of the gospel (Heb. 5:12). It is in the church that we are able to succor one another and to build each other up in the holy faith.

Paul wrote concerning the roles each has in the church. The cooperative nature of each several part doing its work makes for the development and spiritual strength of the whole. Each member has a definite part in the fulness of the whole. It is the body working together that causes the influence of the church in the community to function as it should. The effectiveness of the church in any community relies upon the influence wielded by the combined and harmonious example of the church as a whole.

**Fourth, the work of the church is to**

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**help the needy.** There are many, many unfortunate people who need help. The body needs to be attended to. The physical part of man must not be neglected intentionally. God has made it a part of His plan that man should love one another. He loved man so much He gave His only begotten Son to die at the hand of wicked men so the same wicked men could be saved. Jesus loved man so much He was willing to go to Calvary to make it possible for man to be saved. Man should love his fellow man enough to "lay down our lives for the brethren" (I John 3:16). In fact, it would be too cruel to think that any man would turn his back on another who needed help. Yet the world is so full of cruelty and inhumanity to man that it is deplorable. Yet, the Christian, under no circumstances, should deliberately and intentionally spurn one who is genuinely in physical need. There are many who make sport of the church and live by making requests of the church under false pretenses. Even so, it is better to help someone who needs no help than to spurn someone who is desperately in need.

The church is recognized by saint and sinner alike as a haven of rest in a busy and dangerous world. When someone becomes in need, the first place they think of for help is the church. This is really as it should be. Nevertheless, caution needs to be exercised

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that the church is not made a place of merchandise.

It is not within the prerogative of the church to undertake to merchandise their benevolence. Such things as car washes, cake bakes, or other types of enterprise to make money for pet projects or group trips, etc. should have no place in the church. Benevolence does not justify a lack of authority, or for the church to become involved in worldly pursuits.

### **Conclusion**

In this study, we have sought to point out the mission and work of the church. We have noted that the church's mission is: (1) To remain true to its Creator; (2) To affect the lives of all men; (3) To purify the souls of those who come into it; and, (4) To provide a means for man to worship God.

We have also studied that the work of the church is: (1) To go into all the world to carry the saving message of God to the lost; (2) To teach all men what they must do to be saved; (3) To edify one another; and, (4) To help those who are in need.

If we are diligent to do all these things, then we can identify with the teaching of the Lord in Luke 17:10,

So likewise ye, when ye shall have done  
all those things which are commanded

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you, say, We are unprofitable servants:  
we have done that which was our duty  
to do (Luke 17:10).

The mission and work of the church is noble in every respect of thought and action. Nothing in this world can compare with the precious nature of the church, the cost of it, the impact of it in the world, and the eternal consequences which fall to man with regard to his acceptance of it or his rejection of it.

May God help each of us to recognize and respond to the great challenge we have as we contemplate the mission and the work of the Lord's church.

## Notes



# **SatanAnd HisAttacks**



## *Chapter Twelve*

# **Satan – His Power, Ways, And Servants**

*H. A. (Buster) Dobbs*



Buster has been preaching the gospel for over 50 years • He has served as an elder, debater, writer, gospel preacher • Owner and editor of the **Firm Foundation** • Born in Houston, Texas • All local work has been in the Houston, Texas area • Buster and Martha have three children and eight grandchildren.

If we would be successful in serving God, we must know about the devil and his tricks. Knowledge is power and is the key to resisting the devil and causing him to flee from us.

The apostle John saw an angel coming down out of heaven,

... having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years (Rev. 20:1-2).

John uses four names to describe man's "ancient foe." He is the *disbolos*, which means accuser or slanderer. The English equivalent is devil. Vine says, "this word should be used only of Satan ... There is one devil, there are many demons." "Devil" is used 31 times in

our English Bible to refer to Satan, and is found only in the New Testament. Jesus uses it once to describe Judas.

The prince of darkness is also called Satan, which is found 15 times in the Old Testament and 34 times in the New Testament. This word means adversary. Jesus called Peter by this name, meaning he was acting the part of a Satan-like man by denying and rejecting the teaching of Jesus.

Another name for Satan, because of his characteristics, is serpent. In the Bible, the serpent represents evil, treachery, venom, and murderous inclination. It also represents wisdom and craftiness. This name for Satan is found only in the first and last books of the Bible, except II Corinthians 11:3 where the reference is to Eden. Satan the serpent is hateful and deadly.

John refers to the devil as the "dragon" twelve times in the book of Revelation, and in no other place in the Bible. The word dragon, according to Vine, indicates a "mythical monster; also a large serpent, so called because of its keen sight."

The devil is walking about as a "roaring lion" (I Peter 5:8). He has the power to transform himself into "an angel of light" (II Cor. 11:14).

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against

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powers, against the rulers of the darkness  
of this world, against spiritual wickedness  
in high places (Eph. 6:12).

The devil was sinning from "the beginning" (I John 3:8). This does not mean the devil was not originated. He had a beginning; otherwise, he would be like God. There is a widely held theory that the devil is a fallen angel – perhaps the leader of fallen angels. At some unknown point the devil must have rebelled against God, and was cast down out of heaven (II Peter 2:4; Jude 6).

His home is the abyss – the bottomless pit, the underworld, the lower regions. Satan is in his home, where he must remain until near the end of the earth and time (Rev. 20:3). The angel opens the abyss and smoke bellows forth, "as the smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and air are darkened because of the smoke" (Rev. 9:2). Out of the smoke come horrible creatures. They are limited in the devilment they can do, but can cause such misery that the afflicted "shall seek death, and shall in no wise find it" (Rev. 5-6).

These hideous creatures are called locusts. They...

... like unto horses prepared unto battle;  
and on their heads were as it were  
crowns like gold, and their faces were  
as the faces of men. And they had hair  
as the hair of women, and their teeth

were as the teeth of lions. And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle. And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months. And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon (Rev. 9:7-11).

These two names mean "the destroyer," the one who brings "perdition to mankind." Jesus said of him,

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

Satan is a real being – not a myth – and has great power, deceptive, cunning, and destructive might. Paul speaks of the "wiles of the devil" and tells us not to be "ignorant of his devices."

Jesus came to liberate us from Satan. Until the coming of the Son of God, the devil had the keys of death (Heb. 2:14). People of earth "through fear of death" were "subject to bondage" (Heb. 2:15). Jesus changed that! He

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took the key of death away from the devil (Rev. 1:18). He therefore gives us freedom from the bondage of sin.

The devil's domain is the realm of lies. He is the original liar. Jesus is truth (John 14:6). Truth overcomes and destroys lies as light overcomes and removes darkness.

The birth of Jesus at Bethlehem triggered a spiritual war of immense size. At His birth, the innocent children of Ramah were mercilessly slaughtered and there was "weeping and great mourning ... weeping for her children." The little ones of the Bethlehem region were sacrificed by a heartless king because the devil had control of the merciless monarch's heart.

When Jesus began His public preaching, He was driven away into a wilderness place where He fasted for 40 days and nights. Jesus was tempted during that time, and at the end of the 40 days the temptations were intense. The devil attempted to seduce Jesus to disobey Jehovah by appealing to the "lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vain glory of life." Jesus proved his devotion to the heavenly Father and His inner spiritual strength by turning down the invitations to sin. He turned the devil down by appealing to sacred Scripture.

The power of Satan was pitted against the power of God. The supernatural power of the

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devil and all his demons came against the supernatural power of God and all his angels. There followed a fierce struggle. Jesus showed the greater power of Jehovah by releasing those whom Satan had bound.

Separation from God, caused by sin, drags after it a long train of evil. When the first pair rebelled against heaven's orders, they died. It was a twofold death. Their human spirits died in the very hour they disobeyed. Their human bodies later died when they lost access to the tree of life because of their sin.

Sin separates from God (Isa. 59:2). Separation is death. A soul separated from its God dies. Further, "the body apart from the spirit is dead." Adam and Eve died spiritually and physically because of sin – a twofold death. Transgression of moral law kills the spirit, but also has repercussions in the natural realm. The violation of moral law adversely affects natural law. Sin attacks both the spirit and the body.

A modern day demonstration of the truth of this declaration is the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) which causes the deadly Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). If only virgins of the opposite sex marry and remain in a monogamous relationship, there would be no AIDS problem. Promiscuous sex, most of it homosexual, is how the lethal virus began and grew. The devil's work is

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accomplished through human cooperation and participation.

All disease is the result of sin. God made the world very good (Gen. 1:31). He turned it over to man. Man promptly ruined it. Violation of the moral code resulted in disturbance in the natural realm and that produced mutations. The mutations caused infirmity. Think of how long the ancients lived in contrast to today's life expectancy. Sin brings misery.

Jesus "went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil" (Acts 10:38). The sick were devil-oppressed. There is a connection between sin and sickness. After the damage is done, we must live under the fallout of life. Innocent people, even babies, can suffer the consequence of the sins of their ancestors.

Not every sick person is guilty of personal transgression of the moral rule, but someone has done it. The disease passes into the general population, as happens with AIDS, and the innocent suffers because of the evil deeds of others.

Jesus made an attack on sin. He called us back to moral excellence. He condemned degradation and proclaimed "blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

To show His power to forgive sin, Jesus healed the sick (Mark 2:9-11). Jesus sent a palsied man away carrying his pallet to show

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His authority to forgive sin. The battle was joined between Jesus and Satan. Jesus won!

Demons are the devil's imps. Christ cast out demons, showing His power over Satan. Remember the Gadarenes? The demons in the insane said to Jesus,

What have we to do with thee, thou Son  
of God? art thou come hither to torment  
us before the time?

The demons asked permission to live in swine, and Jesus sent them to their desired hosts. Then the swine stampeded into the sea, which was hardly the expectation of the demons (Matt. 8:28-33). Jesus said,

But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of  
God, then the kingdom of God is come  
unto you (Matt. 12:28).

Satan may have thought he gained mastery over Jesus in the crucifixion. He was involved in the plot to kill the Son of God (Luke 22:3). The resurrection revoked any temporary victory the cross may have implied.

When the 70 returned rejoicing in their success, Jesus said, "I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven" (Luke 10:18). When Jesus ascended on high "he led captivity captive, And gave gifts unto men" (Eph. 4:8). This was the binding of Satan. Revelation 20:2-3 describes it. Though Satan is bound, he is not without power and influence. Though

chained, he is not yet cast into the lake of fire. Though restricted, he is not yet destroyed. He may not use his supernatural power, but continues to exercise his malignant influence. He can operate within natural laws, but not outside those laws. Because of this limitation placed on Satan, God also limits his benevolent influence to understandable and immutable natural laws. He works today through the power of his saving gospel (Rom. 1:16).

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it (I Cor. 10:13).

The promise is not a providential-escape-hatch when pressed by temptation. It is a commitment that temptation will not be supernatural, and an assurance that by your own natural powers you can resist whatever temptation comes upon you. If you do not, it is your fault.

If Paul is saying, as some mistakenly suppose, that God will suit the temptation to your ability to resist, then the child of God cannot sin. Once saved, always saved. It is impossible for him to sin, or the promise fails. If God will not allow you to be tempted above

your threshold of resistance, and if any saved person ever sins, then it is obvious the temptation was greater than he could bear and the promise miscarried. The Bible teaches the possibility of fatal apostasy for the saint, and this passage therefore cannot teach the impossibility for a child of God to sin unto death.

Revelation chapter twenty also speaks of a 1,000 year reign. The millennium is a figure of speech. It implies a long but unspecified time. It started with the binding of Satan and it will continue until Jesus comes. The 1,000 years suggests the entire Christian age, from the cross to the second coming.

The book of Revelation assures us that during this period the redeemed in Christ will reign on earth. If you are a child of God, you are reigning right now. If that sounds strange to you, consider the victory celebration described in the early part of the apocalypse.

And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth (Rev. 5:9-10).

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Please notice that those purchased by the blood of the lamb are a kingdom and priests and they reign upon the earth. The saved are in the kingdom now. You are a priest now. You reign now. This does not refer to some future rule, but a present control. You rule over your body through self-discipline. You rule over Satan by the power of the revealed Word. You rule over the universe through believing prayer. There will be a future reign in heaven for the people of God, but this passage speaks of reigning "upon earth."

John tells us that after the binding of Satan he saw the saints reigning with Christ.

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 (Rev. 20:4).

Pay close attention to what John saw. He saw thrones. He saw people sitting on the thrones. He tells us who occupied the thrones: (1) The souls of them that had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the Word of God, and (2) such as worshipped not the beast, neither his image, and received not

the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand.

Coffman, in his commentary on Revelation, makes an astute and correct observation:

“And judgment was given unto them...”

It is wrong to think that this means only the martyrs received the judgment and sat upon thrones. The thrones are occupied by the living, reigning saints, who have either suffered martyrdom or refused to worship the beast. It is also easy to miss the meaning of the judgment given unto them. It means that God’s judgment was given in their favor, and not that the prerogative of judging other men was to be exercised by them...

“And I saw the souls of them that had been beheaded...” Not these alone, but including these, is the thought. Even though who were beheaded are shown by this vision to have been favorably judged by the Lord and granted the right of glorification at the last day. This assurance was important for the Christians of John’s day ... even if they were called to yield their lives, their sacrifice would issue in God’s vindication of them.

“And such...” In the Greek, this is literally and those who, a second class of persons who had not necessarily been beheaded. This forbids limiting the passage to martyrs...

"And they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years..." Again, this is exactly the promise Christ made to the Twelve (Matt. 19:28), where he defined the period as "the times of the regeneration," a reference to the whole Christian age; and it is absolutely imperative so to understand it here. Neither did any of the apostles, nor any of those in view here, actually live a thousand years; but what is taught is that the reign of Christians with Christ will be a perpetual phenomenon throughout the whole Christian age (the thousand years)...

And how do they reign with Christ? They do this in the spiritual sense of their victory over sin and temptation, doubt, fear, suffering and persecution (pages 471-472).

Our victory in Jesus is both present and future. We must understand that the devil is at work to destroy us, if we can. He goes about as a roaring lion, "seeking whom he may devour." He "seeks to work us woe; His craft and power are great, and armed with cruel hate..." Still, "A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing." He gives the strength we need through the instruction of His revealed and written Word. It is enough – sufficient – all sufficient. It is alone sufficient.

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

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be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works (II Tim. 3:16-17).

We are Satan-like when we deny and refuse the Word of God. To mutilate revelation is to pitch your tent in the camp of the prince of this world. Conversely, we are Christ-like when we cast "down imaginations, and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity" to the obedience of the Lord.

Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him (Heb. 5:7-9)

Such perfection in obedience will defeat the devil and sustain our souls. The Word of God is the chain that binds the "great red dragon." Near the time of destruction of heaven and earth the Word of God will be rare, and the devil will be loosed for a little season, and then shall the end come.

And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where are also the beast and the false prophet; and they shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

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*Chapter Thirteen*

# **Sin – Its Reality And Consequences**

*Kevin D. Beard*



Kevin is a graduate of Memphis School of Preaching • He is a man of outstanding ability • Kevin is a talented song leader • He presently works with the Bailey Street Church in Jacksonville, Arkansas • His father and mother are faithful workers in the kingdom • Kevin and Jan have two children.

Throughout his history, man has suffered with numerous problems. Disease has devastated many populations. Natural disasters such as tornados, hurricanes, and earthquakes have brought destruction upon countless civilizations. Yet man has learned to deal with these and other problems. Medical science keeps improving every year with new and innovative ways of fighting disease. As the science of meterology progresses, better systems of advance warning are developed to allow for preparation to be made for coming natural disasters. Man seems to be able to conquer virtually any problem with which he is confronted.

Yet one problem that plagues all of humanity outweighs all other problems and

can never be solved by the advances of science and technology. That problem is the **problem of sin**. It has troubled man from the beginning, for the very first people suffered with it. And it has afflicted everyone since.

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23).

Sin outweighs all other problems because its consequences reach beyond this world and into the next. None of man's ingenuities can remedy it. The words of the old song state the case so well – *"What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus."*

However, most people do not see sin as a problem with which to be worried, even though it is the worst problem the world faces. This fact is obvious from the statement Jesus made:

Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it (Matt. 7:13-14).

Unfortunately, most of the people of the world will be lost because they do not see the danger of sin. Consequently, they will not seek that strait and narrow way.

Attitudes toward sin vary as widely as do the people who possess those attitudes. Some

scoff at it, some are indifferent toward it, some make light of it. But sin is real. Sin has tremendous consequences. And the Christian's mission is to warn men of it and to show them the way out of it.

### **Society Denies Sin**

In this fast paced, high-tech world of America in the late twentieth century, society seems to think that it has outgrown sin. The news media, Hollywood, popular psychologists, and other so-called experts promote the idea that what is right is determined by the society. They have set out on a course to change the way society views what is right and wrong. The values once cherished by the majority are now being ridiculed as "old-fashioned." What once was almost universally accepted as being morally wrong is now seen as a matter of personal choice.

January 22, 1973 will be remembered as the day that murder became legal in America. On that day, the Supreme Court of the United States, with its decision in the infamous case known as *Roe vs. Wade*, legalized abortion in America. Since then the decimation of unborn millions has run rampant. According to an article in the January 1993 edition of the **National Right To Life News**, 30,000,000 abortions have been performed in the last twenty years.<sup>1</sup> Society calls it a woman's choice

to do with her body as she please. Society screams out that this "right" must be protected by the constitution. What once was called murder is now called a woman's free control over her own body.

At one time in America, the sin of homosexuality was seen as the vile and disgusting thing that it is. But today one can hardly read the newspaper without reading of some group that is protesting for homosexual rights. They demand legally recognized same gender marriages, protection from discrimination, and acceptance into the mainstream of society, just to name a few. In their eyes, their perversion is not a sin, but an alternate lifestyle, another sexual preference. Thus, they want to be accepted for what they are, and they brand as unloving bigots, those who do not accept them.

There was a time when society accepted an absolute standard of right and wrong. But that view is too restricted, too narrow-minded for the free thinking, enlightened man of today. After all, since man exists only as result of an accident of nature (so many scientists claim), the morals he holds are only a result of his own opinions. Therefore, each must decide for himself what values he will hold. No action can be defined as inherently good or evil; the situation and the individual must determine that.

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Oh, how the world needs the Word of God!

### **What Is Sin?**

A time existed once when virtually everyone knew what sin was, and knew what things were sinful. But that time seems to be slipping away, if it has not done so already. The world rejects the supremacy of God's will. The problem is not limited to the world. Many in the church need to be reminded of what God's Word says about sin. Half-hearted, unconverted church members partake in the things of the world without the second thought of what God has commanded. Weak elderships and preachers refuse to preach and teach against sinful practices for fear of losing members or of hurting someone's feelings. As a result, those unconverted, uncommitted church members go merrily on their way to perdition having their consciences salved by smooth talking, "feel good about yourself" preachers.

But what is sin? The inspired apostle John defined it:

Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law (I John 3:4).

The word "sin" comes from the Greek word "hamartia." According to Thayer, "hamartia" literally means "a failing to hit the mark."<sup>2</sup> The

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idea of the word is of one's shooting at a target and missing, or trying to meet some standard but failing to do so. When one lives his life by some standard other than God's standard, he misses the mark of God's standard and he sins. Thus, the idea of "hamartia" represents sin in a very graphic way. John then equates sin with "transgression of the law," or "lawlessness" (ASV). This describes the condition of one who is outside God's law. Thayer defines the word "anomia," from which this phrase is translated, as "the condition of one without law, – either because ignorant of it, or because violating it."<sup>5</sup> So then, the one who lives a life of sin also lives a life of constant rebellion against the laws of God.

This lawlessness about which John writes encompasses the whole spectrum of sin. Sins are often classified as "sins of commission" and "sins of omission," and this classification is accurate. To do something that God's law forbids (a sin of commission) is to be outside God's law, and to fail to do something that God's law enjoins (a sin of omission) also is to be outside God's law. Both are equally sinful and both are included in John's definition of sin. Of course, James specifically points out the sinfulness of failing to do what is right:

Therefore to him that knoweth to do  
good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin  
(James 4:17).

At least two inescapable conclusions must be drawn from this teaching. First, God does have a law by which man must abide. Some may wish to think otherwise, but the fact cannot be denied. If God had no law, what then would be John's purpose in writing that "sin is the transgression of the law?" But the Bible plainly affirms that God does have a law.

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death (Rom. 8:2).

But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed (James 1:25).

Second, God's law is not restricted to His children; every person is amenable to it. John wrote "**whosoever** committeth sin..." That includes the whole human race. Anyone who lives outside God's law commits sin. To be guilty of violating God's law implies amenability to that law. Since "all have sinned" (Rom. 3:23), then all are amenable to God's law.

Sin is real. It is not some figment of the imaginations of God-fearing people. It is a serious matter. The attitudes people chose to take toward sin, whether they ignore it, make light of it, pursue it, or justify it, do not change the fact that sin is real. God does have a law, and that law is binding upon everyone.

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Violating that law brings serious consequences.

### **The Consequences Of Sin**

One of the most dangerous things about rejecting the reality of sin is the disregard for sin's consequences. Regardless of how one views sin, he cannot escape its consequences. But the majority of people in the world go on living lives of sin without considering the fact that they will have to pay the price for their actions.

Without doubt, sin has its consequences.

Be not deceived; God is not mocked:  
for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall  
he also reap. For he that soweth to his  
flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption...  
(Gal. 6:7-8a).

God's law of sowing and reaping holds true not only in the agricultural world, but also in the spiritual world. When the farmer plants corn in his field, he expects to reap corn at the harvest. When he plants beans, he expects to reap beans. When one sows to the flesh, living a life devoted to fulfilling the lusts and desires thereof, he ought to expect to reap corruption. To think otherwise is to try to mock God, to deride Him. According to Robertson, the word translated "mocked" literally means "to turn the nose up at one."<sup>4</sup> Thus, the one who thinks he can escape God's law of sowing and reaping shows his utter disrespect and



disregard for the authority and power of God and deceives only himself, for God cannot be mocked in this way.

Sinners often reap the bitter fruit of their actions in this life. Countless lives have been destroyed by the consequences of sin. The drunkard who gets behind the wheel of his car and sends it careening down the highway often pays the price for his sin with his life. The fornicator, whether he be heterosexual or homosexual, may pay the price for his wicked life in acquiring AIDS or some other disease. The teenager who spends the evening in the back seat of the car with a boyfriend or girlfriend may have to look forward to dealing with an illegitimate pregnancy. The murderer, the thief, or any criminal may find that the consequences of his sin lie behind the bars of the state penitentiary.

People often suffer consequences for their sin in this life. But one of the saddest things about sin's consequences in this life is that they are not limited to the one who committed the sin. Many times others who were completely innocent in the matter suffer from the consequences of another's sin. Innumerable innocent lives have been snuffed out when the drunkard's car crossed the yellow line and hit an oncoming car head on. Many have suffered with AIDS, contracted from tainted blood received in a transfusion,

because the one who donated the blood lived the kind of wicked lifestyle that exposed him to the virus.

King David decided to number the people of Israel. Evidently, he took great pride and comfort in his military strength. However, this was contrary to the will of God. The leaders of God's people were to rely upon the strength of God, not on their own powers. But David continued with the census anyway. As a result, God punished David. He sent a pestilence through the land that killed 70,000 people. David sinned, yet he was not the only one to suffer from that sin (II Sam. 24:1-17).

Another thing about sin's consequences is that they often must be suffered even if the sinner repents. In the case of David's numbering the people, he repented of his sin when he realized that he had broken God's law, but he still suffered the consequences. This is often the case. Many times what is done sets in motion a sequence of events that cannot be altered.

Even though the murderer may repent of his sin and seek forgiveness, the law still states that he will be punished. The person who contracts some sexually transmitted disease through his immoral action may seek forgiveness yet still suffer with the disease.

The story is told of a child who had trouble controlling his temper, and in fits of

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anger would often do or say some very unkind things. The child's father decided to drive a nail in the gatepost for every outburst the child made. But for every kind thing the child did, he would remove one nail. As time passed, the father drove nail after nail into the post. Eventually, the child was able to have all the nails removed. He was excited about having the nails removed, but he also noticed that even though the nails were gone, the nail holes still remained. Sin works in much the same way. Even though the sin may be removed, the consequences still remain.

What about those who never seem to suffer because of their sin? In the song *"Farther Along,"* the writer ponders the thought:

Tempted and tried we're oft made to wonder  
Why it should be thus all the day long,  
While there are others living about us,  
Never molested tho' in the wrong.

Often the righteous suffer and the wicked seem to prosper in spite of their wickedness. This has caused man to question the equity of things when this seems to be the case. Solomon considered the matter. He looked at all of the injustices done under the sun and saw that the oppressors were the ones with the upper hand and that the oppressed had no power. This led Solomon to the conclusion that it was better never to have been born than to have lived to see such injustice (Eccl.

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4:1-3). When one considers only that which is "under the sun," (only that which is seen in this life), as Solomon did, then the conclusion may be drawn that life is not fair, and that maybe it would be better not to be born than to be subjected to that kind of injustice.

For this reason, Christians can rejoice that all of sin's consequences are not seen in this life. If the only punishment for sin came on this side of death, truly the world would be a place of inequity. But God will be the final judge. For this reason, Paul wrote,

Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves,  
but rather give place unto wrath: for it is  
written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay,  
saith the Lord (Rom. 12:19).

Sin does have its consequences in this life, and man ought to be concerned with that prospect. But the greater concern should be for those consequences that will come after this life is over. Sometimes in this life, people commit sin and never suffer ill consequences for their actions. But that will not happen when this life is over. God does not bring final punishment for sin in this life.

The consequences of sin to be suffered in eternity are sure. There can be no doubt that punishment will take place. The Lord's promise to punish the wicked is just as sure as His promise to reward the righteous. Notice the emphatic promise made by Ezekiel: "The

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soul that sinneth, **it shall die**" (Ezek. 18:20a).  
Jesus promised:

But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death (Rev. 21:8).

Jesus said that in the day of judgment, some would be condemned because they failed to show mercy to the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, and the imprisoned. Responding to their protest that they never saw the Lord in these conditions, Jesus will say:

Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal (Matt. 25:45-46).

When the subject of sin's consequences is discussed, those sins considered as "bad" sins, worldly and immoral sins, usually receive most of the attention. These kinds of sins do have consequences both in this life and in the next. But those sins of rebellion against God's Word and His authority, committed by those who blatantly seek to put themselves in God's place by substituting their own will for His, have serious consequences too. These consequences may never be seen in this life,

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but there is no doubt that they will be seen when this life is over. These people are the ones of whom Jesus spoke when He said:

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? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity (Matt. 7:22-23).

Man often focuses most on his attention on this life, rather than on the life to come. For this reason, many do not consider the eternal consequences of sin when they choose their actions. Willing to risk the physical consequences, they ignore the spiritual consequences and live outside God's law. But even if they manage to get by in this life without suffering too many ill consequences for their sin, they will not get by the final judgment.

### **The Christian's Responsibility**

Eternal punishment for sin is certain, but it is not inescapable. Jesus paid the price for the sins of all those in the world who will accept that gift (I John 2:2; Heb. 5:9). Yes, man does sin. But the good news is that sin can be forgiven. Here then, is the Christian's responsibility, to tell the world of this good news. Before He ascended, Jesus

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commissioned His followers (Mark 16:15-16):

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.

Thus, the Christian's responsibility is seen in at least two areas: not only in telling men how to be freed from sin, but also in warning men of the consequences of sin. Though the practice of warning people of sin seems to have gone out of vogue, the command to do such still remains. Sin separates man from God (Isa. 59:1-2). In that condition, man has no hope of salvation (Eph. 2:12).

God set Ezekiel as a watchman over the house of Israel. He charged him to warn the people. Failure to warn the wicked would have brought serious consequences on Ezekiel. God said that the unwarned wicked would die in his iniquity, "... but his blood will I require at thine hand" (Ezek 33:8). In a similar way today, Christians have been charged with warning the wicked of their evil way. Can any suppose that God would not require the same faithfulness to that charge from the Christian as He did from Ezekiel? Certainly not!

### **Conclusion**

Many in the world downplay the serious nature of sin. They would like to relegate God,

His will, and all things associated with them to the land of make-believe. Regardless of what man would like to do, sin still is real. It is real because God has a law by which man must abide, and when that law is broken, it is sin. Sin is real and it has very serious consequences. Because of this, man must take a serious look at sin. Consequences in this life often bring pain and heartache to the sinner and to others who are innocent. Consequences in eternity are sure, and they are worse than anything imaginable on this earth. Sin is real, it has serious consequences, and the Christian's responsibility is to warn men of it, and tell them the good news of how to be freed from it.

### Endnotes

1 Franz, Wanda, "The Shameful Legacy of *Roe v. Wade*: Years of Death and Devastation," **National Right To Life News**, January, 1993, p. 3.

2 Thayer, Joseph Henry, **Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament** (Grand Rapids: MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975), 30.

3 Ibid., 48.

4 Robertson, Archibald Thomas, "The Epistles of Paul," in **Word Pictures in the New Testament**, vol. IV, (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1931), 316.



## *Chapter Fourteen*

# **False Teachers And False Doctrines**

*Roger Banks*



Roger is a graduate of Alabama Christian School of Religion (B.A., M.A.) • He has been preaching for 25 years • He presently works for the East Wood congregation in Paris, TN. (since 1989) • He is a faithful defender of the faith • A frequent speaker on lectureships and in many gospel meetings • Roger and Sue have two sons.

I am personally blessed and deeply honored to participate in this great lectureship. I must express my appreciation to the elders of this good congregation for the foresight and courage to select the topics of discussion as presented this week. I also thank brother Paul Sain for recommending me to this leadership as one of the speakers. I am delighted to be with you.

The assigned topic for this hour is "**False Teachers And False Doctrines.**" The very mention of the topic arouses keen attention of many hearers. Our Lord in His beautiful sermon on the mount in Matthew 7 first addresses the false prophet and the way to identify them. You will recall the Lord MET the GREATEST of the false prophets as described

in Matthew 4 as He was tempted by Satan himself. Return with me to the sermon on the mount as Jesus makes the following observations in Matthew 7:15-20.

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep' s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them (Matt. 7:15-20).

Jesus refers again to false teachers, as recorded by Matthew,

But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. (Matt. 15:9).

It would be an impossible task to dedicate this entire lectureship to discuss all false teachers and doctrines, therefore, please allow me to be very specific. Ours is not the task to decide WHETHER or not false teachers exist, but to identify them and respond in a way that is proper.

Dear brethren, we are this day experiencing the events as described by the apostle Paul, as he wrote Timothy:

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Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier (II Tim. 2:3-4).

My friends, that day is now, the circumstances prevail, the burden is now ours personally to effectively deal with false teachers and false doctrines. How? Again, Paul answers in this passage,

Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine (II Tim. 4:2).

Our problem today is not difficult to discover or define. We (the Lord's church) are not threatened by yesterday's external forces of evil. Our major foe is not Communism, Catholicism or denominationalism. These are obviously false doctrines and false teachers, but they are not in the forefront of our difficulties in preaching the Word of God today. Our major obstacle has been developed from our midst, it came from us – now seeks to be identified as something else; not the old fashioned "yellow pages" church of Christ. The mainline body of believers is today being called "a small and declining right-wing group (in the churches of Christ) that feels compelled to revile most anything that attempts to be in

touch with contemporary needs." "Their loyalty is to a narrow set of traditions that are neither biblical nor Christ-like." These statements are direct quotes of Rubel Shelly appearing in an article written by Frances Meeker in the **Nashville Banner**, October 14, 1991.

I am sorry to be forced into a position of name calling and finger pointing but the day has come, it is time for the faithful of the mainline believers that make up the body of Christ to shout ENOUGH! I heard the now infamous "Centerville speech of '83" as I sat not 50 feet from the speakers platform. I promptly returned to the congregation where I was preaching and told the elders in a meeting that "Rubel is in trouble." Brethren, notice the wording of my report. "Rubel is in trouble." It is not that the church is in trouble, it is Rubel that is in trouble! The church is not drifting, Rubel is drifting! The church is not apostate, Rubel is the one forsaking the direction of that which is right! It is sad that one of the brightest minds of the day is departing the faithful path. It is even more heartbreaking to note the growing body of people that follow him! We can no longer ignore the problem or hope it will disappear. It will not! The situation of false teachers and their doctrine must be addressed. In some cases and in some places we have waited too

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late. If you ever had any doubt as to where Rubel stands – listen to the following quote:

My children will not stay with the church I grew up in. They will not be a part of an irrelvalance. They will not be part of a movement which wastes its time arguing, and fighting and bloodletting and carping about things that are fundamentally irrelevant to the world's Christless condition.

Again, please listen to this description of mainline Christian people.

We are becoming like a flea on the back of a large dog, on our way to becoming a dust mite on the back of a flea on the back of a large dog.

Now friends, let me ask you – does this sound to you like a man who has a deep and abiding love and respect for the church of Christ? Someone has changed and it is NOT the church! It is not with any pride or intention to ridicule or hurt that I use these quotes. Rather, I do so to show that there are people among us whose dissatisfaction for the New Testament Church is a matter of public record. My friends, this is not unlike the problem faced by the apostle John and the first century church in identifying and dealing with the anti-christs. Let me call to your remembrance I John 2:18-19,

Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come,

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even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us (1John 2:18-19).

My point in quoting this passage is very simple. The anti-christ is identified in I John 2:22 as the individual or group that does not accept Jesus as the Christ. You could not reject Jesus in the first century and not be an anti-christ. You cannot treat His body with ridicule and mockery and teach and preach against it falsely without being a FALSE TEACHER; and the words that are used to make fun and slander the "old paths" today are as false as the accusation that Jesus was not the Christ in the apostle John's day. Brethren, it is just this serious!

We are very well aware of the fact that there are thousands, yea, even millions of baby-boomers in this country that are returning to religion across this land. I am grateful and delighted that this particular age group is seeking spirituality in their lives. We must be aware that in this group of people born between 1946 and 1964 there are more than 76,000,000 souls. It was not surprising to see brother Shelly rise to the call and champion the cause of the baby boomer movement. The

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baby boomers have been quite vocal that they are not going to settle for religion as it was in years gone by. We are not talking about people who are not pleased to worship in old buildings or to sit on old pews or sing from old song books. We are speaking of a generation of people that want a religion that has no rules or regulations, no laws to adhere to, they are self-expressive in saying that they desire a religion that makes them feel good about themselves. These are generally people that refused in days past to participate in religion for various reasons. Some, because they were carried to worship as children, some because of hypocrites they have noted along the way, others state that they simply were not impressed by "yesterday's religion." Now, these people are ranging from 29-47 years of age and now realizing the need for some type of religious experience – but not that old stuff that has been repeatedly offered year after year for as long as anyone can remember. The whole attitude of the baby boomers has been very well described by a news reporter from CNN and Headline News, as they recently reported, that the baby boomers were seeking something new in the experience of religion and that they "were more interested in the happenings along the way than in the final destination."

Please notice these points that are so

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apparent in today's baby boomer movement. These folks were the typical teenager's of the 1960's and 1970's. These are the folks that resisted the "status quo" and rebelled against government. These are the people of the peace marches and refusing to go to war. They have always displayed a lack of respect to any figure of authority. It is now easily seen that this same lack of respect for authority is evident in the spiritual realm. They believe the Bible to be old-fashioned, out of date, unable to anticipate or deal with the needs of today and today's problems. There is a lack of faith in the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, so why not change them to suit the individual's needs.

My brethren, we have known all our lives that the purpose of the gospel of Christ is to save the lost. The very plan of the gospel is to change the heart and life of the individual to fit the service of God. Today, we are making every effort and attempt to change the gospel of Christ to fit the whims of the individual. When this is accomplished, the gospel is destroyed. It's saving power is gone. It has never been the intention of our Father in heaven to change His Word to fit men, rather to change men to fit His Word! This is the part quickly rejected by the baby boomer generation.

Secondly, these folks are the generation that sat at the feet of the modernist and



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infidels in the places of higher learning. The influence of the finest men of the world is deeply rooted in their lives. They have been subtly perhaps but successfully taught to reject the authority of the Scriptures and to doubt and question the very foundation of the Church. These people are among the most highly educated generation ever produced by this country. The problem we experienced yesterday is clearly being felt today. Our problem yesterday was that we placed the emphasis or premium on giving our children the finest secular education that could be purchased with money and not enough thought was given to educating them in the faith of God. As a result of increased secular education and decreasing Christian education we have a generation that sees nothing wrong with demanding changes in the most fundamental parts of faith. Therein is the danger. If you have any doubt that this is a prevailing attitude, then please secure for yourself the tapes of two speeches delivered last year at the Nashville Jubilee by brother Shelly. The tapes, "The Church Needs To Change," and "Can the Church Survive Change," very clearly speaks for themselves. If you are getting the impression that there is a movement to bring the New Testament Church into the line of mainstream denominationalism, you have just hit the nail directly on the head. The following

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quote from brother Shelly pinpoints the thought and desires of the baby boomer generation.

I am trying to think my way out of a sectarian spirit. I grew up on the context of one. I learned a sectarian spirit. I breathed a sectarian spirit. I exhibited a sectarian spirit and I taught a sectarian spirit. I am embarrassed, I am ashamed. I have repented. I am trying to outgrow it. And I'd like to encourage other people to rethink some attitudes and to rethink some matters that pertain to unity of believers.

Sectarianism is an attitude that holds that only I or my friends and the people close to me can know or learn or teach the truth. It's a position of exclusivism that holds that we're the only ones who can possibly interpret the truth of God correctly and realize its significance for salvation.

There are sincere, knowledgeable, devout, Christians scattered among all the various denominations. Yet, they are separated from one another by credal formulations, human names, cumbersome organizational structures.

The tired, uninspiring event we call worship in traditional churches has to give way to the exhilarating experience of God that exhibits and nurtures life in the worshippers.

Worship is not getting there or going through a boring routine, predictable, you know what's coming next ... the sermon is about as remote from life as it can be. It addresses the 1940's head on and leaves me to face a 21st century without a Word from God. And I leave so empty. Or, depending on the nature of the preaching, I came needing to be bathed in the love of God and to know that He has purged me and that I am clean by His grace, and I leave beaten and bloodied and depressed ... and what I got was a dose of guilt that is just the last kick in the gut I could stand. When people meet God they leave with a sense everything's just about like it ought to be ... If you understand who God is, worship is spontaneous and unavoidable ... its' the holy WOW.

Folks, these are but a few of the statements made by brother Shelly in various places at various times. Almost all of them have been either made for the first time or restated in the Nashville Jubilee. All of these quotes are representative of the modern day movement of baby boomers seeking a new type of religious experience. An experience that makes them feel good, produces no guilt, has no binding regulative laws, seeks to break some things they address as "deep ruts we've worn called tradition." The last statement "deep ruts" were Shellys words describing a capella

singing – singing that is approved in the New Testament. This “new generation” group is being led and championed by teachers that are willing to disfigure New Testament worship in order to please, entertain and gather numbers! ANY person who is willing to disfigure the very order of New Testament worship as set forth by inspired men of God is a FALSE teacher. His doctrine – however pleasing to untaught ears and hearts, is FALSE. The modern day cry that we must not be afraid to change is falling into the souls of people that do not recognize the very PATTERN upon which New Testament Christianity is based, how can they then recognize the danger of drifting away from things steadfast. IF you have ever wondered HOW people could be so gullible as to be taken in and overwhelmed by false teachers, the answer to the riddle is easy, they do not know the difference! It is sad indeed when good, honest, truth seeking people are “taken in” by fair speeches and smooth talkers! Sad, indeed! But NOT NEW! Please recall from the prophet Isaiah 30:10,

Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits.

Can you imagine a generation as that of Isaiah’s day that placed more emphasis on not hurting feelings or causing guilt than on

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whether or not a matter is true? Remember the news commentator's description of our baby boomer religion seekers placing more emphasis on the happenings along the way than on the final destination! Please notice also the similarities in the message of the people in Isaiah's day and the message from people today; therefore the people must be similar. Notice Isaiah 30:9,

That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the LORD.

How long have you known that people want to hear something other than the gospel of Christ? It is very clear today that people prefer ear tickling, back-patting, feel good messages and will quickly reject as "unkind, unloving, and brow-beating," the old Jerusalem style of preaching that has given the church its distinctiveness over the centuries! Brethren, we are well aware that it does matter HOW a thing is stated. It matters just as much WHAT is stated. Please notice as this truth is emphasized in I Kings 1-18. The young prophet is nameless as is the old prophet. Names are not important. Principles of obedience are! The young prophet has been challenged by the words of the Lord as stated in verses 4-10. King Jeroboam has invited the young prophet to his home to refresh himself

and to give him a reward. The young prophet's response was as strong as one man could reply to another:

If thou wilt give me half thine house, I will not go in with thee, neither will I eat bread nor drink water in this place.

Why? WHY would a young prophet refuse the invitation of Jeroboam, King of the Northern Kingdom, made up of ten tribes? Because God instructed him differently! Verse 9 states,

For so was it charged me by the word of the Lord, saying Eat no bread nor drink water, nor turn again by the same way that thou canst.

We have a specific, one time stated command of God that was unalterable. The young prophet followed the Word of the Lord to the letter until he came into contact with the old prophet. The old prophet inquired about his direction, followed and overtook him and asked the young prophet to return to his home to eat and drink. This was an invitation that was once again declined for the same reason. God had instructed him not to eat or drink water in this place! Nothing had changed! The old prophet then stated, in verse 18,

I am a prophet also as thou art; and an angel spake unto me by the word of the Lord saying, Bring him back with thee into thine house that he may eat bread and drink water. But he lied unto him.

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It was not that God did not love fellowship among prophets, it was that He had commanded the young prophet differently because these folks were dwelling in the land of idolaters. Jeroboam had erected two gold calves, one in Dan, the other in Bethel, and people were worshipping them rather than the living God! If you remember the remainder of the story, you know that the young prophet believed the old prophet, went back to the place where he was told by the Lord not to eat nor drink the water and did exactly that which the Lord had commanded him not to do! The old prophet in this case was the false prophet. His credentials did not matter, his experience did not matter, the number of degrees he held did not matter – the only thing that mattered was the fact that he had misrepresented the law of the Lord. The prophet became a false prophet, the doctrine he spoke was false doctrine – it cost the young prophet his life!

False doctrine today is just as dangerous as in I Kings 13. Brother Shelly has stated, and I quote:

It is a scandalous and outrageous lie to teach that salvation arises from human activity. We do not contribute one whit to our salvation.

It may truthfully be stated that we do not EARN

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nor even DESERVE our salvation. But it is clear error to state that we "do not contribute one whit to our salvation." Always, Rubel quotes Ephesians 2:8-9 as proof text that salvation comes by grace.

For by grace are ye saved through faith;  
and that not of yourselves: it is the gift  
of God: Not of works, lest any man  
should boast (Eph. 2:8-9).

The matter of salvation involves activity by God that man cannot provide. This is the grace part. The gospel offered to man is the epitome of God's grace. Then there is activity of man that God WILL not automatically provide – the acceptance and obedience through faith of the gospel that has been offered by and through God's grace. We have long known that,

But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that **cometh to God** must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him (emp. mine, RB) (Heb. 11:6).

Man's faith is displayed by COMING to God, by obeying the gospel offered by and through God's grace. I challenge you to deny that MAN'S COMING to God in Hebrews 11:6 is not the WORKS spoken of in James 2:26.

For as the body without the spirit is dead,  
so faith without works is dead also  
(James 2:26).



God's response toward man is seen in offering the gospel to him (man) by and through His (God's) grace. Man's response is accepting by faith and obeying this marvelous offer of grace. There is an outrageous and scandalous lie involved. Here is the lie: **"man does not contribute one whit to his salvation."** A gospel plan of salvation not obeyed by man leaves him lost. MAN must ACT in obedience!

Finally, brethren, let me close with this thought. The Bible is the inspired Word of God and is alive and potent and pertinent in the lives of men today! God has a plan in dealing with rebellious generations as our modern day baby boomer generation. Israel of old had their very own baby boomer age. Exodus 31:18 states,

And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God.

As Moses delayed in the mount, the people came to Aaron demanding the productions of gods to go before them. Who knows what had happened to Moses. All of the golden earrings were brought together and given to Aaron. The younger generation wanted a god that they could relate to. Does this sound familiar? Aaron took the gold according to Exodus 32:4 and fashioned it with a graving tool and made a

molten calf. He then announced, "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." If they had voted then, Aaron would have been the man of the hour. He would have been the sole occupant of the spotlight. He gave them what they wanted, something else, Something new and exciting, something that they could relate to. These people had no respect for God or the authority of God's message. Rebellion came easy and natural. It was the going thing of the day! God gave Moses the sad news that they had turned from Him to gods of gold, crediting them with their escape from Egypt. Note Exodus 32:15-16,

And Moses turned, and went down from the mount, and the two tables of the testimony were in his hand: the tables were written on both their sides; on the one side and on the other were they written. And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables (Exod. 32:15-16).

You remember the story of Moses descending the mountain with the words of God written upon the stones finding Israel dancing about the calf. Can you possibly imagine how Moses, the man of God felt? Can you possibly imagine how God felt? Israel had actually lost faith in Moses and in God. The message of old was in fact old. It was to them outdated. They needed,

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wanted something new. We see Moses a second time before God in the mount. Did they get a new religion? Did they get a feel-good message that would not produce guilt or make them feel that they had been whipped by the Word of God? NO! Exodus 34:1 records,

And the LORD said unto Moses, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first: and I will write upon these tables the words that were in the first tables, which thou brakest.

Here is the key to preaching to the baby boomer generation. Give the original old-fashioned Jerusalem gospel. After all, we want them in our assemblies. We want their talents in our efforts. We want them in the church. We want them to return to the church, but God forbid that we should change the Word that He has written!

Since the garden of Eden and the first encounter with the father of all false prophets, false teachers and liars, we have been plagued with false teachers and false doctrines. It does not take much change to make a true statement false. The devil in Genesis 1:4 changed only one word as he said, "Ye shall NOT surely die." The teaching of most false teachers is so subtly done and their finished product is so close to truth it may very well be hard to detect.

On those occasions when a false teacher is discovered and his poisonous message is known, what is our responsibility at this point? First, we should try to the very best of our ability to restore the false teacher according to Galatians 6:1;

Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

Then there is the matter of Matthew 18:15-17 as our Lord states:

Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

Have we indeed challenged the erring brethren that teach false doctrines today? In some cases, yes. I know that brother Shelly has been encouraged, yea, even begged, to reconsider some of the positions recently and not so recently taken. He has refused. He has been challenged by faithful brethren to publicly

or privately debate the issues and he has declined. Now brethren, how much longer are we, as the body of Christ, responsible for preaching the gospel to the world to save the souls of men, going to recognize this man as faithful? When, if ever, are we going to publicly let our position be known? I do hope and pray that brother Shelly will realize the error of his way and realize how many thousands of souls he has influenced – and repent and return to the old paths! I can think of nothing that would bring any more joy in my heart than to hear this report! But until then, let us follow the example that John encourages in II John 7-11:

For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. 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.

My friends, verse eleven is a sobering, thought provoking passage of inspired writing. We can no longer sit silently and let our

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brethren be deceived, even partake and support doctrine when it does not meet the standard of the Word of God. If we must anger half of the nation, we are now facing the time when the world needs to see the REAL church of Christ stand up and be recognized! The truth of Jesus' words ring out through the centurion, "Lift up your eyes, and look upon the fields; for they are white already unto harvest" (John 4:35).

## *Chapter Fifteen*

# **Scriptures (Pattern) Under Attack**

*Robert R. Taylor, Jr.*



Robert is a graduate of Freed-Hardeman, David Lipscomb and George Peabody Colleges • Gospel Advocate staff member since 1969 • He has written many books, tracts, and articles in brotherhood publications • Has been with the Ripley, TN, church for almost twenty years • Robert and Irene have two children.

It is a joy supreme to appear upon this third annual lectureship conducted by the East Hill congregation. This lectureship has quickly assumed a leading place among our most effective lectureships. It is truly on the cutting edge. Ardent appreciation is expressed to Paul Sain, the elders and the entire congregation for the coveted honor of appearing on this one and the two previous ones as well.

Jehovah's Holy Book has had more than its share of avowed antagonists who disdained it, disclaimed it, denied it and sought its total destruction. Satan, through serpentine agency, tampered with God's Word in Genesis 3. The tempted couple, Eve first and Adam next, failed utterly in giving loyalty and allegiance to God's Word. Cain, their firstborn, exhibited

deep disdain for the Word of God in Genesis 4. Most of the men who followed Moses and Aaron out of the land of the Nile in the Exodus refused to allow God's Word to direct and dominate their lives. That is why they, en masse, fell in the wilderness short of Canaan. Most of the forty-one kings from Saul to Hoshea and Zedekiah did not respect God's Word. The ones who really did over a lifetime can be numbered on one hand – David, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah and Josiah. Jehoiakim was a hater of God's Word and became its fiery destroyer (Jer. 36).

The Herods of the New Testament despised the law of God and lived as though it had never been given. Pharisees loved man-made tradition far more than they did the Word of God (Matt. 15:1ff; Mark 7:1ff). Sadducees were willingly ignorant of God's Word and denied the power God wielded therein (Matt. 22:29). Judaizers in Paul's day attacked the exclusive authority inhering the new covenant. The Gnostics of John's later life attacked the nature of Christ and rejected the authority of His Word. Look at how little respect the lukewarm Laodiceans gave the authoritative Word of God in Revelation 3.

The Grand Old Book was completed some nineteen centuries ago with John's literary work in Revelation. Since then every fundamental aspect of it has been under

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attack. Roman Emperors hated it and sought to destroy every page of its writings. Their religious successors, the Roman Popes, have been consistent enemies of the Bible whether they were prohibiting their members to read it, were having Catholic kings and queens to burn it or made Catholic canon law and Papal dictums its equal or even its superior. World Religionists have attacked the exclusive place the Bible demands for itself. They prefer their sacred books over the Bible.

Protestants, for the most part, have not been true friends of the Bible. They have written their human creeds and made them more authoritative than the Bible. Many of them today will take anything their preachers say or that they feel as being superior to Biblical declarations and directives. Many Protestant preachers preach a lot of nothing and very little Bible. And more and more of our preachers are joining the ranks of such infamous religionists!

Today, the Scriptures are under attack as far as their inspiration, infallibility, all-sufficiency and authority are concerned.

### **Strange Sounds Among Us**

Far too many of our members are not disturbed at all over the multitude of perversions that flood the Bible market and go under the guise of translations. They are

really mistranslations.

More and more of our preachers are preaching non-Biblical lessons. What they present should not be called sermons! Brother Gus Nichols used to say before his death in 1975 that the Lord had a mighty hard time getting His say into modern preaching. The situation is worse now than when the noble Nichols said it some twenty years ago.

The reputed scholars among us look down their arrogant noses at proof text or book, chapter and verse preachers, the five steppers or the Bible thumpers. They hurl expressions like Bibliolaters, paper popes, legalists, etc., at those of us who are preaching NOW what some of these ONCE preached themselves! I find this amazingly amazing.

B. C. Carr, founding father of the very fine Florida School of Preaching, has listed ten things being seen and heard more and more among us. They are numbered and noted:

1. Salvation is by grace alone. There is nothing man can do toward his own salvation.
2. Others are saying we are saved by faith only.
3. We are told that instrumental music is a matter of tradition or opinion. We should not make this a test of fellowship.
4. Pattern theology is to be rejected. We should be less rigid in our beliefs.
5. The "old paths" mentality should be rejected.
6. We should not believe we are the only

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true church. 7. The scriptures should not be used as proof-texts. 8. We need to give women a more prominent role in the church. 9. Preachers are swapping pulpits with denominational pastors. 10. Fellowship among all who believe in Christ should be practiced.<sup>1</sup>

A professor in one of **our** colleges can write myth as a marginal note to Genesis 1 and be defended by said school and its board. Another professor can deny that Mark 16:8-20 is genuine, authentic Scripture and yet be retained and used widely by the brethren. Two preachers in Nashville, Tennessee, one of them a professor in one of **our** schools, are on written record as saying,

It is a scandalous and outrageous lie to teach that salvation arises from human activity of any sort. We do not contribute one whit to our salvation.<sup>2</sup>

Yet, Rubel Shelly is used widely in our brotherhood and defended with vim and vigor by those who ought to know better.

A Texas man, preacher and elder, recently affirmed that "we are saved by grace plus nothing" and yet, after saying it, was invited to give a major address at one of our schools.

James Woodroof has written a book on how to transition the church into total apostasy and yet he is used throughout the country. Some of our colleges are wild about him!

Wild and reckless statements are

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becoming the noxious norm with many of our professors and preachers. The wilder and more reckless some of them become, the more widely their services are in demand by spineless preachers, naive elders and compromising congregations. Such is amazingly amazing. Before God, it cannot be right!

### **More Specific Sources Of The Sounds**

In his classic, definitive work, **Behold The Pattern**, Goebel Music devotes four lengthy chapters to what liberalistic leaders among us are saying. Everyone he quotes is an adamant foe to the old paths without exception. They are charting new paths upon the seas of speculation and subjectivism which they ask unsuspecting, naive brethren to sail with them. I lift a few statements from his classic word.

Max Lucado says,

There is no secret code. The Bible is a love letter as opposed to a blueprint. You don't read a love letter the same way you read a blueprint.<sup>3</sup>

Stephen Taylor is a former instructor at ACU in Abilene, Texas. He is now a full fledged denominational preacher. His baptismal philosophy now reads:

Whether he baptizes infants by immersion or sprinkling will be the option of the parents.<sup>4</sup>

Larry James is running the mechanical music in worship ball for liberalistic preachers and churches. He is helping the Christian church while staying among us. He blasts those of us who oppose this divisive, digressive innovation.<sup>5</sup>

Randy Fenter attacks the view that the Bible is constitutional. There is no place in his liberalistic approach to the Bible for necessary inference.<sup>6</sup> Implication is a naughty word to every one of these architects of the new hermeneutics.

Randy Mayeux defends grace only, faith only, women prayer leaders, women preachers, various people in denominational churches and blasts conservative churches of Christ in every conceivable way. He says, "There is no human part of salvation."<sup>7</sup>

Brother Music devotes nearly seventy-five pages to Rubel Shelly's plunge into liberalism and apostasy.

Shelly has a very, very low view of Biblical inspiration. He thinks Matthew composed the Sermon on the Mount from memory or from notes he jotted down listening to Jesus.<sup>8</sup>

There are sincere, knowledgeable, devout Christians scattered among all the various denominations.<sup>9</sup> I'm not sure there is any sense in which the law of Moses is abrogated.<sup>10</sup> The kingdom of God...is

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neither the church nor the future state of the saved.<sup>11</sup> Adultery means covenant breaking.<sup>12</sup> And our big concern is, when are examples binding? The answer if never, Never.<sup>13</sup> Pattern theology has been our undoing.<sup>14</sup> I reject a rigid pattern theology.<sup>15</sup> The church must change.<sup>16</sup>

He has nothing but disdain for sermons on identifying marks of a true church.<sup>17</sup> The last letter I wrote Rubel was back in the middle 1980's. I reminded him of what he used to preach on the church and what he had preached in a gospel meeting with us when I labored with the church in Ripley, Mississippi. He wrote me back and said he remembered well those sermons and especially the one entitled, "What is the church?" At the time of the letter he said he still BELIEVED SUCH!! In that sermon he said the church was the kingdom of God. Now he says it is not.

His grace only doctrine comes forth boldly and brazenly when he states,

It is a scandalous and outrageous lie to teach that salvation arises from human activity. We do not contribute one whit to our salvation.<sup>18</sup>

He and Randall J. Harris have put this into **The Second Incarnation**.<sup>19</sup> This is the statement he refused to defend in honorable debate with Garland Elkins though challenged to do so by brother Elkins and backed by the

Knight Arnold elders in Memphis, Tennessee.

I have in my possession a tape of Shelly in which he dealt with the eldership. He stated it was his opinion that a man does not have to be married or be a father to be an elder. He taught this at Woodmont Hills in Nashville, Tennessee, where he is the local preacher. Since he rejects any type of pattern theology why is not his opinion as good as anything Paul wrote in I Timothy 3 or Titus 1?

Brother J. E. Choate of Nashville, Tennessee, is a real Bible scholar in his own right. He is on the cutting edge of defending the truth against liberals in Nashville and middle Tennessee in particular. He has recently written,

Since the 1960's, our brethren tintured with the new theology have, by stealth, been sowing the bitter seed of division. This has been done behind the cloak of pious rhetoric and an avowed dedication to the Restoration motto, "to speak where the Bible speaks."

Leading liberal spokesmen have crafted a "new hermeneutic" which totally rejects an apostolic pattern for the organization, worship, and practices for the "new hermeneutic" alledged in a Christian Conference Scholarship paper that a "rigid pattern theology" must be abandoned. He regards the writings of Luke and Paul as "occasional" documents

without particular reference for churches today.

He then referred to troubled Middle Tennessee churches, the devastating work linked with the Nashville Jubilee and the part played by Rubel Shelly. Relative to a troubled Middle Tennessee church he wrote succinctly,

This was not the case before Rubel Shelly began peddling his theological wares some ten years ago.

The Nashville Jubilee is a hotbed of liberalism. I am deeply ashamed of any preacher, school, or church who upholds the hands and joins in financially or as speakers with Woodmont Hills, Madison, and Antioch, the three Nashville sponsoring congregations of this annual gathering of architects for the apostasy of God's church in the closing part of the twentieth century. Active supporters of this liberalistic effort need to read with care II Chronicles 19:2; Ephesians 5:11; II John 9-11 and Hebrews 6:9.

### **Pattern Authority Defended**

Hebrew terms in the Old Testament such as **mareh**, **tabnith**, and **taknith** reflect standards, measurements, etc. Greek terms in the New Testament such as **tupos**, **hupodeigma**, and **hupotuposis** reflect type, model, exhibition, pattern or an under or lesser type. Webster defines pattern as,



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Anything proposed for or worthy of imitation; exemplar; as a pattern for men. Anything designed as a guide or model for making things, as a dressmaker's pattern.

Pattern concepts permeate the Scriptures, Restoration sermons and writings and current sermons and writings of those still set for the defense of the gospel and not out to restructure, transition and change the church. Those who disdain pattern authority are the architects of apostasy, the builders for backsliding and the leaders of liberalism among us. Neither the Scripture nor the church is safe in their tampering hands of irreverence.

God had a pattern in patriarchy. Adam and Eve knew of it. Their violation of pattern authority cost them the excellencies of Eden (Gen 1-3). Cain and Abel knew of God's pattern of worship. The former rejected pattern authority and was condemned. The latter accepted pattern authority and was blessed (Gen. 4). Enoch knew of God's pattern for three centuries or more as he walked with God. Noah was given a pattern for ark construction and he followed it minutely and precisely as per Genesis 6:22 and 7:5. Had Noah deviated, the big boat would have never floated upon that shoreless ocean. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph knew of God's pattern and they built their illustrious lives in

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obedience thereunto.

God had a pattern in the Israelite Economy. The decalogue or Ten Commandments were constitutional in their noble nature. They were not just love letters, they were laws; they had teeth injected into them. Through later prophets, God added another 603 laws making 613 in aggregate. More than twenty violations of Old Testament law called for capital punishment. There was a balance with about 60 per cent of negatives and 40 per cent of positives. The purpose of these pattern precepts, these measuring mandates was to make a righteous and godly people out of Israel -- not project a good self-image when they heard God's Word read and discussed.

Moses was told upon shaking Sinai that he and Israel were to make the tabernacle and all that pertained thereunto according to the pattern God showed him (Exo. 25:9; Heb. 8:5). Exodus 25-40 exhibit their faithfulness in respecting and abiding by pattern authority.

God had a pattern for their worship. Had this not been the case they would not have known what day to remember and keep holy, what feasts to keep, what animals to offer, where to assemble for central worship, who was to represent them at the altars of the tabernacle and later the temple, etc.

He had a pattern for their lives. He had

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a pattern for their homes. He had a pattern for the preparation they were to make for the coming of Messianic times.

The pattern was there for Aaron and the people did not observe it when they fashioned the golden calf and rendered it worship (Exo. 32). The pattern was there but Nadab and Abihu disrespected it as they engaged in presumptuous worship in Leviticus 10:1,2. The pattern was there but Korah, Abirim and Dathan defied it in Numbers 16 and paid dearly for the chapter of rebellion they wrote as a finale on earth. The pattern was there but Moses and Aaron failed to honor it at the waters of Meribah in Numbers 20. It cost both of them a coveted entrance into Canaan. The pattern was there but Saul rejected it when he officiated at the sacrificial altar and in the matter of the Amalekites (I Sam. 13, 15). The pattern was there for transporting the ark on Levitical shoulders - not upon a new ox cart - but David and the people failed to honor it (II Sam. 6). The pattern was there, but Uzziah failed to honor it relative to who and who should not enter the temple to burn incense (II Chron. 26:16-21). The pattern was there but Jeroboam refused to honor it as he became king of Israel or the Northern Kingdom in I Kings 12. He manufactured his own religion and the fundamental facets of it.

Had there been no pattern or standard in

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patriarchal or Mosaic times, there would have been no disobedience. Yet there was disobedience in numerous cases in both dispensations.

The besetting sin of physical Israel from Sinai to Calvary was a defiant rejection of God's pattern authority over them. They paid but scant attention to it. They flaunted it right and left.

How like them we are today when we want 100 per cent emphasis upon selfish wants and zero per cent on God's pattern for our lives.

Surely, I have proved at this point in our study that pattern authority inhered Patriarchal and Mosaic Dispensations. And pattern authority did not end at Calvary and Pentecost, the new breed of preachers and professors among us to the contrary notwithstanding. If anything, pattern authority inheres the New Covenant even more as our next few remarks will amply prove.

Minus all question or quibble, pattern authority permeates the New Testament for a surety. The Sermon on the Mount was doctrinal in nature and given in the ardent atmosphere of authority (Matt. 7:28, 29). Jesus admonished people with "his doctrine: for his word was with power" (Luke 4:32). He prefaced the giving of the Great Commission with His claim of possessing all power or authority in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18). In that same

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militant, marching context He charged His disciples to teach those they converted "to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matt. 28:20). Regardless of what the liberalistic "new hermeneutics" advocates say to the contrary this is pattern authority.

Twice Paul told the Corinthians he had delivered to them what he had received from heaven (I Cor. 11:23; 15:3). What Paul wrote constituted pattern authority (I Cor. 14:37). He was careful to teach a uniform message in every church (I Cor. 4:17). Were there no pattern it would make no difference at all whether he taught what heaven conveyed or whether his message was geared to what culture dictated and human hearts desired. Minus pattern authority, why would a person rest under heavenly curses if he preached and practiced a different gospel than Paul preached and practiced (Gal. 1:6-9)?

Paul told Timothy to hold fast the form of sound words and to commit to faithful, able men the same doctrinal message Timothy had heard from Paul (II Tim. 1:13; 2:2).

A rejection of pattern authority destroys the types and antitypes of Sacred Scripture. The holy place was a type of the church. The holy place was a part of the tabernacle and later the temple. It would be strange indeed

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if the tabernacle had to conform to the pattern showed Moses on the Sinaitic summit but the antitype had no pattern at all to which it must conform. Pattern authority inheres the concept of the church just as wisely and widely, if not more so, as it did the type – the tabernacle and later the temple.

We have pattern authority in which is to be preached. It is the gospel. Christ, the Word of God (Mark 16:15; Acts 8:35,4; II Tim. 4:2).

There is pattern authority relative to becoming a Christian. Roman Christians had "obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine" which had been delivered them (Rom. 6:17-18). **Form** here is from *tupos* and refers to a mold or pattern. Jesus died, was buried and was raised. In conversion we conform to that marvelous mold or that precise pattern as we bend in posture to death, burial, and being raised. We die to the love and practice of sin; we are buried in water; we are raised again to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:3-5).

Pattern authority permeated apostolic preaching. They echoed on earth what had already been decided in heaven (Matt. 16:19; 18:18). They preached the same plan of pardon wherever they went.

Pattern authority permeates Christ and the church. He is builder, foundation, purchaser, head and Saviour (Matt. 16:18; I Cor. 3:11; Acts 20:28; Eph. 1:22-23; 5:23; Col. 1:18).

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Pattern authority permeates the living of the Christian life as per Matthew 5:3-12; Colossians 3:1-17; I Timothy 4:12; 5:1-2; Titus 2:1-15; II Peter 1:5-11.

Pattern authority inheres our worship. God is the proper object, in spirit governs motive, sincerity, etc., and in truth governs the how – in harmony with the Bible. We are to sing – not play (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). We are to pray (Acts 2:42). We are to preach and teach God’s Word (Acts 20:7). We are to commune weekly (Acts 20:7). We are to give as we have been prospered (I Cor. 16:1-2; II Cor. 9:6-7).

Pattern authority governs organizational matters. Elders oversee; deacons serve; all members work and worship in unison with the truth.

Pattern authority touches the mission of God’s church. Evangelism, edification, and benevolence sum it up marvelously, magnificently, majestically.

Pattern authority governs the names we wear individually and collectively. There is no one exclusive name in each category but each designation should be a Biblical one.

Pattern authority inheres fellowship boundaries. “Big F” and “little f” fellowship brands are Shellyisms – not Scriptural concepts at all. In my book, **The Bible Doctrine Of Christian Fellowship**, I deal in detail with Big F and little f fellowship and the fallacies linked

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thereto. Two imperatives are set forth in Holy Writ for fellowship boundaries – gospel obedience at a point in the past and a present walk in the light of truth (Matt. 12:46-50; I John 1:3ff).

### **Consequence Of This No-Authority Fallacy**

There would be no basis of restoring the church when apostasy takes its lethal toil. There would be no standard to which people could appeal. There would be no model to measure preaching content or responsive action on the part of auditors. There would be no form of doctrine to which a person must subscribe in becoming a member. There would be no measuring stick determining worship, service, lifestyle, mission, designations, fellowship boundaries, organizational make-up or destinies.

No pattern leaves man out on a sea minus chart or compass. And yet, this is where the “new hermeneutics” crowd of liberals is leading our people en masse.

There would have been no restoration movement nearly 200 years ago if James O’Kelly, Abner Jones, Barton W. Stone, Thomas and Alexander Campbell, John Smith and a host of others had been of the “new hermeneutics” order. How could there have been?



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No pattern revives a practice in the days of judges when there was no king in the land and everyone did what was right in his own eyes (Judges 17:6; 21:25). It is a one-way street leading to chaos and anarchy for a surety.

How very vital is pattern authority in Christianity. Without question or quibble it is the bottom line of Christianity.

Those who negate pattern authority in Christianity are enemies of Calvary for a surety (Phil. 3:18-19).

### Endnotes

1 **The Beacon**, Bellview church of Christ bulletin, Pensacola, Florida, December 3, 1992, via **The Harvesters**, Lakeland, Florida.

2 Rubel Shelly, Randall J. Harris, **The Second Incarnation** (West Monroe, Howard Publishing Company, 1992), p. 207.

3 Goebel Music, **Behold The Pattern** (Pensacola, Austin McGary and Company, 1991), p. 114.

4 Ibid., p. 129.

5 Ibid., pp. 131-138.

6 Ibid., pp. 170-185.

7 Ibid., p. 256.

8 Ibid., p. 280.

9 Ibid., p. 274.

10 Ibid., p. 281.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid., p. 294.

14 Ibid., p. 301.

15 Ibid., pp. 302, 303.

16 Ibid., p. 312.

17 Ibid., pp. 296, 297.

18 Ibid., p. 325.

19 Shelly and Harris, op. cit.

20 J. E. Choate, **Yokefellow**, Curtis A. Cates, Garland Elkins – Editors, February, 1993.

21 Ibid.

22 **Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary** (Springfield, G. and C. Merriam Co., 1949), p. 617.

## *Chapter Sixteen*

# **Grace And Faith**

*Winfred Clark*



Winfred is the director of the School of Bible Emphasis •• He began preaching in 1946 •• He is a powerful gospel preacher, a scholar of the Word of God •• He is an elder at Hobbs Street •• He and his wife Polly presently live in Athens, Alabama, working with the Hobbs Street congregation •• They have two children.

To those who know the Bible, the two words, ***Grace and Faith***, will not be strangers. They are surely known by those who read the book of God. In fact, these are two of the cardinal doctrines of the Word of God. These are familiar words to those who have followed the history of restoration preaching. These themes have been repeated over and over by men who helped to carry the gospel across this land and into others. But one could not be true to the book and not emphasize that which demands so much of our attention.

It is said, but there has been much misrepresentation of the truth concerning grace and faith. This has been the case, not only in the world, but also in the church. These have not escaped the devices of Satan to deceive

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the hearts of men. There has been an abundance of error propagated concerning these vital topics. Many people have gone, and are going, into eternity without a proper understanding and appreciation for that which God intended by His grace. Many have not been recipients of that grace because of a failure to properly understand the demands of faith.

We propose to look at these words in the following fashion. We will look at the **importance of each one** of these. We will then look at the **fact that they are not mutually exclusive**. We will see how they are **related to each other**. We will also see how **they are related to other matters of equal importance**. This will not exhaust the study of such but perhaps it will enrich our lives as we stop and meditate on these matters.

### **The Nature Of Grace And Faith**

How does the Bible address the subject of grace and faith? How are these described? How should they be viewed by us today?

We will begin with the **nature of grace**. What do we mean by grace? What does the Bible mean? Allow us to go back to the first usage of the word in the King James Version. This will be found in the book of Genesis. Notice, "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord" (Gen. 6:8). Now we find ourselves at a

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place where a thing is first mentioned. What did it mean at that time? If you will look at your American Standard Version, you will see it using the word "favor." We can better understand this when we look at what this grace did for Noah. Did not God give Noah some instructions as to the building of the ark? He did just that (Gen. 6:14). But in the giving of those instructions you will find God favoring Noah. He is helping to provide for Noah a way of escape from the flood. Without these instructions you would find no difference in the fate of Noah and the others with whom he lived. We need to be careful to note that this is a description of the grace of God. Remember that this is grace in the eyes of the Lord. So we are talking about the grace of God extended to sinful man. This has to do with God's favor toward man. We have often heard grace described as "unmerited favor." We can be sure that any favor God will show to man is "unmerited." We know such would have been the case in the day of Noah. We know that such would be the case in our own day. But, one of the things we want to underscore is the fact that grace has to do with the favor of God. We know that such grows out of His love and kindness toward man. This is spelled out by Paul when he says,

But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even

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when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together in Christ (by grace ye are saved) (Eph. 2:4-5).

Here is one who is well aware of the source of grace. He knows that such is of God and that it is from his love, kindness, mercy, that we can enjoy His grace.

Again and again we are reminded of grace, but we are also reminded that such is "of God" (Acts 11:23; 13:43; 14:26). These are but a few of the many instances where we are reminded of this great fact.

Grace is said to also be "of Christ." Peter refers to such in Jerusalem when he reminds all those gathered,

We believe that though the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved... (Acts 15:11).

Remember also that the Holy Spirit is said to be the "Spirit of grace" (Heb. 10:29). So all the divine persons are involved in the matter of grace.

What is the nature of faith? What do we mean by the term? W. E. Vine says: "primarily, firm persuasion, a conviction based upon hearing." It also has to do with the matter of trust (Rom. 3:25). Thayer said: "Conviction of the truth of anything, belief." So when we speak of one's faith, we speak of what one's believing or one's convictions about spiritual matters. Many times the words faith and belief

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are used synonymously. Take the case of the Lord's dealing with Thomas. Listen to what He said to Thomas when he was doubtful.

Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing (John 20:27).

Jesus surely had the same thing in mind when He refers to faith and belief in the same breathe. This is also seen in the Hebrew letter where the writer says,

But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is... (Heb. 11:6).

So the one who did not believe would not have faith, but the one who did believe could come to God because he possessed the necessary faith.

There are numerous illustrations one can find in his Bible that will help him to see just what faith involves. Take for example, the passage that is so very familiar to those who read the Roman letter.

... faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God (Rom. 10:17).

So whatever faith is found to be; we know that such is of the heart and mind. But this should not surprise us for Paul said,

For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness... (Rom. 10:10).

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So he clearly affirms that such is of the heart. If we take these two passages together we would conclude that one accepts from the heart the evidence presented to him by the hearing of the Word of God and these become the basis of his conviction. This will enable one to form convictions about matters such as God and His promises. This will in turn produce in his heart the kind of trust and reliance demanded.

We can see something of the nature of faith by John's writing where he says,

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).

Again, we will find evidence presented. This evidence is compelling evidence that is of a supernatural nature. It is the kind of evidence that one would be forced to accept as being valid and reliable. This would produce in the heart of such a person that thing which is called "belief." That is another way of saying that this would produce faith. This will tell us something of the nature of faith.

As we look at the matter of faith, we see this to be a responsibility on the part of man. This is the way Paul saw it. He said, "With the



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heart MAN (caps mine) believeth" (Rom. 10:10). This is something that man is involved in. This is not something that God does for him. It is man who does the believing (John 3:16; 8:24).

### **It Is Not Grace Alone, Or Faith Alone**

Yes, there are cases where one may be told that one is saved by grace alone. I, along with others, have heard men say, "It is grace plus nothing, minus nothing." This would mean that one's salvation would all be on the part of God. But this is a part of the consequence of the old Calvinistic doctrine. One can return to the religious discussion of the past and he will find such debates as the Cayce-Srygley discussion. One of the propositions in that discussion was: God gives eternal life to an alien sinner without condition upon his part. This would mean that the sinner's salvation is all of grace. But if salvation is all on the part of grace without any condition, then if one were not saved it would be because grace did not save. But if it is without a condition on the part of man, then if one were not saved, it would be because God did not, by His grace, save him. But if God saved one from sin by grace alone without condition, would He not be obligated to save everyone that way? If He did not, would He not be a respecter of persons? But did not Peter say that God is not

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a respecter of persons (Acts 10:34)? So, we can know beyond the shadow of a doubt that it is not grace alone.

We also know that it is not faith alone. Yes, we are well aware of the fact that many believe and teach that, "man is saved by faith alone is a most wholesome doctrine and very full of comfort." We also know that such may be wholesome to some, but it is contrary to the will of God. Take a moment to look at what James had to say about the matter. He said,

Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only (James 2:24).

Could we find a passage that would state this more clearly? If this does not say one is not saved or justified by faith only; how would you have to say it for it to mean one is not saved by faith only? This is as clear as it can be. There are other passages that will prove beyond a doubt that one is not saved by faith alone. Were there not a number of the rulers who believed on the Lord but would not confess Him (John 12:42-43)? John said they believed; but that is all they did. Would they be saved? If one is saved by faith alone, these would surely be saved.

Men need to take into account the fact that if one is saved by faith alone; he is saved by a dead faith. This is the way James would

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describe such a faith. You will find him describing such a faith at least three times in a very short span. Notice,

Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone (James 2:17).

He also later asked a question,

But wilt thou know O vain man, that faith without works is dead (James 2:20).

Again, he said,

For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also (James 2:26).

Take a moment to reflect on this matter and see what you will have. He speaks of faith without works as faith alone. But of that faith he will say that it is a dead faith. Now is man saved by a dead faith? Absolutely not, and you have James, the half brother of our Lord, as a witness to that effect. One is not saved by faith alone.

From the above we can conclude that grace alone does not save, and neither does faith alone save.

### **Grace And Faith Are Closely Related**

It is interesting to see the number of times one can find both grace and faith referred to in the same passage. At least five times in the New Testament you will find the terms faith, or believe, together in the same passage. Take

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a moment to look at these cases. First, there is the time when a discussion was under way in Jerusalem concerning the Gentiles. It had been said that they would have to follow the law of circumcision (Acts 15:1). After there had been discussion of this, Peter said,

But we believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they (Acts 15:11).

In this case the believing is that concerned one being saved by grace. Two, we have the case of the work of Apollos in Achaia. Here he helped those "which had believed through grace" (Acts 18:27). This would mean that they have had the opportunity by the grace of God to believe. Again, you will find these together in Paul's letter to the Romans. Here he says,

Therefore it is of faith that it might be by grace (Rom. 4:16).

One could not say in this context that one is saved by faith alone or grace alone. But note also, Paul would later say,

By whom also we have access by faith into this grace... (Rom. 5:2).

Faith is here set as the key to the riches of God's grace. Finally, we have that passage where Paul writes to the saints in Ephesus.

For by grace are ye saved through faith: and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God (Eph. 2:8).

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If there had ever been any doubt about the relationship of grace and faith, this passage should surely solve the difficulty.

We need to take the time to look more closely at these in relation to our salvation. One can do this in several ways. He can take a look at other passages that speak of the subject of salvation. For example: we have our Lord's discussion concerning salvation with His apostles. He told them to,

Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved... (Mark 16:15-16).

There is no question at all about the matter of salvation being discussed at this point. We know that Jesus knew how men were saved. He set forth the conditions and He paid the price for man's redemption. Would any of us say of the person who believed and was baptized, that he was not saved by grace? We all know what Paul and others have had to say about the matter of salvation being by grace. In view of that we would not deny grace was present in that case. This would have to be an understood thing. But wherein would one find the grace of God in this case? Would it not be found in the message of the gospel to lost sinners? Paul spoke of "the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24). The gospel is both a product of God's grace and a message

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of His grace. Without the gospel one could not be saved. He would not know of the provisions of grace, such as "he by the grace of God tasted death for every man" (Heb. 2:9). But the gospel faithfully preached will present the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ (I Cor. 15:1-4). But the gospel faithfully preached will also set forth the commands of the gospel. Is this not the case with Peter and the apostles on Pentecost? Surely we would all agree that they did indeed preach the gospel to those who were assembled. These were told,

Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made this same Jesus whom you have crucified both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36).

There can be no question about the essentiality of faith. This was required. When they would ask what they were to do (Acts 2:37). They were told to...

Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38).

There can be no question about the fact of demands being set forth by the preaching of the gospel. If they would ever be saved by the grace of God, and that is the only way they could be saved, then they would have to obey the commands that are spelled out by

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the gospel. So the gospel facts and commands are definitely related to man's salvation by grace. There can be no place in the preaching of the apostles for one to think of "grace alone" or "faith alone." We do find that both grace and faith are involved in the salvation of these who responded to the call of the gospel (Acts 2:41).

There are other instances where this can be seen. We have the record of the conversion of Cornelius. You will find that he is told to send for a man by the name Simon, whose surname is Peter (Acts 10:5). This man was to come and it is said, "he will tell thee what thou oughtest to do" (Acts 10:6). We have the record of the fact that Peter did indeed go to the house of this Gentile. Peter spoke of Cornelius and those who were gathered about the fact that "in every nation, he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness is accepted by him" (Acts 10:35). He also spoke of the fact that "whosoever believeth in him shall receive the remission of sins" (Acts 10:43). We also know that Peter commanded that same group to be baptized in the name of the Lord (Acts 10:48). This inspired apostle set forth the conditions and commands.

If you take the time to look closely you will see that these Gentiles were saved in the same way that the Jews were saved on Pentecost. The same preacher spoke to both

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groups was inspired by the same Spirit. You would therefore expect the same commands to be given for these would have heard the same gospel. If you have any doubts that this is the case, then all you have to do is move over a few chapters in the book of Acts. After Peter had preached both sermons you will find him in Jerusalem discussing the matter of the salvation for the Gentiles as well as the Jews. Take a moment to look at what he had to say.

Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe, And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us: and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith (Acts 15:7-9).

So Peter would say there is no difference in the way they were saved and the way the Gentiles were saved. But was grace involved in their salvation? Let Peter give the answer:

But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved, even as they (Acts 15:11).

So there is absolutely no question as to both the Jew and Gentile being saved in the same way by the gospel. They would have to obey the commands of the gospel in the name of



Jesus Christ. But their obedience would not negate the grace of God. Neither would grace exclude the commands of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We can therefore see both the matter of faith and grace involved in every case of conversion in the book of Acts. There is no exception to this. There was none in the days of the New Testament, and there is no exception today. Yes, we are saved by grace and faith, but by neither of these alone.

## Notes

*Chapter Seventeen*

# **Concerns With Rubel Shelly And Others**

*Curtis A. Cates*



Curtis is the director of the Memphis School of Preaching • Trained preachers for many years • Holds various degrees from universities • Taught virtually every Old and New Testament book • Author of several books, tracts, etc., including a recent exposee on Rubel Shelly • Annette and Curtis will both speak in this lectureship.

The theme of the **Third Annual Truth In Love Lectureship**, conducted by the great East Hill church and directed by brother Paul Sain, is an excellent and timely one; indeed, *"Fundamentals Of The Faith"* should be emphasized regularly. Very true is the observation that the Lord's church is always but a generation from apostasy, and Satan is never happy when the truth is exalted and when the old Jerusalem gospel is being sounded forth.

This decade is witnessing the greatest barrage of antagonism against and the most ruthless ravishing of the beautiful bride of Christ in very many decades. Unfortunately, these attacks are coming from within her own ranks! This phenomenon is not new; see Paul's



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century, and it happens repeatedly today, thus John's urgent warning,

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world (I John 4:1).

Regrettably, the subject of this assignment, brother Rubel Shelly, is just such a person. Several decades ago, brother Shelly was greatly admired among adherents to the Word. He defended and proclaimed the pure gospel with vigor, with solid Scriptural teaching, and with genuine love for lost souls. His works were widely read and used in Bible classes. The author used some of his works in such classes. They were true to the Word and well-written. However, that has changed! His latest works are filled with speculation, subjectivity, sectarianism, and modernism, and most of his sources are modernists. An examination of the footnotes in the book he co-authored with Randall J. Harris, **The Second Incarnation**, makes that very evident.

We love brother Shelly. He is a man of great ability. We plead with him to return from his error. We feel very hurt that he departed from the truth he once preached. However, we still must oppose his error, as he once did so powerfully. Two decades ago, in Memphis, Tennessee, he stated on **The Truth In Love** radio broadcast, entitled, "What Is Your Attitude

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## Toward Truth,"

Do not be swept away by liberal theology and false doctrines which tell you that you cannot know the truth and be absolutely certain about what is right and wrong in religion. Take your stand for truth today and resolve to be guided by the authority of the Word of God in everything you believe, teach, and practice! (Sermon No. 307).

In another radio broadcast of the Getwell Church of Christ, entitled, "Liberalism Among Churches Of Christ," he urged,

The great "silent majority" in the church must quit keeping silence. The people of God must be informed and alert on issues of the day and have the courage to speak and live divine truth (R.B. Sermon No. 315, April 9, 1972).

Again having in the same sermon exposed "left-wing magazines (such as Mission and Integrity)" and what was being heard from pulpits and youth seminars against "old fashioned preaching on baptism, the one church and instrumental music," he warned, "We are being brainwashed into shying away from controversies and debates."

Ironically and sadly, **now** Shelly is an editor of arguably the most "left-wing (as he puts it)" and modernistic magazine among brethren, **Wineskins**, and steadfastly refuses to debate – and "brainwashes" people

against debates.

The author recently refuted the Rubel Shelly–Randall Harris book, **The Second Incarnation**, in a work entitled **The Second Incarnation: A Pattern for Apostasy**. The purpose of this chapter is to contrast the Biblically sound and lovingly aggressive affirmation and contending for the primitive, New Testament faith which was once for all delivered (Jude 3) of the former brother Shelly, with the “second incarnation” and “pilgrim church paradigm,” which constitute an outright rejection of the pure gospel of Christ and an acceptance and defense of the sectarian and modernistic theology of the “new hermeneutic” of the present brother Shelly. We steadfastly persist in and affirm the scriptural mandate to be “set for the defense of the gospel” (Phil. 1:16) and to “contend earnestly for the faith” (Jude 3), as brother Shelly once affirmed, thus this chapter.

### **The Former Rubel Shelly**

Brother Shelly once held that the mouths of false witnesses must be stopped, as Titus affirmed,

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. For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the

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circumcision: **Whose mouths must be stopped**, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake (Titus 1:9-11).

He said in his excellent book, **Liberalism's Threat to the Faith**, marketed in the early 1970's as "A Simple Studies Publication,"

Although some today would discourage the exposure of false doctrines among brethren, it should be remembered that the Apostle Paul exposed error and called the names of those teaching it (cf. II Tim. 2:16-18) (p. 3).

### **1. The former Rubel Shelly warned against constant change.**

In a Spiritual Sword article, "Some Marks of Modernism,"<sup>1</sup> brother Shelly observed, "Some liberals are very open about their modernistic beliefs and practices and are avowedly intent on *restructuring* the church" (April, 1972, p. 42). In his article on "Restoring the New Testament Church," he correctly wrote,

Change is the rule in human knowledge and pursuits. Thus many have supposed that change must also be the rule for the Christian religion.

But change is not the rule in divine knowledge and workings. Permanence, not change, is the distinguishing mark of the work of God as opposed to the work of men. Our God is not fickle and inconsistent. He is all-powerful and





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our own philosophy to oppose it (liberalism)," Shelly wrote, "God has given us the definite answers to Liberalism's errors in the Word" ("Some Basic Errors of Liberalism," SS, October, 1969, p. 41).

In "The Example of Paul in Evangelism," brother Shelly warned against letting "the pseudo-intellectual wave that is sweeping our great brotherhood engulf us." We must not abandon Christ, the Bible, and the church for the "quicksand of relativism and humanism," the social gospel, or human philosophy (SS, December, 1970, p. 42). The "only reliable guide ... unto unity is the Word of God. Not councils, traditions or subjective feelings" ("What About the Ecumenical Movement," SS, July, 1972, p. 33). He further warned in "The Present Rebellion Against Authority" against "God-denying human philosophies," existentialism – "anti-authoritarian philosophy," which "denies all absolutes and refuses to recognize the right of ... even God to command obedience" (SS, October, 1972, p. 5).

In his radio sermon "Liberalism: What Do We Mean," Shelly condemned religionists who adapted Christianity to philosophy, and "thus was born theological liberalism." "Philosophy was allowed to lead theology around by its nose. The theologians gave up without a fight and accepted naturalism" (R.B. Sermon No. 314, April 2, 1972). Even "mysticism has

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invaded Protestant churches" (R.B. Sermon No. 307).

**He held that one can know the truth, and that truth is absolute.** In a Gospel Advocate article, "Can Man Know the Truth?" Rubel wrote, "In other words, we have held that truth is absolute and that man has the ability to comprehend it" (December 18, 1969, p. 805). And, that truth is universal: "It cannot be true for some and false for others" (Ibid.); further, the apostles "spoke truth which is eternally valid" (Ibid., p. 813). "We have a 'Thus saith the Lord' for the plan of salvation and can know that we are safe in following it" ("Restoring," SS, July, 1970, p. 45). He spoke of the "simplicity of that is in Christ" (Ibid., p. 47). It is "not a blind, unreasonable, 'leap-in-the-dark' type of faith," but is "based on the strongest sort of evidence" ("If Ye Love Me...", SS, April, 1970, p. 45). "Man can know the truth and know that he knows it" ("The Importance," SS, January, 1970, p. 52). "We may know of God's will for us. The scriptures are our only sure guide in spiritual matters" ("Some," SS, October, 1969, p. 41).

The Bible is the "source of absolute truth," and it is the "inerrant revelation of the will of God to men in propositional form" ("Can the Bible Be Trusted Completely?" SS, October, 1971, p. 40). Brother Shelly stated regarding miracles that the New Testament is the

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"absolute standard (and 'objective standard') by which all men may objectively evaluate such claims" ("No One Has the Gift of 'Tongues' Today!" SS, October, 1970, pp. 42,43). Opposing situation ethics, he wrote,

By the same token (as setting aside the rules in football), life cannot be lived if men set aside the rules of God as given in the Bible or claim that every situation is an exception to those rules ("The Present," SS, October, 1972, p. 6).

In "Is There An Absolute Standard of Morality," brother Shelly said, "The agnostic denies any absolute authority because he says his knowledge is too meager to be final and absolute." Shelly answered saying,

Each man is not left to set his own standards. God has set standards in His word by which we must abide (SS, July, 1971, pp. 45,47).

To turn away from that standard in morals and religion is "unrighteousness," he said (Ibid., pp. 47,48). He described one rejecting these truths as "a man standing on quicksand and having his head in a fog! He has no security, no sense of direction" ("How Should Men Regard the Bible?" SS, July, 1972, p. 46). In his radio sermon on "Can Men Mock God," he correctly affirmed, "He saves only those who come to a knowledge of His revealed will and have been freely obedient to it. Men are

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trying to mock God who seek salvation by any other means" (R.B. Sermon No. 305).

**He taught that we can, indeed must, obey the truth.** "Nobody will be unsafe if he simply takes the New Testament and follows its directions in every detail" ("Restoring," SS, July, 1970, p. 46). Thereby, "We can **know** that we have received divine salvation" ("The Importance," SS, January, 1970, p. 53).

No man who has access to a copy of the Bible can plead ignorance of God's will!  
 ... God has ... communicated his divine requirements ... Woe unto the person who refuses to take the time and expend the necessary energy to learn and obey them (Ibid., p. 54).

Further, he observed that obedience to the Word is not bibliolatry (Ibid.). Such obedience must include, Shelly said, "immersion for the remission of sins" ("The Example," SS, December, 1970, p. 42). "As surely as a man refuses to receive and obey the truth, he condemns himself" (R.B. Sermon No. 307).

**3. The former Rubel Shelly defended the New Testament as a pattern.** He spoke of the "pattern of authority," which possesses the "very authority of God in itself" ("Can," Gospel Advocate, December 18, 1969, pp. 805, 813). This pattern he said to be "simple," as well as that which "must be faithfully followed" ("Has the New Testament Church

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Been Restored," GA, December 16, 1071, p. 794). He wrote that the New Testament pattern is "fixed," "permanent," "the standard in religion," "a once-for-all revelation," "binding," not "to be changed from generation to generation," "our authority for everything we believe or practice in religion" ("Restoring," SS, July, 1970, pp. 43,44).

Urging "the imitation of New Testament **examples** of devotion to God's will," he stated, "... if we follow the **New Testament pattern** of teaching and practice, we will be exactly (emp. supplied) what those early disciples were - Christians only" ("The Example," SS, December, 1970, p. 39). "We must follow the pattern given from heaven" ("The Present," SS, October, 1972, p. 4). In "Should You Change Churches," brother Shelly said, "If your church is organized differently than the church of the New Testament, you need to change churches. According to the scriptural pattern, each congregation..." (R.B. Sermon No. 302).

What is that pattern? It is the New Testament (R.B. Sermon No. 307, p. 4).

... it will not be enough to restore the ethical teachings of Jesus and the zeal of the early disciples. We must restore not only the "spirit" of New Testament Christianity but also the plan of salvation, the worship and organization of the church described in the New Testament! ("Restoring," SS, July, 1970, p. 44).

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He continues to urge that "we must be loyal to the teachings of Christ and His apostles (not just to the teachings of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, CAC).

Loyalty to the doctrine, work and worship of the church of the first century will be necessary in order for the restoration plea to be realized (Ibid.).

They (those who "minimize the role of the church in God's plan for man's salvation") are quite fond of encouraging people, "Seek Christ and not the church!" These statements are as false and misleading as they can be. Christ cannot be separated from the church ("You can be a Member of the church," SS, July, 1970, p. 35).

Indeed, the pattern is the apostles' doctrine; "those apostles and prophets have written the Word of God" ("Is," SS, July, 1971, pp. 47,48).

It will not do for an individual to say that he is trusting a **person** instead of a **book**, that he is relying on the authority of the person Jesus rather than the authority of the Bible ... To attempt to separate Jesus from the written Word is to undertake an absurdity ("How Should Men Regard the Bible?" SS, July, 1972, pp. 46,47).

Could/can God communicate that pattern to man? The former Shelly affirmed that He could! Shelly said,





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#### **4. The former Rubel Shelly contended that the New Testament church can be/has been restored.**

... members of the churches of Christ do not consider themselves members of a denomination founded in the nineteenth century by Alexander Campbell but members of the church spoken of in the sacred Scriptures.

But recently there has been a great outcry against the validity of the plea for restoration. Brethren have said that the New Testament church has not been restored. They contend that we are only striving toward that goal – as are people in “other denominations” ...

I categorically deny the notion that the restoration plea is invalid. I also deny that the goal of restoration is yet unrealized (“Has,” GA, December 16, 1971, p. 793).

He urged that we are “simply members of the church spoken of in the sacred scriptures,” not of a denomination (“Restoring,” SS, July, 1970, pp. 42,43).

There is a church in the twentieth century which is organized just as the church was organized in the first century. There is a church today with the same creed and name as the church had in the first century (Ibid., p. 47).

Yes, you can know that you are a member of the right church, **Christ’s**



true church of Christ and become something less (R.B. Sermon No. 315).

**5. The former Rubel Shelly held the church actually to exist, and to be sufficient for its mission and work.** The church is not only "striving for that goal (of restoring the New Testament church)" ("Has," GA, December 16, 1971, p. 793), Shelly said, but "We are the body of Christ..." Brother Shelly spoke of the attempt by some to affirm that the church has not been restored.

As "proof" of their contention, such brethren offer the evidence of failures on the part of both individuals and churches to care for the needy, love men of all races and classes and present an example of moral perfection to the world.

Denying this so-called "proof," he answered,

What about the shortcomings of individuals and churches in the areas mentioned earlier? The church in the days of the apostles was not a perfect church in all areas of its performance, but it was Christ's church because of the doctrine of Christ! (Ibid., pp. 793,794).

... the Bible leads one to perfection in God's service. This does not mean that people will become sinlessly perfect, for such is not within the power of humans. Instead, it means that through obedience to the word of God one will receive all the necessary abilities and attributes which he must



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not have the right to revise and tamper with the King's laws, for Christ is an absolute monarch ("Some," SS, October, 1969, p. 42).

We have "citizenship in the kingdom of God, which is the church (cf. Matt. 16:13-18; Col. 1:13)" ("You," SS, July, 1970, p. 34). "When the kingdom was established on the first Pentecost following the resurrection of Christ, three thousand people entered it in one day!" (Ibid., p. 34).

**7. The former Rubel Shelly urged Christians to follow examples of the faithful of the early church.** In fact, he wrote a whole article on the example of the apostle Paul, stating, "The Bible encourages the imitation of good men and women as a means of learning to please the Lord." Praising the examples of the Old Testament characters, he moved on to observe, "...if we follow the New Testament pattern of teaching and practice, we will be exactly what those early disciples were."

There is no other character mentioned in the New Testament, except Jesus Christ, who is more worthy of our imitation than Paul the apostle ("The Example," SS, December, 1970, p. 39).

Brother Shelly did sanction the idea that one is to follow only Christ, not the faithful brethren.

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**8. The former Rubel Shelly rejected the idea of "Unity in diversity."** He rejected the liberal definition of fellowship, which "is the recognition of all so-called Christians as equals with those who have been obedient to the one faith." Still further, he rejected the liberal definition of tolerance, which "is the ignoring of doctrinal differences..." ("Some," SS, April, 1972, p. 42). He saw this as harming the zeal of the church.

Furthermore, some people are not interested in evangelism because they want to be careful to be "tolerant of the other person's faith." But what many people are now calling "tolerance" is really sheer lack of conviction ("The Example," SS, December, 1970, p. 40).

How did Shelly define "unity"? "The term 'unity' refers to a situation of harmony, agreement and accord. It has to do with the quality or state of being made one."

To equate religious unity with union, federation, consolidation of different parties into one (regardless of their doctrines and practices) is to make a serious mistake ... not the same as establishing Scriptural unity. ("What," SS, July, 1972, p. 32).

Some would tie us to the denominational world by joining ministerial alliances and participating in inter-denominational religious programs and projects. Others







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submit to immersion in water" ("You," SS, July, 1970, pp. 36,37). The Spirit works "through the gospel" ("The Works of the Flesh," SS, July, 1971, p. 39).

The Spirit shows men how to worship and serve God as Christians in the kingdom of heaven. He accomplishes this through the Word of God ("How," SS, July, 1972, p. 49).

The Holy Spirit does not act, Shelly said, "directly" but "only through the gospel" (Ibid.). He pleaded for those who were "members of churches which teach that before one can be saved the Holy Spirit has to work some sort of enabling miracle on his heart" to leave those false churches (R.B. Sermon No. 302). The Spirit always, according to the former Shelly, whether upon saint or sinner, worked through His gospel.

**11. The former Rubel Shelly affirmed that one must worship only in the prescribed and authorized way.** "... the New Testament authorizes five acts of worship which Christians may – and must – perform" ("Has," GA, December 16, 1971, p. 794). We must "look for the pattern of acceptable worship which is given in the New Testament ... The mere fact that a worshipper desires to do a certain thing in the course of his worship does not mean it would be right for him to do so. Does he have scriptural authority for that

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act?" ("Restoring," SS, July, 1970, p. 42). He named such unauthorized things as incense, mechanical instruments of music, candles, et al. (Ibid., p. 46).

They, like Saul of ancient Israel, have taken liberties with God's instructions and have altered doctrines, restructured the organization of the church and introduced any number of unauthorized practices into her worship (emp. supplied) ("The Present," SS, October, 1972, p. 4).

"We must follow the pattern given from heaven," he continued (Ibid.). See also "Should You Change Churches," (R.B. Sermon No. 302). "God rejects men who practice error ... (i.e., wear the wrong name, are sprinkled, worship with an organ, take the Lord's Supper every six months)" (R.B. Sermon No. 304). An example of unauthorized worship is, "Singing is authorized by the New Testament and instrumental music is not" (R.B. Sermon No. 307).

And, one of the marks he gives for modernism is subjectivism, about which he observes, "In this latter category are to be found a great many young people who are highly susceptible to emotionalism.

**12. The former Rubel Shelly rejected the idea of an "encounter," an element of existentialism, or "crisis theology" – modernism.**

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Contrary to this teaching (that one is saved by a knowledge of the gospel and obedience), there are numerous sects which encourage people to pray for and wait on some sort of encounter with the Holy Spirit in order to be saved ... Salvation does not come through some mysterious experience... (R.B. Sermon No. 305).

Speaking of the chaos in American religion, he wrote,

It is generally held that we are all equally right and equally wrong and that no one can be absolutely sure about anything. Religion is therefore held to be a personal quest for some sort of "spiritual encounter with Jesus" by which one will come to know that he is saved (R.B. Sermon No. 307).

QUESTION, dear reader. Do you see where the former Rubel Shelly was wrong on any of these areas in which he once stood so valiantly and strong? These affirmations are true to "the Book" in every area. However, please give attention to the latest Rubel Shelly.

### **The Present Rubel Shelly**

Brother Shelly wrote, "It is time to become militant in our preaching of truth and opposition to error." He further urged modernistic false teachers "ought to be separated from, rebuked and warned against openly (II Thess. 3:6; Rom. 16:17)" ("Some,

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SS, April, 1972, p. 44). We take no pleasure in having to fulfill his mandate of the Scriptures in brother Rubel's case (or any other; yet, it must be done. We accompany our exposure of his departure from truth with the humble plea that he will repent and return to the Biblical principles which he once held, loved, and defended. Please contrast what he has written recently with his earlier affirmations, point by point.

**1. The present Rubel Shelly is crying out for change.**<sup>3</sup> We must "raise questions continually" (p. 350), and "rethink the theological foundations of the living church" (p. 19). The newness of today's world requires "constant rethinking what it means to be a church" (p. xii). Brethren Shelly and Harris, in **The Second Incarnation**, will "indulge their imaginations" to give us "a theology for the 21st century" (pp. 239, xiii). We must not stay in the "deep ruts" of what brethren have stood for through the years and "limit God" (p. 10). The church "needs to change" (p. 3), they say, or else, "opt for the old wine of religious legalism" (p. 12). "The last thing it (the church) can afford is inflexibility and defiance toward change" (p. 7).

**2. The present Rubel Shelly says we do not have the truth.** Why? It is because man cannot come with anything except "flawed attempts" to understand the Bible (p. xv).

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“...there is no infallible method for interpreting Scripture” (p. 19); thus, truth cannot be known. Therefore, to believe you have the truth is an arrogant attitude. If you “call on the rest of the religious world to be just like us, they will understandably be suspicious” (p. 81). Only the “core truths of Christianity” have “eternal significance” (p. 191). Those are the deity of Christ, baptism, and the Lord’s supper, according to them. A “thus saith the Lord” and a “what saith the Scriptures” are not highly regarded. They would substitute dramatic presentations for the “preacher in a dark suit who quotes dozens of lengthy passages from the Bible” (p. 9). We must not be “proof-texter” with the Bible (p. 27).

**3. The present Rubel Shelly rejects the New Testament pattern.** “We reject a rigid pattern theology” (p. 31). We are not to imitate slavishly “everything the first-century Christian church (not the sectarian use of “Christian,” CAC) said and did” (p. 34). The Scripture “certainly does not present an absolute blueprint for building a church” (p. 36). They abhor the idea of “line-item theology” (p. 57), “a set of doctrines” (p. 62), “our tendency to find and bind rules” (p. 65), “a rigid pattern” (p. 128), and “pointless encumbrances” (p. 245). Of course, we know the Bible to be clear on the fact that there is a pattern, based upon the absolute authority of God (Heb. 8:4-6; Acts

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7:44; Titus 2:7; Rom. 6:17; Jude 3; John 12:48). And, it is understandable and it is not obsolete.

**4. The present Rubel Shelly says the church of the New Testament cannot be restored.** One must not "assume" that to extract "doctrines, organizational patterns, and the like" from the New Testament "would be to create (to restore) the church of the New Testament" (p. 62). "There is no historical prototype of the church for duplication," they say (p. 6). "We have no interest in building a first-century church" (p. 37). "But there is no perfect church to study as a model for imitation" (p. 63). Of course, that rules out the great Jerusalem church where the apostles were (Acts 2:42), the Thessalonian church (I Thess. 1:6-8), Macedonia and Achaia (II Cor. 8,9), as well as great examples such as Paul (I Cor. 11:1), Timothy (I Tim. 1:16), and others.

**5. The present Rubel Shelly holds the church to be flawed, insufficient.** The church, they say, must not claim "to be the sole repository of or channel for God's truth on earth" (p. 58). The Lord's "church is flawed. It is weakened by division. Its call to holiness is belied" (p. 50). For the church to fail to recognize her insufficiency is the "most sinister sin of all" (p. 69). The church "never arrives," but is always a "pilgrim church" (p. 70,71). Is the Bible cited for evidence of this charge

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against the bride of Christ? No, but rather the modernist Catholic writer Hans Kung is cited. Shelly affirmed in West Memphis, Arkansas, that "The true church has never existed" – we are not the "true church ... an arrogant claim." "The church has never existed except in the Father's mind."

**6. The present Rubel Shelly denies that the church is the kingdom.** He quotes Hans Kung, who says that the church "is not the kingdom of God" (p. 75). The kingdom will not exist, Shelly says, until the end of time (p. 75). Until the second coming, "we continue to pray, 'Father, your kingdom come'" (p. 76). They say, "We are still praying for the kingdom to come" (p. 104). Sounds like premillennialism, does it not? Notice this heretical statement: "... the church must always seek the fuller reign of God in its experience" (p. 76,77).

**7. The present Rubel Shelly denies that we are to follow any examples other than that of Christ.** Before anything is done in religion, Rubel says the question must be asked, "Does it correspond to the person, teaching, and lifestyle of Jesus..." (p. 14), the old denominational, worn-out, liberal "Preach the man – not the plan" heresy. The beginning point is "Christocentricity" (p. 28). We are to test the "literacy programs," "soup kitchens," et al. only by Jesus (pp. 29,166).

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Christ, they say, is the sole standard, the "Jesus test," not the early church and Acts through Revelation (pp. 55,63,79,62,55-56). Of course, in their own book, Harris and Shelly appeal to examples and references from the epistles, contradicting their own "theology" (pp. 57,59,62,144,190-191,226, et al.).

**8. The present Rubel Shelly endorses "unity in diversity."** "... the diverse members of the body love one another," though they are divided, they affirm (p. 64). "We dare not claim to be the embodiment of God's heart and mind as Jesus was" (p. 80). Even though we have "denominational traditions," we must not quarrel, they say (p. 201). The church is "fractured," and the Lord's Supper reminds us of that (p. 219). Yet, it tells us, they teach, that there is "room for all at this fellowship." Where do they get their defense for "unity in diversity"? From another modernist, Dietrich Bonhoeffer (pp. 223,59).

**9. The present Rubel Shelly preaches that the Lord's church cannot be identified.** "The church is not immutable" (p. 7). In other words, it is in constant change, or should be, they say. How, then, can one identify it? "There is neither a set of doctrines nor a series of activities that can guarantee the existence of the church" (p. 62). Yet, they contradict themselves thus: "If we impart the spirit of our culture in the church, we will destroy one



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of its identifying marks" (p. 88). The only two identifying marks, they say, are the "central rites of baptism and the Lord's Supper" (p. 211). Now, how do they arrive at this? They neglect most of the "apostles' doctrine" and move to their own "new hermeneutic" and sectarian opinion. Of course, by their own admission, they are theologians. And, evidently, "theologians" do not need evidence nor do they need to respect the authority of the Scriptures.

**10. The present Rubel Shelly says the Holy Spirit leads directly.** He is the "eternal dynamic" (p. xvi), who helps the church to change (p. 4,11). He is one of the "two elements" present in baptism (pp. 48,98). How does this differ from the baptism of the Holy Spirit? He must personally indwell "in order both to validate and to empower their unique experience" (p. 100). "A single Spirit (the active agent) indwelling every member of the Body of Christ draws us together" (p. 110).

**11. The present Rubel Shelly affirms that we should abandon the worship authorized in the Bible for spontaneous, unavoidable celebration.** Our present worship, they say, is "boring" and "irrelevant" (p. 114); our "tired, uninspiring event called worship ... must give way to an exhilarating experience of God" (p. 13). How do we rid ourselves of the "scandalous ... spoil(ing) of

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worship ... (which is) ... dull and boring to ourselves and unattractive to non-Christians" as they charge (p. 139)? We must have "raucous celebration," "spontaneity" (p. 139), "habbub," "planned and spontaneous services," "individuals, groups, and entire congregations" singing (p. 132), "unavoidable" worship, "shouts," "dances" (p. 119), "applause and cheering" (p. 140), "solos" (p. 136), "a narcotic trip into another world" (p. 125), "dramatic presentations by men and women" (p. 9). In fact, when the Holy Spirit gets to "moving" in their services, they may turn out much different than planned; it is the "invigorating presence of the Spirit's fresh breezes" (pp. 132,135). And, He may lead some to testify (p. 138, et al.). Indeed, it is called by them a "holy wow" (p. 139). You see, "The gospel ... does not create worshippers ... We shall need to have fresh revelation of the greatness of God and the beauty of Jesus" (pp. 113,114), they say; we must seek "again to be filled with the Holy Spirit."

### **Conclusion**

Indeed, Shelly has sought change for many years, and he has certainly found it. It did not come overnight with him (Heb. 2:1-3); but, it is so sad! Brother Rubel correctly observed,

A man does not love God in any real and full sense if he is soft and compromising with the gospel. He does not love his fellowmen if he allows them to go on believing, teaching and practicing error without calling the error to their attention (R.B. Sermon No. 315).

What should be the attitude of a false teacher who steadfastly refuses to repent? Sadly, we are reminded of brother Shelly's article, "Oh, for an Honest False Teacher." Of the false teachers who went out from the brethren (I John 2:19), he wrote,

Can anything good be said about such apostates as these? Yes! They were honest ... Surely we can have more respect for a man who is honest and open about his convictions (or lack of them) than for a man who no longer believes the basic doctrines of the gospel but seeks to stay within the body of believers as a subversive. Such a person is not only a heretic Christian, he is a dishonest man.

His final observation about such college professors, preachers, Sunday school teachers, etc. was, "...let them be honest enough to break with us openly and quit their unmanly treason" (GA, May 6, 1971, pp. 283,284).

Regrettably, brother Shelly is still leading away brethren from sound doctrine. For example, the church where he preaches is one of the three sponsoring Nashville congregations

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(Woodmont Hills, Madison, and Antioch) of the Nashville Jubilee, which has done great harm to the peace and doctrinal purity of the Lord's people in Nashville and surrounding areas. He has promoted much of his heresy through this forum, for example, when he affirmed that "to say that baptism is a part of the plan of salvation is a monstrosity." Titus affirmed that the mouths of false witnesses must be stopped.

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. For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: **Whose mouths must be stopped**, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake (Titus 1:9-11).

Let us pray for brother Shelly, but let us beware of false teachers and mark them

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves (Matt. 7:15).

Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and **avoid them**. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple (Rom. 16:17-18).



## Notes

## *Chapter Eighteen*

# **What Does The Future Hold?**

*Winford Claiborne*



Winford began preaching in 1943 • He is the full-time preacher at the West Fayetteville Church, Fayetteville, TN • He has been preaching for over 50 years • He previously taught in the Bible department at Freed-Hardeman University and directed their annual lectureship • Winford and Molly have two sons.

A brand new discipline – futurology – has arisen in the past few decades. The men and women who study current trends to enable them to forecast the future have made some valuable contributions to our political and economic systems. My first encounter with the futurists was in 1970 when I bought and read Alvin Toffler's best-selling book, **Future Shock**. Toffler argued that the future is coming at us so fast and furiously that many of us will suffer from future shock – a condition similar to what anthropologists call "culture shock." Toffler overlooked some very important elements in his predictions, overstated others, but his look let us know that we are living in a rapidly changing world. I vigorously disagree with his assessment of the family's future, but his book

almost certainly served a worthwhile purpose.

Following the publication of Alvin Toffler's book, there has been a flood of books dealing with the future. John Naisbitt, a believer in some aspects of the New Age movement, has produced two best-sellers: **Megatrends: Ten New Directions Transforming Our Lives** and **Megatrends 2000: Ten New Directions for the 1990's**.<sup>1</sup> Russell Chandler, a religion writer for the **Los Angeles Times** and "one of the finest voices in American journalism," has written a very useful and informative book, **Racing Toward 2001: The Forces Shaping America's Religious Future**.<sup>2</sup> Chandler's book is the best of its kind I have found. Every concerned religious leader could spend his time profitably by reading Chandler's book.

Predicting the future is fraught with many pitfalls. Jeane Dixon, America's most famous crystal ball gazer, has made some spectacular predictions which have come back to haunt her. For example, she prophesied that Jackie Kennedy would never marry Aristotle Onassis, the Greek shipping magnate. She married him the next day. She also predicted that Communist China would become a Christian nation by 1959. Edgar Cayce, the famous Kentucky psychic, made numerous predictions which have proved to be false. Douglas Groothuis says that Cayce thought the lost continent of Atlantis would rise again in 1968



or 69.<sup>3</sup> Cayce had secret information from akashic records<sup>4</sup> that the State of California would fall off into the Pacific Ocean by the year 1975. It had not disappeared into the Pacific Ocean in the summer of 1991 when my wife and I visited San Francisco. Why do millions of Americans honor Edgar Cayce when true prophets never make false predictions (Deut. 18:22)?

Several prominent religious teachers have made predictions which have embarrassed the whole field of religion and which were palpably and inexcuseably false. William Miller, one of the founders of Seventh-Day Adventists, insisted that our Lord would return and the world would come to an end in 1843. Since he missed the prophecy, he said he had made a mistake in his calculations – obviously. He set the date for 1844. He also missed that date. After his second miss, he withdrew from active leadership in the Adventist movement and quit setting dates.

Jehovah's Witnesses have been the worst offenders in predicting the end of the age. Judge J. F. Rutherford believed that "millions now living will never die" and wrote a book with that title.<sup>5</sup> Many Jehovah's Witnesses deny that such a book was ever published. But Charlie Campbell of Akron, Ohio, borrowed a copy of the book from Joseph Cox of Louisville, Kentucky, and reprinted it so that

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Jehovah's Witnesses would not be able to deny that the book ever existed. The Witnesses have set several dates – 1914, 1941, 1975, and others – but they seem not to learn from their past failures.

Just recently a religious leader in Korea created a great stir and deceived thousands of people when he affirmed that Jesus was coming immediately. How sad that a religious teacher will mislead his followers and others in such a fashion. Of course, his disciples are not without culpability. If they read the Scriptures even cursorily, they would know the truth about Christ's return.

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 (II Peter 3:10).

The great tragedy is that such false prophecies furnish opportunities for the enemies of Christianity to criticize all so-called "conservatives" or "evangelical" Christians.

I am sure the East Hill elders and Paul Sain do not expect me to make any specific predictions concerning the future. I do not know where the church is going, whether or not there will be a major division and what the outcome of current trends will be. But we

can have some understanding about the future by examining the past and carefully studying the present. There are certain trends – unless checked – which will lead many churches of Christ into apostasy – if those churches are not already there. My responsibility – as I see it – is to identify some of those trends and discuss them as time will allow.

It is my sincere hope and prayer that some digressive steps may be reversed, but from an historical perspective, that is not likely to happen. Once a church starts in the direction of modernism or liberalism, it is almost impossible to prevent the downward trend and to call that church back to faithfulness. There have been notable exceptions (Rev. 2:1-7), but the numbers of churches who have returned to their first love are not too encouraging. The difficulty of getting churches to forsake their liberalism, indifference and ungodliness must not prevent our trying. It is with these introductory thoughts in mind that I address my assigned topic, "What Does The Future Hold?"

### **Examining The Past**

Bible writers often refer to historical events in order to warn and to encourage their readers. The prophet Daniel confessed his sins and the sins of the Israelites.

And I prayed unto the LORD my God,

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and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments; We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments: Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land (Dan. 9:4-6).

Daniel reminded the Jews that their exile in Babylon was a direct result of their ignoring the law of Moses (Dan. 9:13-15).

Malachi accused the Jews of having forgotten God's law and having perverted many of the law's precepts and ordinances. He severely criticized God's people for having broken their marriage commitments to their wives. The Jewish men had dealt treacherously with their wives. Through the prophet, God said to His people that He hated divorce (Mal. 2:14-16). Malachi called the Jews to repentance because they had robbed God of tithes and offerings (Mal. 3:8). He encouraged the Israelites to "remember the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments" (Mal. 4:4).

The New Testament often refers to God's dealings with the nation of Israel. Paul

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reminded the Jews in Antioch of Pisidia of God's choosing them for these special purposes (Acts 13:17). He also told of their delivery from Egypt and their entrance into Canaan (Acts 13:17-19). He mentioned historical details of God's choosing of king Saul (Acts 13:21), David (13:22), and of the work of John the Baptist (13:24-25). Paul gave this historical summary of God's gracious provisions for the Jews to let the people of his day know of God's deep concern for their eternal salvation. Acts 7 (Stephen's dying speech) and I Corinthians 10:1-13 and two more examples of Divine inspiration's appeal to historical events. Paul tells the Corinthians and us:

Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall (I Cor. 10:11-12).

Christians must not only read New Testament historical material; we must be acquainted with the history of the church after the canon was closed. We need to understand, for example, the enormous number of controversies which arose in the early church and throughout history. Harold O. J. Brown, a professor of biblical and systematic theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, has

rendered a great service to all students of New Testament Christianity by providing us with information regarding heretical teachings from the early days of the church to modern times. Brown's book, **Heresies**, points out that some of the controversies were trivial, such as, the number of angels which can sit on the head of a pin. Other heresies were of great importance: Gnosticism, Arianism, Montanism, Adoptionism, etc.

One significant controversy arose over two Greek words: homoousios and homoiousios. If you will examine these two words you will find only one letter more in the second word. The letter iota (our English "i") appears in the second word. The difference between the two words may seem unimportant, but it is not. It is the difference between Christ's being God or being like God. Homo means same; homoi means similar. Is Jesus really God or is He just similar to God?

As all Bible students know, there were prophecies in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 7:15-20) and in other New Testament teachings about expected departures from the faith. Jesus warned of wolves in sheep's clothing who would make havoc of the church (Matt. 7:15). Paul told the Ephesian elders of false teachers who would come from the outside and of those who would arise from within the church – perhaps even within the eldership

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(Acts 20:29-31). The same apostle sought to apprise a young preacher of problems and heartaches which lay ahead (I Tim. 4:1-4; II Tim. 4:1-8). The apostle John wrote:

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world (I John 4:1).

Church historians enable us to know of the specific departures from the primitive faith. One of the first – if not **the** first – departures from the Divine pattern was the corruption of God's governmental plan. When Paul warned the Ephesian elders of wolves entering the flock and of perverse behaviors even among the elders, he may have had in mind the changing of God's means of governing the church of God. At least, we know there were many changes in church government. The Roman Catholic Church with its complicated hierarchy – popes, cardinals, archbishops, bishops, parish priests, etc. – could hardly be further from the simple New Testament governmental structure. God cannot be pleased that men have substituted their preferences in the government of the church for His will.

The Roman Catholic Church preached and practiced doctrines for which there is no Divine authority. Where did the Catholics obtain the doctrines of purgatory, the works of

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supererogation, extreme unction, veneration of the saints, the infallibility of the pope, the bodily assumption of Mary and a host of other extra-biblical doctrines? These doctrines cannot be found in the Word of God. They have arisen from tradition – in many cases, very flimsy tradition – but when a church is ruled by a pope and a college of cardinals, it can do whatever it wishes. If it wants to add doctrines or practices, it has its own authority for doing so. The Roman Catholic Church does not know or wishes to ignore Paul's admonitions to the church at Colosse,

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord (Col. 3:16).

We have a right – an obligation – to ask the Roman Catholic Church and all other religious organizations: "By what authority do you do these things? and who gave you that authority?" (Matt. 21:23).

Both Jews and Gentiles became members of the New Testament church by confessing their faith in Jesus Christ (Rom. 10:9-10), repenting of their alien sins (Acts 17:30-31), and being baptized into Jesus Christ for the remission of sins (Mark 16:15-16). The Roman Catholic Church and later various Protestant denominations changed God's plan for saving



man. The Catholic Church substituted sprinkling and pouring for baptism – immersion (Rom. 6:3-5; Col. 2:12). When the reformers began their work, they retained this doctrinal aberration – at least, some of the denominations did. Many of the Protestant groups also denied any connection between baptism and salvation. They insisted that men are saved by grace alone through faith alone.

The Lord's Supper was changed considerably by both Roman Catholics and Protestants. The Roman Catholic Church pretended that the priest's blessing of the fruit of the vine turned it into the actual blood of Jesus Christ. When he blessed the bread it became the very body of our Lord. This doctrine is known as transubstantiation. The Lutherans denied that the fruit of the vine became the blood of Christ and the bread his actual body. Instead, they said the Lord's Supper contained the actual body and blood of Christ. Both the Roman Catholic Church and most Protestant churches removed any requirement for keeping the Lord's Supper every Lord's day, as Christians in the early church did. This fact is admitted by many Roman Catholic and Protestant scholars. "By what authority" did they make these changes?

Music in the early church was vocal, as admitted by John Calvin, Martin Luther, Adam Clarke, John Wesley, and Charles Haddon

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Spurgeon, one of England's most celebrated Baptist preachers, and many others. There is not a man alive who can take the New Testament and find authority for using instrumental music. Adam Clarke records these words from John Wesley, the founder of Methodism:

I have no objection to instruments of music in our chapels, provided they are neither HEARD nor SEEN.

Clarke comments:

I say the same, though I think the expense or purchase had better be spared.<sup>7</sup>

But when men base their worship to God on what they want – not what God wants – they are free to do whatever pleases them.

Church history – including restoration history – informs us that what is happening today among churches of Christ is not new. For two thousand years, there have been many attempts to change Bible doctrine, church organization, church membership, the plan of salvation, the Lord's Supper, music and many other items. None of this is particularly comforting, but we must know about it in order to avoid going the way of Roman Catholicism, Protestant denominationalism and some groups within the restoration movement. Old Testament history and church history should help us to understand Paul's admonition to

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the Corinthians.

Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall (I Cor. 10:12).

### **Studying The Present**

When I began to preach the gospel fifty years ago, if someone had told me that gospel preachers in the late years of this century would be preaching Calvinism I would have thought they had lost their minds. But it is happening, as every preacher of the gospel knows – or could know if he kept up with our brotherhood. Rubel Shelly, a former teacher at Freed-Hardeman University, argues that salvation “rests wholly and exclusively on what a Jewish peasant did 2,000 years ago.”<sup>8</sup> If Rubel’s assertion were true, then salvation would be universal since God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34-35). Rubel further says, “Preaching is no more a matter of merit than salvation. Both are entirely by grace.”<sup>9</sup> If preaching is by grace alone – “entirely by grace” – and man makes no contribution of any kind, why does Rubel spend so much time in preparation for his sermons, books and lectures?

Who would have believed fifty years ago or even ten years ago that men like Jim Woodroof would be questioning the inerrancy of the Scriptures? Yet, that is precisely what

Jim is doing, although not intentionally. In Jim Woodroof's book, **The Church In Transition**,<sup>10</sup> he accuses churches of Christ of having "majored in 'effect' material instead of 'cause' material" by which he means we have preached more from the book of Acts, the epistles and the book of Revelation – than from Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. In the first place, Jim does not know that. What kind of survey did he conduct to ascertain what our brethren preach? In the second place, his use of the expressions "effect material" and "cause material" – casts doubts on the value of some parts of Holy Scripture.<sup>11</sup>

Jim recommends preaching from all parts of the Bible – Old Testament as well as the New. He refers to the Old Testament as a "prereflection or shadow, of the glory of Christ revealed in the Gospels."<sup>12</sup> Jim's judgment on the Old Testament is in line with the teaching of the book of Hebrews (10:1). The Old Testament prepared the way for the coming of the Messiah, but it did not reveal Him in His fulness and glory. Jim calls Acts and the epistles a "reflexion of the same glory. But the actual glory of the Lord is revealed in the Gospel records themselves." Because we have preached primarily from the Acts, the epistles and Revelation, Jim says we have not been a "people who have majored in the glory of the Lord. Until we do we will not be a Christ-

exalting restoration."<sup>13</sup>

James D. Bales' new book, **"The Church In Transition" To What?**, provides an excellent antidote to Jim Woodroof's very disturbing book. Bales asks:

Has Woodroof focused so much on the Gospels that he has blinded himself to the fact that Acts through Revelation deals with the time when the Messiah was exalted and glorified?<sup>14</sup>

A few questions on Jim's distinction between the gospels and the rest of the New Testament are in order. Where did he learn that the actual glory of the Lord is revealed in the gospel records and not in the rest of the New Testament? Can we not be – have we not been – a Christ-exalting restoration by emphasizing Acts through Revelation? Is it possible to be a Christ-exalting restoration without preaching all the New Testament – Matthew through Revelation?

Jim Woodroof argues that churches of Christ have suffered from a lack of power and loss of nourishment. He explains why:

You won't get much nourishment eating the shadow or the reflection of a ham sandwich. Neither will you get any power plugging an electric motor into the mirrored reflection of a power outlet.<sup>15</sup>

And what is the "reflection of a ham sandwich" and the "mirrored reflection of a power outlet?"

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Jim uses these expressions to show the comparative worth of the four gospels and Acts through Revelation. Jim Woodroof's sharp distinction between the gospels and Acts through Revelation reminds one of Martin Luther's attitude toward certain Bible books. Luther was not too fond of James, Hebrews or Revelation. He called the book of James "a right strawy epistle." Luther has been accused – rightly, may I add – of having a "canon within a canon."

Paul affirmed that all Scripture is inspired, which includes the Old Testament, the gospels and Acts through Revelation. Paul insisted that the words of Scripture were the very words of Jehovah God (I Cor. 2:13).

For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe (I Thess. 2:13).

The great truths Paul wrote in his epistles are just as meaningful, just as binding and just as much from God as Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The little book of Jude is just as much inspired as any other book of the Bible. Jim's attitude toward Scripture is tremendously disturbing and destructive.

James D. Bales makes some very

pertinent comments on Jim's use of the New Testament.

One does not treasure less the life of Christ recorded in the Gospels because one treasures His glorified life revealed in Acts through Revelation.<sup>16</sup>

In what Woodroof calls the time of the shadow is the time when Christ is the mediator of the new and better covenant.<sup>17</sup>

Is it a compliment to the Holy Spirit to say the Old Testament and Acts through Revelation have no nourishment or power?<sup>18</sup>

What follows from Woodroof's reasoning about the Gospels? First, the Christian has no need for anything but the Gospels. Second, the Gospels were the time of the complete revelation, the revelation of all the truth. This contradicts what Jesus said (John 16:12-14). Third, Christians do not have a throne of grace with the merciful high priest who is also king, we have no altar which differs from the old covenant altar, and the new covenant is not operative.<sup>19</sup>

History is repeating itself in the attempts of various preachers and other church leaders to introduce into the worship of the church mechanical instruments of music. One elder, speaking at the Jubilee in Nashville, Tennessee, said it would be alright to have instrumental music if it is within your "comfort

zone." I have heard of many standards of authority in religion – tradition, human reason, feelings, the teaching of the church – but one's "comfort zone" is a new one on me. Using one's comfort zone as one's authority, it would be permissible to introduce anything and everything which suits men's fancy. Nothing could be excluded. Is this the direction the churches of Christ are heading?

One preacher, who has been preaching for at least twenty years, was asked his stand on instrumental music. He said he was "restudying" the matter. He was then asked how he stood on marriage, divorce and remarriage. He said he was restudying that question also. Does the Bible speak so ambiguously on these topics that a capable preacher cannot make up his mind in twenty years? Or is he trying to determine which way the wind is blowing? Is it possible, as one preacher said, that he has strong convictions on both sides of these vital issues?

There appears to be an anti-intellectual spirit arising within our brotherhood. In Jim Woodroof's book there is a poem by John Carroll Brown. The poem has the title, "A Dream of Judgment: A Poem Concerning Those Who Make Laws Based on Inferences from the Silence of the Scriptures."<sup>20</sup> It would be difficult – if not impossible – to find thirty pages of material – prose or poetry – which teach

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more error than these pages from Jim's book. One of the verses in the poem reads,

For surely you can plainly see,  
That your reas'ning is to me  
Worth nothing! for what men infer  
And bind is prone to err.<sup>21</sup>

The poem is supposed to be a picture of the judgment. The great Judge is saying to His followers, "Your reas'ning is to me worth nothing!" How strange that God gave us minds and judges us for using them. Paul used the word "reasonable" (logikos) in Romans 12:2. Peter used the same word. "As newborn babes, desire the sincere (logikos) milk of the word that you may grow thereby" (I Peter 2:2). May we use our minds to infer what God Himself implies? For example, who told Jim Woodroof and John Carroll Brown that the commandments of the Bible are applicable to them? As long as I have been reading and studying God's book, I have never seen either man's name – or mine either – in it. How do they know the message of the Bible is for our generation? Do they not have to infer such? How can they miss seeing the inconsistency of their position?

Another jewel from Brown's poem reads as follows:

For silence neither gives consent,  
Nor yet does silence e'er forbid.<sup>22</sup>

Jim Woodroof's apparent endorsement of

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John Carroll Brown's illogical and unscriptural positions make us know how far from the truth of God's Word both men have wandered. Is it reasonable to argue that silence neither gives consent nor forbids? I wonder if Noah would have been condemned had he used any other kind of wood than gopher. God did not say, "You must not use oak or pine or sycamore." Yet, Noah understood he would not have been blessed had he not obeyed the Lord's specific command. If Noah had operated on the basis that silence neither gives consent or forbids, would God have said concerning him,

By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith (Heb. 11:7).

Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he (Gen. 6:22).

Does that include respecting the silence of God?

Does the Bible ever say, "Men from the tribe of Judah may not serve as priests under the law of Moses?" The Scriptures were silent on that point. Yet, our Lord could not serve on earth as a priest during the old covenant. The Hebrew writer tells us very plainly:

For the priesthood being changed, there

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is made of necessity a change also of the law. For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood (Heb. 7:12-14).

Moses spoke nothing? Is that not a good definition of what the silence of the Scriptures means? But for some reason, the Hebrew writer believed that the silence of the Scriptures forbade Christ's being a priest under the Mosaic law.

So-called "women's issues" must have arisen in the early church or we would not have I Corinthians 14:34-35 or I Timothy 2:8-12. Some Christians in the first century may have understood passages like Galatians 3:26-27 to establish absolute equality between men and women – even equality of function and position. Christians believe because the Bible teaches that all men and women are created equal (Gen. 1:26-27) and are therefore of equal value in God's sight (Gal. 3:26-27). But, Paul teaches explicitly that women cannot be elders, deacons or preachers. A woman cannot be the husband of one wife and therefore cannot be an elder or a deacon. She cannot teach or usurp authority over the man and therefore cannot be a gospel preacher.

But these are not the only Scriptures

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pertaining to women which are being challenged – not only among feminists and liberal theologians, but among gospel preachers and teachers in our Christian colleges and universities. One counselor in a Christian university asserts that the family model preached among churches of Christ – the husband as the head of the wife and the wife in subjection to the husband – is dysfunctional (meaning it does not work) and pathological (meaning it is sick). He even goes so far as to argue that the pattern mentioned above leads to incest among elders and preachers of the gospel. Obviously, this is a serious attack on God's pattern for the home and must be vigorously opposed. The home is in enough trouble without countenancing such destructive teaching. How can a Christian university allow such a man to remain on its payroll? Does that university endorse such false positions? If it does, it does not deserve the support of members of the churches of Christ. If that university does not endorse such anti-biblical teaching, it ought to apologize to our brotherhood and fire the teacher.

### **Thinking About The Future**

Since no one can project what will happen in the future, it is not possible to predict exactly what will happen. But, generally speaking, we can examine the past and the

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present and make some temporary projections based on trends which are so obvious among churches of Christ. Surely no one will hold me responsible for the accuracy of any predictions I am about to make, but the following do seem to be possibilities.

**First**, attacks against the inerrancy of Scripture seem to me to be inevitable. Jim Woodroof's attitude toward the Bible probably is more widespread than most of us would like to believe. For many of these progressive brethren, the Bible is too restrictive, too traditional. It does not give them the freedom they desire. They want to restructure the church – its organization, its worship services, its doctrine and many other aspects of the church. Since the Bible does not allow such changes, many of these men are going to leave the church – either to join liberal Protestant denominations or to begin their own churches. In fact, some have already begun their own churches.

Our first line of defense against the latest wave of liberalism in the church must be showing that the Bible is inerrant, authoritative, complete and final. Most of us who preach have always known the necessity of defending the Scriptures against atheism, agnosticism, humanism, and other forms of unbelief. We have also been aware of the need to respond to the speculation and imagination of religious

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liberalism. But we may never have dreamed we would have to spend a great amount of time educating our own brethren to the dangers of modernism, liberalism and humanism. We can no longer take for granted that all members of the churches of Christ accept the Bible as God's inspired and authoritative Word.

We must preach on establishing Divine authority for the church's work and worship. For too long we have assumed that members of the body of Christ knew the authority by which we as individual Christians and by which the church as a body were to operate. The older preachers – N. B. Hardeman, Foy E. Wallace, Jr., G. C. Brewer, and similar stalwarts of the faith – taught regularly on the need for and the source of authority in religion. But many of our modern preachers have been too busy preaching "positive" messages and making everyone feel good about himself that we have neglected some fundamental biblical themes, such as, authority in religion. The neglect of this topic and positive false teaching on it have brought us to a crisis in the church's history.

**Second**, worship services of the churches of Christ must be made as stimulating, challenging, and helpful as we can possibly make them. One young preacher told his Bible class that worship services among the

churches of Christ bored him to tears and he was the preacher for the church where he made these offensive remarks. Could it be that this young man's heart was not attuned to the meaning of Christian worship? Could he be to blame and not the worship services? But whatever the case, worship services ought to be meaningful and scriptural – whether or not they have the effect of a rock concert or an old-fashioned revival. Do we have to be entertained all the time?

One of the solutions to making worship services more fruitful is strong, faithful, loving, expository preaching. Preachers of the gospel must know what is happening in our world and in the church and must integrate this knowledge into our preaching, but fundamentally we must preach the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. The solutions to our moral and spiritual problems can still be found in God's book – not in the vain imaginations of liberal theologians and in the wild speculations of academicians.

### **Conclusion**

God's people are not furnished any great amount of information about our future on this earth. We do not and cannot know what direction the church will take in the next ten or twenty or thirty years. But we do know what God has arranged for us in His Word and we

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do know that we must follow that Word in the worship and the work of the church. We cannot go wrong if our souls are anchored to the Rock of Ages. As we have heard for many years, "We do not know what the future holds, but we know WHO holds the future." May God help all of us to work diligently, faithfully, and prudently so that the Lord's kingdom may spread over the face of the earth as the waters cover the sea.

### Endnotes

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4 Akashic records are supposed to be ethereal records of every evening in the history of the world. Only those who have special abilities like psychics, channelers, mediums, etc. have access to this information.

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15 Woodroof, pp. 33-34.

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# The Future



## *Chapter Nineteen*

# **The Second Coming And Judgment**

*Joe E. Cox*



Joe is a native Texan • Presently works for the church in Beeville, Texas • He has preached the gospel for twenty years • He is an experienced radio and television speaker • Author of several Bible study workbooks • Joe has conducted gospel series in dozens of counties • Joe and Paula have four children.

We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth; So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure: Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer: Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus

Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day (II Thess. 1:3-10).

It is such a supreme pleasure for me to be able to speak to you on this occasion, and of all the many topics that could be discussed none would delight me more than the one assigned to me. So, as you can readily see, I am a happy man.

The second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ is the most momentous occasion I can imagine. It is the culmination of our Christian faith. The time when all our hopes will be realized, all our labors and toils will be rewarded. A day when all of the accounts will be settled and all of the books will be balanced. This theme is of such vital importance to the child of God, it is covered precisely and in great detail in the New Testament. There are at least 300 references or allusions to this event mentioned in the Scriptures, meaning one in every twenty-five verses written in the New Testament speak of this day. Being of such prime importance to our Christian faith and holding the degree of prominence that it does in the Scriptures, it should not surprise us in the least that it has

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captured the minds and imaginations of Bible readers since the very beginning. It has been preached on, written on, debated on, and speculated on by every generation. It is the topic of our most inspiring songs.

O how sweet twill be to meet the Lord,  
When He comes in glory by and by;  
What a song of praise will be outpoured,  
When He comes in glory by and by.

I am longing for that happy day,  
When He comes in glory by and by;  
For with Him I hope to soar away,  
When He comes in glory by and by.

And many of us still feel goose bumps on our arms when we sing the rousing words of J. M. Black,

When the trumpet of the Lord shall sound  
and time shall be no more, And the  
morning breaks eternal, bright fair, When  
the saved of earth shall gather over on  
the other shore, And the roll is called up  
yonder, I'll be there.

What wonderful and thrilling thoughts float through our minds when we sing these old standards that echo the words of the New Testament writers.

The second coming of our Lord and the time of judgment is of such importance that the Holy Spirit has given it an appellation. Quite often it is not spelled out as the second coming or judgment it is simply referred to as "That Day."

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Peter used...

- the day of God (II Peter 3:12).
- the day of judgment (II Peter 2:9).

John called it...

- the great day of his wrath (Rev. 6:17).

Paul referred to this event as...

- the day of our Lord (I Cor. 1:8).
- the day of Jesus (Phil. 1:6).
- that day (II Tim. 1:12).
- day of redemption (Eph. 4:20).

Jesus put it all in perspective for us when He repeatedly referred to this even as **"the last day"** (John 6:39,40,44,54). There will be no need remembering to turn the pages of the calendar, the winding of your watch, or the setting of alarms because time will be no more. That day, in the words of Jesus, will be the last. There will be no more risings of the sun for the last morning has broken. We are told to "look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:20), to "love his appearing" (II Tim. 4:8), and in the words of Jesus Himself to,

Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, **Watch** (Mark 13:35-37).



The beloved apostle John, writing from the Isle of Patmos, ends the great Revelation with these words,

He which testifieth these things saith,  
Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so,  
come, Lord Jesus (Rev. 22:20).

### **The Fact Of His Coming**

As accepted as this doctrine is, it may appear strange for us to say that many deny this second coming or even a day of reckoning. However, these important doctrines are denied not only by the multitudes of unbelievers but also by a host of so-called religious people. I never tired of listening to brother Foy Wallace preach his great lessons exposing Premillennialism. He often said,

There are two classes of disturbers in New Testament times, as now, who were also stirring up questions about the time of His coming – the skeptic and the speculator.

There have always been and will always be those who refuse to believe that Christ will come again. Peter warned us of those skeptics in his second epistle.

Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the

creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men (II Peter 3:3-7).

Today even some in our own precious brotherhood seem to be advancing a false doctrine which denies a return by our Saviour to gather together the elect and to execute judgment upon the world. Those following the absurd meanderings of Max King are doing just that. For those of us who choose to believe the Bible on this subject, the message is abundantly clear. Because we, as the skeptics, also realize that "all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation," but then the likeness ends and the differences begin. For we, having the faith of our father Abraham, are "fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform" (Rom. 4:21). The promise of His return cannot be dismissed with the wave of the hand. In fact, from what I can determine, the very first prophetic statement that came through man concerned the second coming (this refers to man being inspired to speak by the Holy Spirit,

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certainly God had already given a prophetic statement, but it is not recorded that man had been used as a spokesman before the time of Enoch), and the day of judgment. Jude reports that,

And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him (Jude 14-15).

In a beautiful and touching scene on the eve of His betrayal, Jesus made a promise to His disciples,

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 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 (John 14:1-3).

Jesus stated on more than one occasion that He would come again (Luke 12:40; Matt. 24:44). The apostle Paul taught us that,

And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: 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 (Heb. 9:27-28).

Peter furnishes further evidence in his first epistle,

That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: (I Peter 1:7).

There is even angelic testimony of the fact of Jesus' coming again.

And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven (Acts 1:10-11).

So the fact of His return is well documented throughout the New Testament. To deny this is to deny the very Scriptures themselves.

### **The Manner Of His Coming**

How will Jesus come? As opposed to His first coming, by being born of a virgin in near obscurity where it took an announcement by the angels from heaven and a star to lead the wise men, His next appearing will be one that

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no one can overlook. John wrote,

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 (Rev. 1:7).

The mocker, the atheist, the agnostic, the unrepentant, the false teachers as well as the faithful, shall be able to see Jesus make His triumphant return. Every eye shall behold Him. This verse stands in complete opposition to the various theories of an "invisible" coming of Jesus Christ seven years before His manifestation takes place. The Jehovah's Witness, originally known as the "Zion's Watch Tower" was started by Charles Taze Russell in 1879. Russell was a speculator and troublemaker, as false a teacher as the organization that he started. He predicted and preached the end of the world to occur in October of 1914, saying that Jesus would return and the present order of things in the world would come to an abrupt end. He went so far as to publish a booklet entitled **Millions Now Living Will Never Die**. Of course, as the predictions of men fail repeatedly, this one did also. However, to save face, Russell and his followers then claimed that Jesus did indeed come exactly as predicted, but He could only be seen by the "faithful witnesses" and even then not literally, but only by the eyes of one's

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understanding! This is no more absurd than the Premillennialist of today insisting that there will be a dual coming. After Hal Lindsey published his error-riddled **The Late Great Planet Earth** (his predicted battle of Armageddon never took place, so his influence has waned) there was a rash of speculators appearing on the scene. Bumper stickers warning of the impending doom of mankind began to be seen all over the country. One particular bumper sticker that caught my attention was the one that read, *"In case of the rapture, this vehicle will be unmanned."* As I inquired into the nature of this strange statement, I learned that many of the Premillennialists insist that the first coming of Christ will be invisible, the second, seven years later will be the one every one will witness. This doctrine is accounted for, we are told, because of two distinct words in the New Testament, words which they say were specially inspired to teach this particular thing. These words are "parousia" and "epiphaneia" – His "presence" and His "manifestation." "Parousia" we are further told is the time when Jesus **comes down for** His saints (this will be His presence). But when He **comes** "with His saints," it will be the time of His "manifestation" – the epiphaneia. This is usually defined in even greater detail by saying that this period is what is called the "rapture"

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of the saints in the heavens with the Lord, while the tribulation is blasting out its fury on the earth. To say the least, the ingenuity and imagination of such a scheme deserve at least a standing ovation. Because for all the time and toil it took to figure out such an outrageous scheme, an ovation would be about its entire worth. The New Testament does not support one word of this teaching. The so-called distinction between the two words exist only in the mind of its inventor. For instance, in I Thessalonians 3:12 Paul says,

To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming (parousia) of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints (I Thess. 3:13).

Now remember the so-called theory being advocated has Jesus coming to gather His saints (parousia) and then returning with His saints to bring judgment (epiphaneia). This is exactly opposite of how the Scriptures read. Paul said His "parousia" would be **the coming with** all His saints! Many other passages could be cited that show the fallacy of this false doctrine but we will look at only one more in detail.

In II Thessalonians 2:8, Paul said,

And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with

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the brightness (epiphaneia) of his coming  
(parousia) (II Thess. 2:8).

In this passage both of the words are used. It reads, "Whom the Lord shall destroy with the epiphaneia of his parousia." Clearly the Holy Spirit is teaching us that the Lord will destroy the wicked with the *epiphaneia* of his *parousia*. There is not even a split second of time that elapses between these two events, they stand for ONE coming, not two. What takes place at the *epiphaneia* also takes place at the *parousia*. The words can only be interpreted to define the exact same coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. You can also take the time to check II Timothy 4:8 where Paul says he will receive the "crown of righteousness" at the *epiphaneia* of the Lord's coming, not the *parousia* as the Premillennialists teach. This supposed difference is a smoke screen, an attempt to bolster a false doctrine with false suppositions. The Bible makes it abundantly clear "**every eye shall behold him.**" It will not only be visible to all, but it appears it will be a rather noisy event also. In two of Paul's epistles he mentions the audible portion of this coming.

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye,  
at the last trump: for the trumpet shall  
sound, and the dead shall be raised  
incorruptible, and we shall be changed  
(I Cor. 15:52).



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: (I Thess. 4:16).

It shall be an actual return,

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 (II Cor. 5:10).

What an exciting event the Bible describes to us beyond our scope of imagination! The Lord returning to earth in the skies, every single human who has ever lived being able to visually see Him, whether one lives in China or Tennessee, the stillness of the air being broken with a voice so loud every single ear shall hear it. The blind to see, and the deaf to hear. Yes! No one is omitted from this glorious event. Our pulses are racing; our hair is standing on end; our hearts beat so loudly we feel the blood itself coursing through our veins. Suddenly the brightness engulfs us as the darkest of nights suddenly fills with such glowing radiance the sun itself fades into its shadows. That's the coming of the Lord!

### **Why Is He Coming Again?**

What are the events of His coming? What shall take place? What will happen? The answers to some of these questions may

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appear somewhat inadequate to those wanting minute details. God has not revealed all things to us – just those things of necessity to guide our faith. With careful study of the text in its context and a full comparison of related Scriptures, there is quite a bit we can learn without having to assume a great deal of information.

1. We will discuss in detail the time of His coming a little later. But the time has been set for the second coming. Matthew, in recording the words of Jesus, said,

But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only (Matt. 24:36).

So there is a day and an hour in which the Father has set aside, marked, for the second coming of our Lord.

2. It appears from I Thessalonians 4:13-14 that we need not worry about the righteous that have put off this earthly shell in the moment of death. It is my understanding of the Scriptures that when that time comes that our breath is stilled, our arms dangle limply to our side and the heart that pumped that life-giving fluid of blood through our veins stops from its labors; that body dies. However, that immortal part of man that God has given to his creation does not go the way of the body but it continues its existence separate and apart from the physical remains. We learn

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from James that "the body without the spirit is dead" (James 2:26). Nothing is said about the spirit or the soul of man ceasing its existence. In fact, the wise man wrote in the book of Ecclesiastes,

Then shall the dust return to the earth  
as it was: and the spirit shall return unto  
God who gave it (Eccl. 12:7).

Paul was guided by the Holy Spirit to write,

For we know that if our earthly house of  
this tabernacle were dissolved, we have  
a building of God, an house not made  
with hands, eternal in the heavens (II  
Cor. 5:1).

Where does this spirit go at death? Is it in a state of "limbo" or in a state of unconsciousness? No, I have never been able to believe that. I have held the opinion that Luke 16 is not just a "parable" teaching us the evils of richs, (Jehovah's Witness doctrine) rather it is the truth of man's destiny immediately following death. There is a world separate and apart from our physical existence where the spirits of men go at death. In the Greek language it is known as Hades, "the realm of departed spirits." In the Hebrew the corresponding word is "Sheol." According to the account in Luke there are two distinct parts to this Hadean world separaating one from the other by a "great gulf" that is permanently fixed and which forbids the passing from one area

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to the other (v. 26). The conditions of those two areas are diametrically opposite, one providing comfort (v. 26) and the safety and rest of Abraham's bosom (v. 22), while the area on the other side of this great fixed gulf which forbids passage is a place that is described as "torments in flame" (vs. 23-25) and a place where the physical needs are still assumed by the spiritual body (v. 24). Look closely. This realm of departed spirits is a place where the emotional state is still intact, the mental faculties have not abated, nor have rational thoughts gone. This man cried out in his agony believing that physical water could cure the thirst he was feeling; he saw across that "great gulf" and recognized Lazarus, the beggar, that had lain at his gate begging for morsels of food. He remembered his five brothers, having compassion and feelings for them that they not follow him to this place of destruction. Friends, that is a conscious soul, one that thinks, feels and has an emotional state. The Psalmist prophesied of our Lord Jesus, that "thou wilt not leave my soul in hell (Sheol); neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption" (Psm. 16:10). This prophecy of what would happen to our Lord after His death is most revealing. Peter speaks of the fulfillment of this prophecy in his sermon on the day of Pentecost,

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He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption (Acts 2:31).

Of course the word *hell* in the King James version of the Bible is misleading and should have been translated *Hades*, meaning the Hadean world. Jesus also spoke of His going to this place in Matthew 16:18 when He told Peter,

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 (Matt. 16:18).

Again the word *hell* is the Greek word *hades*, having Jesus say that even though He would die in the flesh, the bonds of death (the Hadean world) would not hold Him or prevent Him from coming back to build His church. Exactly as Jesus told the thief on the cross,

Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise (Luke 23:43).

Jesus, when He departed from the tabernacle of human flesh, was carried by angels to Abraham's bosom or, as He said, paradise. But that Hadean world did not hold Him, He was brought forth from that place reunited with His physical body and came forth from the tomb. As Peter stated, "he seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ." After that

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forty days upon the earth he ascended back unto the Father, where according to Paul He is to be until His triumphant return.

For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: (Phil. 3:20).

When the day comes that our heavenly Father has set aside, then Christ shall come forth. He will not be alone when He comes, but "his mighty angels" will be with Him (I Thess. 1:7), and the righteous souls from that Hadean realm will be brought forth, "even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him" (I Thess. 4:14).

3. Contrary to popular opinion there is not one word in the Scriptures that indicates that our Lord will ever set foot back on the earth. Rather He will come back with those mighty angels, and the saints will be brought forth from paradise. But they will be in the sky, or else Paul was wrong when He said,

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 (I Thess. 4:17).

So as the Lord appears in the clouds above the earth He will have an innumerable company with Him.

4. After their appearance the Bible says the body of those faithful dead shall be the

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first to rise. Or as Paul states, "the dead in Christ shall rise first" (I Thess. 4:16). The bodies of those faithful shall come forth from the grave to be reunited with their spirits. What will this body be? What will it look like? Paul was asked this same question by the brethren in Corinth, "But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?" (I Cor. 15:35). Paul gives us an overview of the resurrection dealing specifically with the raising of the fleshly body.

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory (I Cor. 15:52-54).

We are told by Paul that the physical resurrection of the flesh shall occur at the second coming of our Lord (vs. 21-23). The body will be changed from corruptible flesh to incorruptible (v. 42). In further explanation, Paul says,

And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren,

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that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption (I Cor. 15:49-50).

There are, of course, questions I am asked occasionally by folks which I cannot fully answer. For instance: What about those that leave behind no earthly remains; what can God raise up? People forget that bodies return to dust, given the proper amount of time (Eccl. 12:7). We are able under very precise procedures to escape some decay but not all. Even the sea itself shall give up its dead (Rev. 19:13); those that perished in fires or whatever, God will take care of. Well, what about my child that died in childbirth or all of the aborted babies? What will happen to them? Children in the resurrection will no doubt be given an appropriate body. The God that created the heavens and the earth is no less capable today than He was then. I know that whatever the age, 105 to fetus, that God will give us a body that will serve His purposes. If He has a desire to give us an incorruptible body that shares resemblance to physical bodies, and he grants requests, I'm asking for the one I had at sixteen. I liked that one okay. This is said in jest, of course, for I have no idea what that resurrected body will look like. Many take the position that as Jesus' resurrected body did not take on a different appearance then we also shall come forth from



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the ground with the same appearance that we went in. While this may have validity to it, it also has some major difficulties. One in particular is from the words of I John 3:2. Now I realize that this verse is a matter of some dispute, but I think it means exactly what it says. John was an eyewitness of the bodily ascension of Jesus Christ into the heavens (Acts 1:10-11). He had been around Him on many occasions since His resurrection from the tomb. He was quite aware of what kind of body Jesus had, and ascended with. But now hear him a few years later:

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is (I John 3:2).

We can rest assured that whatever is right God will do. Not only will it be right, but it will also be to our supreme pleasure for there will be no tears in heaven.

5. The next thing that will happen will be the ascension of those that are found faithful at the Lord's return. Again, from Paul we read,

Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed (I Cor. 15:51).

Paul is quite clear that after the dead in Christ are raised,

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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 (I Thess. 4:17).

Suddenly, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, those that are alive at the coming of Christ shall drop the veil of flesh and be changed to that which is incorruptible. Absolutely staggers the imagination, doesn't it?

6. After the faithful have been caught up to meet the Lord in the air, there will be a resurrection of all others. Jesus said,

Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation (John 5:28-29).

Jesus said, "the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice." There is only one hour mentioned and one voice heard. He did not say there will be an hour in which the righteous shall hear His voice, and then another hour in which the wicked shall hear His voice. There is NO great interval of time between the raising of the good and bad. In Paul's defense before the Jewish council and before Felix, he revealed his belief in only one resurrection including both the good and the bad. In Acts 23:6 it is recorded,

But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question (Acts 23:6).

Notice that Paul used a singular word to refer to **the** resurrection; only one is under consideration. In Acts 24:15, Paul again uses a singular reference to the resurrection,

And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.

A resurrection is in the singular. Who is involved in this singular resurrection? Paul says the "just and the unjust." There is but one resurrection, and it is of "the dead" – all the dead. The millennialists try to argue that there is a distinction made between the expressions "of the dead" and "from the dead." They say "from the dead" means that some will be raised "from" or out of the dead. Then finally, the resurrection "of" the dead means all who are left in the graves, after the others had been previously raised "from" among them. This is another false supposition trying to bolster a false doctrine. Compare Colossians 1:18 where Christ is called the "firstborn **from** the dead," but in Revelation 1:5 He is called

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the "firstborn **of** the dead." Was He both at the same time? Of course He was! There is no distinction between the two phrases. Remember Paul said he hoped to attain the resurrection "of the dead" in Acts 23:6 and in Philippians 3:11 he said he hoped to "attain unto the resurrection **of** the dead." Do the millennialists think Paul will not be one of those raised **from** the dead? Jesus did not mince any words when He stated,

.. the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left (Matt. 25:31-33).

Amazingly the millennialists can still see two resurrections and two judgments. All nations shall be gathered before him, and then there will be a division – a complete and permanent parting of evil from error. The thing to keep in mind, however, is that there will be no great amount of time between these two resurrections. It will be nearly simultaneous. It will take place in a moment in the twinkling of an eye, and only one coming to accomplish the complete resurrection of all.

### **When Is He Coming?**

Without a doubt one of the most controversial topics under discussion today involves the time of the second coming of Jesus Christ. People have never been able to accept the fact that the time of this great event has never been disclosed. These speculators can be numbered by the thousands today with no end in sight. Even the early church did not escape these vain speculators. The letters Paul wrote to the Thessalonians were written in part, at least, to correct the error these speculators were spreading. Many of these false teachers today make vain attempts to prove even the apostles of our Lord taught His immediate return. Such foolishness is inexcusable among the denominational world, much less among God's own people. None of the writers even hinted at the fact that the Lord's return would be within his lifetime. In fact, just the opposite is true. Paul gave prophecy of the things that would happen after his death in Acts 20:29-30, as did the apostle Peter in his second epistle (II Peter 1:14). Today I am shocked to hear many of my own brethren talking about the "signs of the times." Naive statements are made by people who ought to know better. Recently a man that serves as an elder said, "Well, you know the Lord won't let the world last long in this immoral condition." I don't know any such thing, and neither does he.

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Are we so ignorant of history that we have forgotten the darkness that engulfed the religious world for 1500 years? Are we so swallowing the denominational baloney of so-called signs that we have forgotten what the Bible says? The world might end before we get through preaching this sermon. Then again it might not. Certainly it is going to happen, but no one, not one single person knows when. That's why supposed seers and self-proclaiming Bible scholars have been able to prey upon the minds of the gullible. In 167 A.D. in the area around Phrygia in Asia Minor, cult leaders began to preach that the end was coming. The believers refused to plant their crops, insisting on spending their time in prayer. Of course, all these died never seeing the end of the world. In the century following the year 999, the lower nobility, village priests, and peasants of Christendom had taken as gospel that the "nightfall of the universe was at hand," wrote Richard Erdoes in A.D. 1000. Many believed that it would be at the stroke of midnight on New Years Eve. Others believed just as strongly that it would come on Christmas Eve. In response many gave away possessions to the poor, wore sackcloth and ashes, left businesses unattended. What happened? They all went the way of the dead into that silent city without ever seeing the second coming of our Lord. In Muenster,

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Germany, in the year 1534, a fellow by the name of John Leiden proclaimed himself the "King of Zion" and said he had established a kingdom of a 1000 years and literally took complete control of the city. The Catholics and Lutherans were so upset they joined forces and laid siege to the city. John Leiden was finally executed, and his corpse was hung in St. Lambert's Church. Needless to say, his followers also went to the grave never seeing the end of the world. William Miller, the founder of the religious cult known as the Seventh Day Adventists, persuaded his followers that Christ would be returning in October, 1843. Thousands were led to accept his views, and so fervently did they believe the Lord would come on schedule that many of these disposed of their property, brought themselves long, white, muslin robes and climbed a mountain to await the Lord's return. The day was rainy and cold from the early morning to late that night when even the most faithful finally gave up and went home. A few days later Miller announced that he had miscalculated by one year and surely the Lord would come in 1844. Of course, 1844 came and went while Mr. Miller went down into obscurity. The sect itself would have died off completely if it had not been for the efforts of the self proclaimed prophet Ellen G. White. As stated earlier Charles T. Russell the founder

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of the Jehovah's Witness group also gained his following by claiming that he knew when the end of the world would come. The formula seems pretty simple; start telling people that you alone have been given divine insight into Bible knowledge and know assuredly when Jesus is coming again, and then just start your own church. There are plenty of folks gullible enough to believe anything. In the past few years, as the turn of the century approaches, more and more of these soothsayers are coming out of the closet, predicting destruction and devastation upon mankind. They have even gone so far as to drag 16th century French philosopher Nostradamus back from the dead. He predicted 400 years ago annihilation appearing in the year 2000. The noted faker Jean Dixon even got on the band wagon by saying that surely the end will come by the year 2000. In the past few years many of the news stories have detailed groups claiming to be waiting for the end of the world, from Arkansas to Japan. As I write this lesson, there is a nut in Waco, Texas, that claims he is the Christ. He has secluded himself with his followers awaiting the battle of Armeggedon and the start of the 1000 year reign. Jesus said,

But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noe



were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be (Matt. 24:36-39).

Paul, writing to the Thessalonians, said,

But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night (I Thess. 5:1-2).

So the very idea of speculating needs to be left to investment bankers. Such does not belong in the life of a Christian.

### **What About The Day Of Judgment?**

There will be...

...a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead (Acts 17:31).

The judgment day will be a day in which,

...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 (II Cor. 5:10).

That great day that is coming will be the final separation of the righteous from the evil.

And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal (Matt. 25:46).

If you will read those verses closely you can see that (1) the judgement is a real day that will take place; (2) everyone will be present, there will be no excused absences, no late arrivals. It will be a day in which YOU will be present, (3) it will be a day when the final destinies and rewards will be given. The words of our Lord will say to those who are righteous,

Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: (Matt. 25:34).

But unto those who are found in their sins, the cold cutting words will be uttered that can never be erased or forgotten,

Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: (Matt. 25:41).

Let us prepare ourselves this day, knowing, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that we will spend an eternity in one of two places and the choice of your eternal home is yours to make. Choose you this day whom ye will serve (Josh. 24:15).

## *Chapter Twenty*

# **Heaven And Hell**

*Willie Bradshaw*



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For our lesson text,

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 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. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me (John 14:1-6).

Next, let us look at Paul's statements to the Thessalonians,

And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power (II Thess. 1:7-9).

Also, we learn additional valuable facts in Romans 1:16-17 and John 12:48.

### **Jesus And Heaven Are Real And The Devil And Hell Are Real!**

In I Peter 5:8 we learn,

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour (1Peter 5:8).

The devil is real. He is the enemy of all righteousness. The devil is our adversary. He has a desire or purpose, and he works to accomplish his purpose.

The Lord, during His earthly ministry, said,

... Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren (Luke 22:31-32).

Satan is cunning and crafty and uses many devices to deceive man. We need to acquaint

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ourselves with his tricks, lest he deceive us and cause us to lose our soul.

The apostle Paul spoke of Satan and his wiles,

And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works (II Cor. 11:14-15).

Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices (II Cor. 2:11).

## **H E L L**

Hell is a real place. It is a building or space devoted to a special purpose. There is a meeting place for all.

And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment (Heb. 9:27).

Paul stated to the Corinthians,

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor 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. All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any (I Cor. 6:9-12).

Death brings the rich and poor, the high and the low, the good and the bad, the wise and the foolish – all to a common level.

The Bible tells us about the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31. Take the time to read this informative story:

There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now

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he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead (Luke 16:19-31).

There are three basic facts that we want to note: (1) two men lived; (2) two men died; and (3) the situation of those men in the next life was exactly the opposite of what it had been in this life. Note the differences:

1. The rich man on earth became the beggar in hell.

2. The poor man on earth became the rich man in paradise.

3. The rich man here was clothed in purple and fine linen.

4. In the next life the rich man was clothed in a garment of fire.

5. The poor man was attended by the

dogs on earth.

6. In the next life the poor man was attended by the angels.

7. The rich man here fared sumptuously every day.

8. In the next life the rich man could not get a drop of water to cool his tormented tongue.

9. The poor man suffered many evil things on earth.

10. In the next life, the poor man was comforted.

### **Hell Is Eternal**

There are many passages of Scripture that demand the conclusion that hell is eternal. Notice the following:

And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal. (Matt. 25:46).

And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever (Rev. 20:10).

And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name (Rev. 14:11).



The conclusion is evident. Hell is an eternal place.

### **Hell Is A Place Of Darkness**

Read with great fear and concern what God declared about this fact.

For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment (II Peter 2:4).

And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matt. 25:30).

### **Hell Is A Place Of Fire**

It is described as:

And shall cast them into a **furnace of fire**: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth (Matt. 13:42).

Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into **everlasting fire**, prepared for the devil and his angels (Matt. 25:41).

Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the **fire** that **never shall be quenched** (Mark 9:44-45).

And the devil that deceived them was cast into the **lake of fire and brimstone**,

where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever (Rev. 20:10).

And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the **lake of fire** (Rev. 20:15).

### **Hell Is A Place Of Pain**

Matthew tells us that,

And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matt. 25:30).

There will not be any time for rest in eternal hell.

And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have **no rest day nor night**, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name (Rev. 14:11).

There will not be any relief from the torments of hell. You can stay out of hell, but if you ever get in, you can not get out!

And beside all this, between us and you there is **a great gulf fixed**: so that they which would pass from hence to you **cannot**; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence (Luke 16:26).

Once in hell, a person is there for eternity!

### **There Is No Hope In Hell**

The Bible teaches that once in hell, always

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in hell, that no changes of eternal abode will take place. There is no hope of things ever getting better.

And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal (Matt. 25:46).

### **In Hell, A Man Retains His Mental Faculties**

After the rich man died (Luke 16), he could feel, see, hear, talk, and remember. It would be something to live right, go to heaven and not know that you are there.

### **Where Are The Good And Bad Buried?**

To look at the epitaphs on tombstones, one would think everyone will be in heaven. We note some saying, "*rest in peace,*" "*asleep in Jesus,*" and "*from toil to rest.*" I have never seen a tombstone with the inscription "*A robber is buried here.*"

The words on a tombstone do not change our destiny.

### **Hell Is A Place Of Divided Families**

In II Corinthians 5:10 we read,

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 (II Cor. 5:10).

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In most families, this very thing will occur. A father and son will go to hell – a mother and daughter will go to heaven – or vice versa.

Many have said of their mate at death, "*I will see you later.*" That fact depends on each other's life. You may not see them later.

## **H E A V E N**

John records for us.

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 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 (John 14:1-3).

### **Heaven Is An Eternal Place**

The Bible declares the fact that the prepared place for the prepared people of God is eternal.

And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever (Rev. 22:5).

Our minds cannot understand or grasp the length of time known as "*eternity.*"

### **No Sin Will Be In Heaven**

In Revelation we find,

And **there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth**, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life (Rev. 21:27).

Heaven will not be like this world, full of sin and sinners. The ones who will be in heaven will be righteous and godly.

### **Heaven Will Be Beautiful**

The description of heaven that we find in the Word of God includes: wall of jasper, city of pure gold, like unto clear glass, all manner of precious stones. Note what John recorded for us,

And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God (Rev. 21:10).

### **Heaven Will Be A Place Of Happiness**

Today we are often very happy. But our brief, temporary happiness does not, can not compare to the true, eternal happiness of those who will be in heaven.

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away (Rev. 21:4).

### **Heaven Will Be A Place Of Rest**

While upon the earth, the people of God labor and serve. In heaven, God's faithful will enjoy an eternal rest.

There remaineth therefore a **rest** to the people of God (Heb. 4:9).

### **Heaven Will Be A Place Of Precious Fellowship**

We enjoy the privilege of fellowship within the family of God today. We should never take these blessings for granted. But we cannot possibly grasp the glorious fellowship that will exist in eternity, in heaven, with all the righteous and godly of all ages.

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have **fellowship** one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin (1 John 1:7).

We cannot stay here on earth forever. A man is fooling himself if he thinks he can find complete and total happiness in this life. This life is just a stopping off place. This is not our home. We are just strangers and pilgrims traveling in a foreign land.

At God's command, heaven and earth will pass away:

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 (II Peter 3:10).

Man determines his destiny. Man determines where he will be throughout all eternity.

Heaven cannot be seen with the naked eye, nor with a telescope, but with the eye of faith.

### **Heaven Or Hell – You Make The Call**

It is up to you.

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (II Peter 3:9).

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16).





# **Lesson ForWomen**

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*Chapter Twenty One*

# **Bible Women Speak To Today's Women**

*Annette B. Cates*



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Solomon said in Ecclesiastes 1:9,

The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.

The problems confronting women today are basically no different from the problems women faced in Bible times. The premise of this lesson is that by looking at some Bible women and how they handled their difficulties, we will be better able to manage our lives.

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope (Rom. 15:4).

**What are some of the things that hinder**

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our lives today? There is a general disregard for truth, both in the world and in the church. Our society seems to be rushing headlong into immorality and materialism. We are stressed on every hand by the pressures of daily living. Many of us are needlessly unhappy with ourselves. These are age-old problems, and the Bible – our rule book for successful living – has the answers.

We live in a society that has little regard or respect for the truth of God's Word, the Holy Bible. Ours is not the only generation for which this has been the case. The society at Corinth at the time of Chloe was rotten to the core. The city itself was a great commercial center, known for its corruption. Because of its central location, it drew people from many social and religious backgrounds, bringing in idolatry and aberration from numerous cultures. The congregation of the Church there was influenced by those circumstances. It was torn by various factions (I Cor. 1:12-13). There were those who were involved in incest and other immorality (I Cor. 5). The partaking of the Lord's Supper was abused (I Cor. 11). They did not understand the resurrection and its importance to the Christian (I Cor. 15). Out of this environment, we see the household of Chloe who stood against the depravity, communicating with the apostle Paul concerning the problems at

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Corinth (I Cor. 1:11).

There are times when Christians have to stand alone, when the love of truth above error demands nothing less. This is the case for the Christian woman who does not have a husband who is a faithful Christian. She must be faithful alone, rearing her children in the Lord. This is the case for the Christian in the workplace where no one else is a Christian. Her lifestyle and interests are different from those of the world. This is the case for the young adult whose classmates and friends may be involved in activities in which Christians cannot participate. She may have to forego the popularity that young people so desperately want and need. This is the case for the preacher and his family when he preaches the truth in love, regardless of the fact that there may be people in the audience unwilling to alter sinful practices who would rather see the preacher gone than to change their lives. This is the case for Christians who will not compromise truth for liberal, but popular, teachings, who may have to travel a distance to worship with others of like precious faith. These are the people who, like Chloe and the "elect lady" of II John, follow Matthew 6:33 and seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

The environment in which Vashti lived was very immoral. We read of her and her husband,

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King Ahaseurus of Persia, in the first chapter of Esther. In the third year of his reign, Ahaseurus began to show off his riches. In this account, he gave a great feast where there was much drinking and revelry. The king commanded Vashti to be put on display before his drunken guests. How did Vashti handle this situation? She did so with virtue, the moral courage to refuse the king's demands. She was banished from the palace as a result, but she was willing to pay the price to be morally right.

There are times when "NO" is the only response a Christian can give to temptation. It may cost us some things such as so-called friends we did not need or, perhaps, some business contacts, but if we count the true cost, we find there is nothing that equals one's soul. Some moral questions are very obvious. We all know it is wrong to murder, steal, or lie, but many do so by calling it something else: aborting a blob of unwanted protoplasm, bringing home materials from the office for personal use, or having a child tell a caller that you are not home. Those things that would destroy the body are wrong, such as smoking, drinking, or abuse of drugs, including those that are legally prescribed.

Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? (I Cor. 3:16).

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For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's (I Cor. 6:20).

Those things that destroy a Christian's influence are wrong. We are to be the light of the world (Matt. 5:14-16) and are to avoid the appearance of evil (II Thess. 5:22). Anything that would come between us and spiritual priorities is wrong.

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon (Matt. 6:24).

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him (I John 2:15).

Why do we say "NO"? We do so because we do not want the sorrow sin brings. Vashti may have found herself banished from the palace, but she could awaken in the morning with a clear conscience. She did not bear the guilt and consequences of the sin of displaying her body in that debased setting. We reap what we sow (Gal. 6:7-8). We say "NO" because God sees what we do.

The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good (Prov. 15:3).

TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting (Dan. 5:27).

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A similar problem is materialism, i.e., allowing the physical cares to overwhelm our spiritual concerns. It may be the quest for financial gain, or it may stem from overloading our lives with things that are not really important. We can see the contrast in the attitudes of Mary and Martha in Luke 10:38-42. The occasion is one of the many visits Jesus enjoyed with this family. Mary sat with Jesus, listening to Him. Meanwhile, Martha was busy with the meal preparation and serving. The word "cumbered" is used in the text and indicates she was needlessly burdened by her household work. She became irritated that she was the one doing the work while Mary remained with Jesus, seemingly oblivious to the activity in the kitchen. Martha complained to Jesus, "Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me." Jesus' response was a gentle rebuke,

Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

There are several observations we can make here: (1) Martha's materialism (emphasis on the physical) led her to speak sharply to Jesus and to be critical of her sister. This shows the impact it has on spiritual and personal



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relationships. (2) There are routine things that can clutter our lives on a daily basis, and it is easy to let these distract us from serving the Lord. (3) There is a higher priority than day-to-day activity, and that is to attend to spiritual development. II Peter 3:18 tells us to "Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." (4) Mary is commended by Jesus for having chosen the better part. (5) No matter what may happen to us, when the troubles of life descend upon us, it will be the spiritual development we have made that will see us through. It will be the faith that we have nourished that will allow us to reach up to the hand of God.

Anxiety and stress grow out of materialism. Of course, there are problems beyond our control that bring tremendous pressure into our lives. Illness, the death of loved ones, and other transitions in our lives are great stress factors and are a normal part of living. But, in many instances, we put ourselves into situations where we are spread too thin to do justice to anything we do. Perhaps a fear of not having what we need pushes us to over-emphasize the physical. Everything escalates; luxuries become necessities and the pressures of day-to-day living "cumber" us just as they did Martha, who was overly concerned with having the perfect meal to serve Jesus. Her motive was

right, but her attitude and actions were wrong. Mary, on the other hand, was more interested in what Jesus had to say than in having a sumptuous meal for him. We have assurance from God's Word that He will take care of us. In Genesis 21:14-21, we read of Hagar fleeing and taking her child with her into the wilderness. We see how God took care of them. Hagar had already known God's care, for in Genesis 16:13, she said, "Thou God seest me." In Psalm 37:25, David said, "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor His seed begging bread." Peter tells us to cast all our cares upon God, for He cares for us (I Peter 5:7). Truly, Christians should have no part in materialistic anxiety and its attendant stress.

There is another problem that Dr. James Dobson has identified as the number one problem for women today – a lack of self-esteem. The approaches the world takes in dealing with this problem are inadequate to solve it. These "solutions" are as follows: (1) "I'm OK and you're OK," "let's all love everybody regardless of what the circumstances may be." This "pollyanna" approach does not deal with difficulties that are the source of the problem. The first step in overcoming any problem is recognizing it, then dealing with it. Simply saying, "This is the way I am and I'm OK" maintains the status

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quo and goes nowhere. (2) "Go ahead, be angry and blame everybody else for your problems." This is fertile soil for the women's movement and much of the discord we see in society today. It takes away personal responsibility for one's actions. (3) "Surround yourself with the trappings of success" ignores the inner spiritual needs we all have. (4) "Throw off the guilt-trip that comes from belief in God and free yourself from traditional restraints." This is nothing more than atheistic humanism. (5) Some cope by withdrawing from society. It is easier to brood in self-pity than to take action. This is why many women become "cooking sherry" alcoholics, prescription drug abusers, or agoraphobics.

The young woman (some call her Shulamith) Solomon loved and wrote of in his Song of Solomon gives us an example of God's way to develop positive feelings of self worth. We see her grow from a selfish, possessive, insecure person in chapter 2:16 where she says, "My beloved is mine, and I am his," to a maturity where she could say in chapter 7:10, "I am my beloved's and his desire is toward me." She had times of doubting her physical beauty. How inadequate she must have felt at times! Her skin was deeply tanned from having worked in her family's vineyards, and she lamented in chapter 1:16, "... but mine own vineyard have I not kept." Solomon

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was a tremendous help to her here in assuring her of her self-worth and his love for her. In chapter 1:8-11, he praised her beauty, and in chapter 2:4, she related that he brought her to the banqueting house, and his banner over her was love.

Very few of us are married to a Solomon, but we can all gain assurance of our self-worth from God's Word. (1) We are God's children, and He wants us to have the abundant life (John 10:10). His banner over us is love, for He sent His only begotten Son to die for us (John 3:16). He loves us as He did Daniel, whom He told, "Thou art greatly beloved" (Dan. 9:23). (2) We have to develop enough faith in God's love to forgive ourselves when we sin. In Song of Solomon 5:2ff, we see a marital spat, and Shulamith sought Solomon in the night to right the wrong. Their problem was put in the past and left that way. When we sin, we must confess that sin as widely as it is known, make whatever amends are necessary, and pray for God's forgiveness. Then, we must put the sin behind us and get on with life. We must not allow sins from long ago to deprive us of the joy of living for God today.

... forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before ... (Phil. 3:13-14).

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(3) We must work on our own mental attitudes. "As a man thinketh, so is he" (Prov. 23:7). This involves exhibiting friendliness toward others. "A man that hath friends must show himself friendly" (Prov. 18:24). Counter negative thoughts with positive ones, for success breeds success. We must believe in our own abilities and judgment. We have to learn to laugh at ourselves, for everybody makes mistakes. When we are criticized, see if it is justified. If it is justified, then correct the problem. If it is not, then forget it. Make the effort necessary to do our best, staying active, for achievement comes from doing, not from dreaming. We should fill our minds with spiritual things.

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things (Phil. 4:8).

Our lives are going to be filled with something. It is our choice. We have seen some Bible women who had choices to make for truth over error, good over evil, spiritual over material, peace over turmoil, happiness over sadness, and they like Mary, chose the better part. Let us emulate these women and,

as other problems arise in our lives, look to God's Word for the solutions, for there is no new thing under the sun.