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LET THE TRUTH PREVAIL

1. That there should be only one church today, as it was in the beginning—Church of Christ—Which Christ Himself built, and about which we all can read in the Bible (Matthew 16:18). That congregations of His one church everywhere may be known as churches of Christ, as we read at Romans 16:16. That there should be no denominations or sects in the name of the church. (1 Corinthians 1:10).
2. That there should be only one plan or guideline of salvation, as is revealed and taught in the Bible, followed everywhere. All must be told to believe in Christ, to repent of wrong, to confess Christ the Son of God, and to be baptized for the forgiveness of sins. (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-38). Those who obey these commands of salvation are saved by the Lord and He Himself adds the saved ones to His church (Acts 2:47); which is His spiritual body. (Ephesians 1:22, 23; 4:4; 5:22).
3. That all followers of Christ, everywhere, should be known as Christians, after His name alone, as it was in the beginning. (Acts 4:12; Acts 11:26; 1 Peter 4:16). That all other names which exalt and glorify any other name of a man, or a doctrine, or a day or a movement, etc., must be forgotten.
4. That all man-made creed books must be put aside, with other books written by men, and only the Bible which contains God's inspired message for man must be followed in all spiritual matters. (Matthew 7:21-23; John 12:48).
5. Let us accept the authority of Christ in all religious matters (Matthew 28:18), and strive to abide in the New Testament doctrine of Christ (2 John 9).

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EDITORIAL

What Does The Bible Teach?

“And He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again”

Some time back news papers had carried a story about an incident that took place in a village called Nazlet Emara in Egypt. It said that six people, including four of the same family, had drowned when they jumped into a well to save a chicken. Interesting, isn't? It stated that the chicken had fallen into a farmer's well. The Farmer's eighteen year old son observed and quickly dived into try to save the chicken, but slipped and drowned. On the spur of the moment his two brothers and a sister, ages 20 and 16 and 14, also jumped one after the other to save him, but all met the same fate. Also, two neighbours who came to their rescue were drowned. Later, a police team which removed the corpses from the well found the chicken alive and floating in the water! Evidently, the eighteen year old boy did not realize that he would kill himself. His action was spontaneous. He thought he would save the chicken. His three brothers and sister loved one another and were perished in trying to save each other. Likewise, the two neighbours were moved with compassion but were perished in trying to save them. Their

action was impulsive or unpremeditated. They hadn't realized that their action would kill them. They did what they did to save one another but not to die!

However, when we think of the death of Christ, we notice, that He willingly, knowingly and purposely died for all. (2 Corinthians 5:15). In Romans 5:6-8 we read, "For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Focusing on the death of Christ, the apostle Paul said to the followers of Christ at Corinth that that was the gospel or the good news that he had preached to them earlier, which they had received and in which they stood, and he further said, "By which also you are saved if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died of our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." (1 Corinthians 15:2-4).

Christ just didn't die. He died for our sins! He died to propitiate, to appease, to conciliate for our sins. He was sent by God, given by God to die instead of us. Christ repeatedly, in His life on earth, stated the purpose of His coming to earth, i.e., to die for the sins of the world. (John 3:16; 12:32; Matthew 17:22,23; 20:18,19; Mark 8:31-33; Philippians 2:6-8). He had come to earth from heaven solely for that purpose, that is, to die for the sinners. And, if He hadn't done that, would we have any hope after this life of earth is over? We would die in sin and live in hell for ever, for the wages of sin is death, that is, eternal separation from God. But thanks be to God and His Son Jesus Christ in whom we have the gift of God which is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23).

Today we don't have to live and die in sin, since Christ has shed His blood to redeem us from sin. Through faith in Him and obedience to His commands anyone can have his/her sins forgiven by God, and the scripture says, of those who have obeyed the saving gospel: "For if when we were enemies we

were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." (Romans 5:10). Through faith in Christ and repentance from sin and baptism for the remission of sins one is forgiven by God of all past sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16). In following Christ in His steps each day one remains in the saved state (1 Peter 2:21-25). And finally receives the eternal life in heaven as a saved person in Christ.

Who Is A Sinner?

J.C. CHOATE

We don't hear words like sin, sinner, bad, wrong, evil, wicked, ungodly, and other similar words very often. It is as though these words do not exist anymore, that man and woman are no longer guilty of such things. But believe me, they are still there and human beings are still guilty of such practices.

Sin is defined in God's word like this: "Whosoever committeth sin, transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." (1 John 3:4). The same writer also said, "All unrighteousness is sin." (1 John 5:17). He continues, "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning." (1 John 3:8).

Sin then is that which is bad, wrong, wicked, evil, and contrary to God's will. All accountable beings are guilty of it. The Apostle Paul said, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23). In the context he identifies these sinners as being those who speak lies and shed innocent blood. These would be those old enough to know right from wrong. Babies or infants would not be included. As a matter of fact, Christ said, "Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 18:3).

But if we are sinners, how can we be forgiven of our sins? Again, Paul says, "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more

then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." (Romans 5:8-9).

The point is that Christ came into this world and died on the cross that man might be saved from his sins. But how do we apply the Lord's death to our sins? The fact is, Christ lived a sinless life and was therefore able to offer himself on the cross that we might have our sins washed away. When Saul obeyed the Lord, the gospel preacher came unto him and said, "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." (Acts 22:16). After the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection, he commanded the Apostles, "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).

When the Lord saves one then he enters into Christ and his church. (Romans 6:3,4; Acts 2:47). But even then one is still a sinner because he is still in the flesh. The Apostle John explains it like this: "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: 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. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness, if we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." (1 John 1:5-10).

Consequently, we are all sinners but we can have our sins forgiven by obeying the Lord, and as we live the faithful Christian life we can remain pure and holy as the blood of Christ cleanses us from all of our sins.

We pray that you will believe in the Lord, repent of our sins, confess your faith in Christ as being the Son of God, and that you will be baptized that you may be saved. We pray further that you will remain faithful to the Lord so that you can not only be saved in this world but in the world to come. (Revelation 22:14; Revelation 2:10).

Especially For Women

Search For Truth Try The Spirits

BETTY BURTON CHOATE

"I am so glad to have this book," Rachel said as they resumed their study of the history of church development the following night. "I had no idea about how all the churches started. From childhood I had supposed they were all in the Bible, but this history shows that they were started as various men began to teach particular doctrines, and as others followed them. Actually, that's what we were doing, Andrew—following what we were taught by our parents, and they were following what their parents taught them, and so it has come down through the centuries. But I didn't know that before the 1500s *non of the Protestant denominations existed*, that only the Roman Catholic church, the Greek Orthodox Church, and the Lord's church were in the world!"

"Neither did I," admitted Andrew. "But seeing how divisions have occurred because of human thinking and commitment to personal beliefs, I am becoming convinced that *anywhere*, in *any age*, and in *any place*, people can leave truth and begin a new branch of error! It must have happened continually, ever since Jesus sent the Holy Spirit and began His church"

"Of course!" exclaimed Rachel, thinking aloud. "Some in the church in Corinth were already dividing and leaving the pure truth, and some of the seven churches addressed in Revelation had taken up doctrines that were wrong—and God warned them that He would remove their candlestick—their representation—if they didn't *repent!* In the same way, down through the centuries, 'denominations' must have developed wherever people began to add to God's word, or to take something away, or to twist its meaning. What a sobering thought for us as we try to leave all of the division behind to go back to the gospel as it was taught in the first century!"

"It will be good to share this new knowledge with others in the church," Andrew said thoughtfully. "I'm sure they know nothing of the history of denominationalism, either. This certainly

illustrates Jesus' warning, '*And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrine the commandments of men*' (Matthew 15:9)."

"Your book is a very helpful tool!" Rachel said as she picked up her pen and notebook, ready to take notes again. "Since my family had traditionally followed the Baptist belief, I want to learn about that church."

"This history, referring to the **World Book Encyclopedia**, says that the first Baptist Church was organized in London in 1607 by John Smyth, but that Baptists claim that their church was originally started in the days of John the Baptist and that all who were baptized by him were actually Baptists—that would include even Christ! Some say it was started when the 12 apostles were chosen, and others say it was sometime during the ministry of Christ. But they say that the church talked about in the New Testament is the Baptist Church."

"That would be strange, since it is never called by the Baptist name in the Scriptures," Rachel answered. "But if it were the true church, its doctrines would be the same as were taught then. And I just thought, what a coincidence!—so far, each one of these churches we've read about recognize that the church was started in the New Testament times, but **they all claim to be that one!** If they can see and understand that much of what the Bible says, why don't they just follow *all it says* about the church and salvation, and then they really would be that church?"

"That's the puzzle," admitted Andrew. "If all who claim to be believers in Christ really were following the same teachings—just as they're recorded in the New Testament—and if there really was only one church today, as in the days of the apostles, how much easier it would be for people to see the truth!"

"This book says that at first the followers of John Smyth preferred to be known as Brethren, Disciples of Christ, Christians, or Believers, but that the name **Baptist** was first used in 1644 and the Baptist people have worn it ever since. What a shame, that they grew away from the truth, even in the name they would wear!"

"There are now 28 different kinds of Baptists, divided according to differences in beliefs. Though they have a Standard Baptist Manual, not all follow it, or follow it closely. All (except Free Will Baptists) are Calvinistic in doctrine, some more so than others."

"But all believe that we are saved by faith alone. The one who wishes to be baptized is asked to confess that he believes that God has pardoned his sins, even before baptism, so though Baptists immerse, they insist that baptism is **not for remission of sins**; however, just as the preacher told us, *they also insist that one must be baptized to enter the Baptist church!*

"The person must also tell of some "experience" to show that he has been saved, and then the members vote whether to receive him and allow him to be baptized—though, according to their doctrine, he has already been saved at the point of belief in God and Christ! Isn't that amazing, that they would *presume*, as a group of *humans*, to vote on the acceptance or rejection of a person that—according to their own doctrine—God has already accepted!"

"So they believe that a person who has not been baptized into Christ can be saved and go to heaven, but he is not allowed in fellowship in their churches simply on the basis of faith?" asked Rachel.

"And most of the groups practice 'closed communion', which means that the person who has not been accepted in full fellowship—those who haven't been baptized—can't partake of the Supper—though they don't have the Supper weekly, as Christians did in the New Testament."

"Last week two young men came to the door, wanting to study with me, Andrew. They said they were members of 'The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints'. At least they have Christ in their name, and they seemed very evangelistic and sincere. Does the book say anything about them?" asked Rachel.

"I keep thinking of the warning the apostle John gave in 1 John 4:1: '*Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world*'. We have so much to be thankful for, that we have the written word of God and can compare every teaching with what the Holy Spirit caused to be written.

"Let's see what we can learn about **The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints**. It is better known as the Mormon Church, was organized on April 6, 1830 in Fayette, New York, by Joseph Smith, Jr., with six members. That tells the story right there, before anything else is considered," Andrew said, "Its full name, and its better known *name*, is *not used in the Scriptures*."

It was *not* started in Jerusalem, on the day of Pentecost, in the first century, and it was not started by Christ. So, none of its identifying marks match what the Scriptures say about the church which was established by Christ.

“But let's see some of their doctrines. Joseph Smith claimed to have a vision in which an angel, Moroni, appeared to him and told him the location of some plates of gold on which were written the words Smith was to translate. The book that resulted is called **The Book of Mormon**.

“Rachel, do you remember what Paul wrote in Galatians 1:8-9? By that warning that Holy Spirit prepared Christians for just such claims as this. *'But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so say I now again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed'*.

“But since John Smith claimed to have a new revelation from God, he would be saying—like all the others we've read about—that the church he started is the true one recognized by God! **Isn't that amazing?**—that we don't read about any of these churches in the Bible, and yet all of them say they are the church of Christ, the church we read about in the book of Acts!”

“And all believers could be in that one original church if they didn't add their own names and write their own creeds and books with their own beliefs and practices that are different from the doctrines taught in the New Testament. How simple the truth is! How easy it would be for all of us to be united in Christ!” Andrew said with intensity of feeling.

Who Established Your Church?

FRANCIS DAVID

Majority of the people do not understand the meaning of the word 'Church'. If you ask them they will tell you that church is a concrete building. A number of them are ignorant of the great truths of the Bible. What do we mean by word church? The church is not a building, as many people think. The word church comes from the greek word 'Ekkelisia', which means the 'called

out ones'. The church is a group of people those who have obeyed the gospel of Jesus and this is regardless of their nationality, colour, status or social position. All those who have obeyed the one universal gospel are added to one universal church of Christ. (Acts. 2:47).

What we see today, in the religious world that people talk and say that our church does this or our church has some particular things to do etc. It shows us that they are talking about some particular denomination. Do you know how these so many denominations came into existence? When the church was established in A.D. 30, there was unity in the church or among Christians. But gradually they began to depart from original pattern of the Bible. The history tells us that first denomination that came into existence was Catholic. The meaning of word Catholic is Universal. This church crushed all those who opposed them. Martin Luther was one of the catholic priest who was opposing their doctrine and practises and because of his opposition he was outcasted or driven away. This took place in 1517. When people were opposing the doctrines of catholics, instead of coming back to the original new testament pattern they followed their leaders and they were known after their names or particular doctrine. They formed all kinds of denominations. Some people began to follow Martin Luther and instead of following the truths or facts of the Bible they followed Martin Luther and were known as Lutherans. Why Christianity is not growing? It is all because of great confusion. All the glory and honour was snatched from our Lord Jesus Christ and the human beings (Church leaders) were honoured most. People preferred to follow these leaders instead of doctrine of Jesus Christ.

There are hundreds of denominations today and all have their own teachings and practises. Infact, there is a mess in Christianity. The book of Corinthian tells us that even in the first century, there were some people who were dividing the church. They were creating disunity among the Christians. In first Corinthian Chapter 1 and verse 10, apostle Paul says: "Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in same mind and in the same judgment." What these people were doing

at Corinth? They were trying to divide the Lord's church and instead of following their Master (Jesus), they began to follow the preachers. They started calling themselves after the names of their preachers. Some said: 'I belong to Paul' (St. Paul's church), Some said 'I belong to Appolos (St. Appolos church); some said: 'We belong to Cephas' (St. Cephas' church). Paul asked them a question: "IS CHRIST DIVIDED?" then again he asked: "Was Paul crucified for you?" or "were you baptised in the name of Paul?" (Read verses 11 & 12). Don't we see this kind of thing in the world today?

The world is full of churches (denominations). I have a long list of denominations. Let me give here some of the names and their founders. In this list I find the first name is Seventh day adventist church. William Miller is the founder of this church, and he started this in 1844. John Smyth founded the Baptist church and there are all kinds of baptist churches existing all over the world. Brethren church was started first in Germany in 1708. In 1830 Joseph Smith founded Latter day Saints or Mormon church. Christian Scientist was established by Mary Baker Eddy. Jehovah's Witnesses church was founded by Charles T. Russel. There is Presbyterian church and this was established by John Calvin. Mr. John Wesley is the founder of Methodist church and then some people started the church of Nazarene and their base was the teaching of John Wesley.

Mennonite church was started by Menno Simons. He was a Roman Catholic priest. There are all kinds of Pentecostal churches all over the world. Many of these came out from methodist and Baptist background. They use a great variety of names and do not always include the word 'Pentecostal'. They have a largest group which is called: 'Assemblies of God'. William Booth started the salvation Army church. He was a preacher in the Methodist church but he left the pulpit in 1861 and made a vow to work in slums and streets for the poor. He first named this group 'Christian mission' but later changed it to Salvation Army. The year was 1878. There are worlds of churches that we can mention here but due to lack of space its not possible. What do you think about these different denominations? Don't you see a mess in Christianity? Other day a man came to my office. He was a Hindu and he told me that they are preparing a website of different religions including

Christianity. When I talked to him and told him about different churches, he was surprised to know that such a thing is existing in Christianity and he told me he wanted to know more about it. I gave him some Christian literature. Now, may I ask you, who established your church? Is Jesus the founder of the church that you belong to? Jesus said: "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up" (Mt. 15:13).

The church which I belong to was established by Lord Jesus Christ. He is the founder (Mt. 16:18). He is the builder, head and Saviour of this church (Col. 1:18; Eph. 5:23). Christ called this church "MY" and he is the Owner. He shed His blood for this church (Acts 20:28). Apostle Peter preached on the day of Pentecost and after hearing his message 3000 people responded and they asked Peter and rest of the apostles "What shall we do?" He told them they need to repent or change their minds from sin and be baptised for the forgiveness of sins. They did it and the Bible says: "were added to the church". We see here, 3000 baptised plus 12 apostles and this was the beginning of the church of Christ. (Acts 2:47). All over the world there are thousands of congregations of churches of Christ (Romans 16:16). You can be a part of this church. You need to hear the word of the gospel (Rm. 10:17; Acts 18:8), Believe in Christ as the Son of God and repent of your sins and be baptised (Heb. 11:6; Mt. 10:32-33; Mark 16:16; Acts 17:30; Acts 2:38). We as Christians, oppose all forms of Christianity which is not found in the word of God. If you want to do Lord's will then please let us know, we will assist you in your obedience to the gospel of Christ.

What a Saviour!

THOMAS R. DOHLING

He atoned for (propitiated) our sins & reconciled us to God!

Propitiation is not the placating of a vengeful God; but it is, rather, the satisfying of the righteousness of a holy God making it possible for Him to show mercy without compromise. Propitiation demonstrates the consistency of God's character in saving the worst sinners. Propitiation reconciles man to God. This means that sin is no longer the issue between man and

God. Because of propitiation, God is free to love the believer without compromising either His Righteousness or Justice.

In the Bible, reconciliation is the word used to refer to the process by which God changes human beings and adjusts them to the standard of His perfect character. Rom. 11:15 refers to the "reconciling of the world". The Greek word used here is the noun *katallagh* (*katallagei*). This word is also used in Rom. 5:11, "... but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the reconciliation."

By the death of Christ on the Cross, the world is thoroughly changed in its relationship to God, Eph. 2:14-18 and Col. 1:20-22. That is, through the Cross of Christ the world is so altered in its position respecting the character and judgment of God that God does not now impute sin to human beings. The world is therefore rendered savable!

Nothing man could do could satisfy God. Only He could satisfy Himself. Only He could make atonement for man's sin (Rom. 5:11). Only He could bridge the gap that separated man from Himself. So, He sent a part of Himself down to earth to satisfy Himself by living the life that was acceptable to Himself. He experienced for Himself what man, in his fleshly weakness experiences; the pain of separation from loved ones, the frustration and helplessness caused by diseases, sorrow, pain, rejection, and loneliness. He experienced the futility of the temporary life on earth. He had prepared a fuller, joyful, permanent, eternal life for man with Himself in heaven. For all these, on behalf of man, He bore man's sorrows and became acquainted with our grief (Isa. 53:3). He suffered for us—instead of us; the Creator for the creature, the sinless one for the sinful, the strong for the weak, the perfect one for the imperfect so that man may be purified and share in His glory. No one can say He doesn't know or care about man. It's because He cared that He came and because He knows that He helps. It's because he understands that He has prepared a better place for man so that He can be with man forever; where Satan will never be able to break man's relationship with the Father. Therefore, the greater divide has been created which, at the end of time, will remain forever (Luke 16:26). However, for now, we have access to God through our Wonderful Saviour! Let everyone accept God's gift while there is still time before it is too late!

Let The Bible Answer

ROBERT MEREDITH

What is the significance of the term "*One God*" in Ephesians 4:6? In the first part of Ephesians four, the Holy Spirit directed the apostle Paul to pen seven ones which are necessary if one desires unity. Paul concluded the seven ones with, "*One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all*" (Eph. 4:6). this ultimately shows us unity of worship.

The member of the God-head referred to in this verse is the Father. Therefore, in this section of Scripture one has all three members of the God-head mentioned: the Holy Spirit, One Spirit in verse four; Jesus, the One Lord of verse five; and the Father in verse six. God is united. One in nature: divine and eternal (Heb. 9:14; John 1:1-3); one in purpose: the reconciliation of man (2 Cor. 5:18); and one in work, making access to the Father possible (Eph. 2:16-18).

Paul stated that there is one God and Father of all. In the New Testament age, God has reconciled all (Jew and Gentile) unto Himself in Christ Jesus our Lord (Eph. 2:12-16). God is now accessible to all who are willing to come to Him (Mt. 11:28). All the members of Deity have done their parts so that man can choose to come to God or not. The Father developed, or planned, a way that man could have the forgiveness of his sins through God's grace (Eph. 3:10-11). The Word took on flesh becoming the Son of God and dying for our sins (John 1:14; Eph. 1:7), and the Holy Spirit revealed God's will to man by the apostles and other inspired penmen of the first century (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 1 Cor. 2:10-13). Furthermore, the providence of God has preserved His will for us. It is now possible for all to be redeemed from their sins (Heb. 2:9; 1 John 2:2) and worship God as He directs (John 4:24).

It should be the desire of every religious person to have unity. Jesus prayed for unity (John 17:21) and the Holy Spirit commanded it (1 Cor. 1:10). In Ephesians 4:3-6, the Holy Spirit shows what is necessary to have proper unity. The prophet Amos penned, "*Can two walk together, except they be agreed*" (Amos 3:3). The answer is obvious. God tells us how we can walk together. "*There is one body (unity of organization) and one*

Spirit (unity of revelation), *even as ye are called in one hope* (unity of aspiration) *of your calling* (2 Thess. 2:14); *One Lord* (unity of authority) *one faith* (unity of doctrine), *one baptism* (unity of practice), *one God and Father of all who is above all, and through all, and in you all* (unity of worship)." Let us be honest, friends, denominationalism does not fit this picture of unity. The word denomination denotes part of a whole or division; which God condemns (Amos 3:3; John 17:21; 1 Cor. 1:10; John 1:7). Our plea is to return to and restore simple New Testament Christianity. In the first century there was only one church, and each congregation of that one church followed that same doctrine with the same terms of admission, same organization, and same work for each. God's way has not changed. When one is baptized with the one baptism, obeying the one faith as delivered by the one Spirit and made possible by the one Lord, then the one God adds them to the one body, and they have the one hope. Let us strive for unity.

How Beautiful Heaven Must Be

JERRY JOSEPH

Anyone can go to heaven if he would obey the will of the Father. (Matthew 7:21.) To live in heaven should be the desire of every person. Heaven is a wonderful, glorious and beautiful place. Let us notice some reasons why heaven is such a beautiful place.

1. HEAVEN IS BEAUTIFUL BECAUSE IT IS HOME FOR THE CHILD OF GOD

We are pilgrims, strangers in this life. (1 Peter 1:1.) Our stay on earth is only temporal. (Hebrews 9:27.) It is in that future home happiness will be found and hope fulfilled. (1 Corinthians 15:19.) This earth is not our home, and we are just passing through to a better and more beautiful home, heaven.

2. HEAVEN IS BEAUTIFUL BECAUSE IT IS ETERNAL

According to Matthew 25:46, it is the righteous who will obtain life eternal. As children of God we will have eternal rest in heaven. (Revelation 14:13.) The blessings and benefits of heaven will never cease. The beauty of heaven will continue because it is eternal.

3. HEAVEN IS BEAUTIFUL BECAUSE IT IS A PLACE OF WONDERFUL ASSOCIATIONS

In heaven we will be able to enjoy eternal fellowship with the Godhead. (John 14:1-6; 1 Corinthians 15:23-25.) We will also enjoy fellowship with the godly of all ages. (Matthew 25:31-46; Hebrews 11.) How wonderful and beautiful that fellowship will be because of the associations there.

4. HEAVEN IS BEAUTIFUL BECAUSE IT IS A PLACE OF VICTORY

In this life, we can have victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 15:57.) In heaven we will enjoy final eternal victory. We will have victory forever over death, the Devil, darkness, despair, discouragement, distress, disappointments, danger and even disobedience. (Revelation 21:1-8.) How wonderful it will be knowing that one day we will have victory over these things.

5. HEAVEN IS BEAUTIFUL BECAUSE IT WILL BE THE END

In this life there is indifference (Revelation 3:15-16), immorality (Galatians 5:19-21), and immaturity. (Hebrews 5:12-14.) In heaven all these will end. Irreverence, ignorance, ill-will, and ingratitude will not be in heaven. How wonderful and beautiful heaven is going to be without these things.

6. HEAVEN IS BEAUTIFUL BECAUSE OF ITS NATURE

It is a promised place for the people of God. Peter states in 1 Peter 1:4 it is the Christian's inheritance. This inheritance Peter says is "incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you." This inheritance does not decay, is not defiled, is not dull and is definite.

7. HEAVEN IS A PREPARED PLACE FOR PREPARED PEOPLE (JOHN 14:1-3).

To prepare, one must have faith (Hebrews 11:6), repent of

sins (Luke 13:3), confess Christ (Matthew 10:32-33), be baptized (Mark 16:16) and then live a faithful and dedicated life. (Revelation 2:10.)

Begin now to prepare for this wonderful glorious and beautiful place called heaven.

Dodge The Burden—Lose The Blessing

EDSEL BURLESON

Long ago a king is said to have placed a large stone in a road and then hid and watched to see who would remove it. One by one the people walked around the stone blaming the king for not keeping the road clear. Finally, a very poor man, on his way to market the few vegetables he had grown, came that way. Seeing the stone, he laid down his load, and rolled the stone into the ditch. He then noticed a purse lying where the stone had been. He opened it and found it full of gold pieces with a note from the king saying it was for the one who removed the stone.

The masses had passed by, dodging the burden and missing the blessing. Jesus said, "For whosoever will save his life for my sake shall find it." (Matthew 16:25.) We can turn back from a cross or go around it, but we are the losers if we do.

Epicurus said, "The greater the difficulty, the more glory in surmounting it. Skillful pilots gain their reputation from storms and tempests." There are no victories without conflicts, no rainbows without a cloud and a storm. But there is a sure and safe shelter in the face of the most raging storm.

Fidelia Fisk was once teaching a group of women in a country where the custom required all to sit on the floor without back support. She had just recovered from an illness and grew very tired. One of the ladies noticed this and sat behind her placing her back against her. Miss Fisk hesitated to put much pressure against her friend, but the woman said, "NO! NO! If you love me, lean hard."

This is what Jesus is saying to us, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

(Matthew 11:28.)

The writer of Hebrews said concerning Jesus, "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." (Hebrews 5:8-9.)

God's love for us is not a love that always exempts us from trials, but rather, a love that sees us through trials. Peter urged, "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you." (1 Peter 5:7.) Nothing lies beyond the reach of prayer, except that which lies outside the will of God. Prayer is to ask not what we wish of God, but what God wishes of us.

James said, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." (1:12.)

How to Study the Bible

ROD RUTHERFORD

The Bible is a very big book. Actually, it is a library of 66 different books. There are 39 books in the Old Testament and 27 books in the New Testament. These books are all joined together because they have one common theme. This theme is God's plan to save man from his sins through Jesus Christ. The first 39 books, the Old Testament, tell us that "Christ is coming." The first four books of the New Testament tell us that "Christ has come." The last 23 books of the New Testament tell us that "Christ is coming again."

In order to understand the Bible properly, one needs to ask five questions as he reads: (1) Who is speaking? (2) Who is spoken to? (3) When is he speaking? (4) What type of language is the speaker using? (5) What are the circumstances or conditions under which he is speaking? If one can answer these five questions correctly, it will help him to understand the word of God clearly.

First, one must ask "**Who is speaking?**" Everything in the Bible was written by men who were inspired by God. However, these inspired writers sometimes recorded by inspiration the words of evil men. Even the words of Satan are found in the

Bible (see Job 1:9-11; 2:4-5; Matthew 4:3,6,9). These words are accurately recorded but they are not recommended for us to follow today. If one asks, "Who is speaking?" it will help him to know whether the words he is reading are words he should obey.

Second, one must ask, "**Who is spoken to?**" In Genesis 6:14, we have the following commandment of God: "Make yourself an ark of gopher wood." Is it necessary for us today to build a ship out of gopher wood in order to please God? No, God does not want us to do this. This command was given to Noah. It was necessary for him to obey it in order to be saved from the great flood which God was going to send on all the world. But this command does not apply to us today. If we answer correctly, "Who is spoken to?" we will see this command was meant only for Noah.

Third, one must ask, "**When is the Bible writer speaking?**" Is the writer speaking to people such as Abraham and Isaac who lived in the Patriarchal Age when God revealed His will directly to the fathers? Or, is he speaking to the people of Israel who lived under the Law God gave Moses at Mt. Sinai? Or, is he speaking to people today who live under the Law of Christ, which is the New Testament?

In the days of the Law of Moses under which Israel lived, animal sacrifices, sabbath keeping, special feast days, instrumental music and choirs and a special priesthood were all a part of the law of Moses (Exodus 20:8-11; Leviticus 23; 1 Chronicles 25; 2 Chronicles 29:25; Psalm 150). But Jesus fulfilled the Law, Psalms, and Prophets (the Old Testament) (Luke 24:44). He has taken it away (Colossians 2:14). Today, all men live under the Law of Christ, which is the New Testament (Hebrews 8:6-13). If we ask, "When is the speaking?" it will let us see that these Old Testament laws of worship are not for us. We must go to the New Testament to find how God wants us to worship Him today.

Fourth, in order to properly understand the Bible, we need to ask: "**What type of language is the inspired writer using?**" All human languages have two types of speech; literal and figurative. Literal language is the type which is found in the historical books of the Bible such as Genesis and Exodus, the book of Acts, etc. It is fact. Literal words must be understood to have their actual meaning. In literal language, if a sheep is mentioned, it means a four legged animal which has wool on its back.

Figurative language is different. Words are used to represent ideas or thoughts which are different from the actual meaning of the word. For example: a sheep or lamb may be spoken of, but an animal is not meant. It is being used to represent something else which has some of the qualities of a sheep or lamb. Jesus was a man. He is the Son of God. But in figurative language in the Bible, He is some times spoken of as a lamb. John the Baptist said of Jesus: "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29)! Lambs were used for sin offerings under the Law of Moses. John did not mean that Jesus was an actual lamb. But he meant that Jesus would be the offering for our sins.

A fifth question to ask as one reads the Bible is: **"What are the conditions or circumstances in which this writing is given?"** If we know the circumstances surrounding the writer at the time he writes, it will help us to understand what he is saying. For example: many people have great difficulty understanding the book of Revelation. But if we know the circumstances under which the book was given, it will help us to understand its message. The writer of Revelation was John, the apostle. He had been imprisoned by the Roman government on a rocky island called Patmos. This was done because he was a Christian. The heathen Roman government was persecuting the church of Christ near the end of the first century (about A.D. 95 to 100). The things which were revealed to John were "things which must shortly take place" (Revelation 1:1). The book of Revelation was intended to encourage those Christians who were being persecuted in the first century (Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21). Any time that Christians are persecuted, they can gain great encouragement from studying the book of Revelation.

The Bible is God's inspired Book. It is His revelation to mankind. But in order for us to understand the Bible, we must learn how to study it properly. We must "rightly divide the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). If we will ask these five simple questions as we study, we will find that we can indeed understand God's Book!

God Called Him Home

GLENN COLLEY

It is not uncommon for bewildered and grieving people to stand beside the casket of a loved one and say words like these: "The Lord just called him home." Sometimes well meaning friends will say to the grievers, "God just decided He needed him more in heaven than on earth."

Is that true? When a person dies is it because God decided this was the best time for him to die?

What determines when a person will die? There are only two possibilities: Either we die when our physical body is no longer a suitable house for our soul, or we die when God arbitrarily chooses for us to go.

There are cases in the Bible in which God decided for people to die at a particular time. Goliath died when God assisted David. The people of Jericho died when God guided and blessed the Israelite army. Ananias the Sapphira died as punishment for lying to the Holy Spirit in Acts 5. And then there was the unique case of Enoch in Genesis 5:24: "And Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him." Hebrews 11:5 adds, "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him; for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God." However, this was a unique case. This kind of occurrence is never said to be commonplace. It was a unique and unusual event. It has never been true on a wide-scale basis.

The answer to our major question is this: It cannot be the case that the time of people's death today is when God arbitrarily chooses, for these two reasons:

First, there are things we can do to prolong life. Ephesians 6:1-3 says, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord; for this is right. Honor thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise), that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth." As a whole, children, who learn to obey and honor their parents, live longer.

Psalm 90:10 attributes long life to a man's strength: "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor

and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.”

If we die based only on when God decided He wants us to die, why should we avoid things which harm our health and which are known to cut life short? Smoking? Cholesterol? Obesity? We go to the doctor. Many of us can truly say that we wouldn't be alive today except for skilled doctors and nurses. The point is this: We can have some effect on the length of our days on earth.

Second, there are things we can do to end life. A father stood once beside the casket of his teenage son. After several friends gently said, “God just called him home,” he shook his head and cried, “Stop saying that, It isn't true. My son isn't dead because God wanted him in heaven. He's dead because he was out in the middle of the night ripping through the countryside instead of being home in the bed where he belonged! If he had done right he would not be dead right now.”

We know people sometimes choose to die and commit suicide (Acts 1:18). A man sits with a gun to his head and you enter the room. He says he is planning to end his life in a few moments. Can he choose to pull the trigger or not? Of course he can. Your response to him would be to encourage him to put the gun down and get help. You would not walk away saying that if he dies it will be because God called him home.

Sometimes people choose to take the life of another. I John 3:15 says that murderers can't go to heaven.

If it is the case that when a person dies it is because God called him home, then isn't a murderer simply carrying out God's will for those whose time it is to die? And if that is true, then why is murder condemned in the Old and New Testaments?

The truth is that we will die when this earthly body is no longer a suitable house for our soul. This may occur because of old age, or perhaps a disease, or perhaps a terrible accident.

In the Bible texts in which we are permitted to listen to people talk after their death, not once do we read them fretting about how they died, nor about the young age at which they died. They have but one concern, and that centers on the relationship they have with God. Balaam had it right when he begged, “let me die the death of the righteous.” (Num. 23:10). And remember, you cannot die the death of the righteous if you won't live the life of the righteous. Let us remember that life, at

best, is brief, and that our chief concern must be in pleasing our God.

God's Plan of Salvation

HUGO MCCORD

Since all responsible human beings are sinners (Romans 3:9, 23), and since "all of us must appear before the judgment seat of Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:10), everyone, along with the Philippian jailor, should ask, "What must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30.) Paul and Silas replied to the jailor, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you and your household will be saved." (Acts 16:31.)

But faith in the Lord Jesus Christ alone will save nobody, for "a man is justified by works, and not by faith only." (James 2:24.) Many "among the rulers believed in" Jesus, "but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be expelled from the synagogue. They loved the praise of men more than the praise from God." (John 12:42-43.)

Sins are "blotted out" by repentance (Acts 3:19), but not by repentance alone, for except a sinner believes in Jesus, he will "die" in his "sins." (John 8:24.)

With "the mouth one confesses" that Jesus is "the Christ, the Son of the living God" to "be saved" (Matthew 16:16; Romans 10:10), but not by confession alone, for Jesus announced that "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my heavenly Father." (Matthew 7:21.)

Baptism "saves" (1 Peter 3:21), but unless baptism is preceded by faith in Jesus, repentance, the "good confession" (Luke 13:3; Romans 10:9-10; 1 Timothy 6:12; 1 John 4:15), baptism is just getting wet.

It follows then that "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27) sets forth four actions on a sinner's part before he is saved: faith, repentance, confession, and baptism.

In the neighbourhood of Topeka, Kansas, is a large, underground silo where ballistic missiles are stored. When one walks out of the elevator that brings him down to the storage

area, he is not immediately in the room where the missiles are stored. One has to pass through the doors of three rooms before he opens the door into the room where he sees the missiles. As there is not an entrance to the fourth room without passing through three rooms, so a sinner is not saved from his sins biblically without the four actions stated above: faith, repentance, confession, and baptism.

TWO MEANINGS

In a class studying John 3:16, “the Golden Text” of the Bible, someone asked if the Greek word translated “believes,” namely “pisteuo,” has the same meaning in other places where it is found. Exactly, so, but in some places two different meanings of “believe” are meant, as in the following citations.

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes (pisteuo) in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16)

“Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed (pisteuo) in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.” (John 12:42-43.)

The meaning of pisteuo in John 3:16 takes a sinner to “everlasting life,” while the meaning of pisteuo in John 12:42-43 is limited to a mental action, a thought in the mind, and did not include confessing Jesus.

This second meaning of pisteuo, which is faith only, will never take a sinner to “everlasting life.” Of this second meaning, a conviction in the mind, James writes: “Even the demons believe (pisteuo)—and tremble! (2:19.)

Furthermore, a confession of that mental conviction by itself is worthless. An “unclean spirit” cried out to Jesus, “I know who you are—the Holy One of God.” (Mark 1:214.)

The believing (pisteuo) of John 3:16, a believing that gives a sinner everlasting life, includes more than a mental conviction, more than faith only. One can say that the believing (pisteuo) of John 3:16 is comprehensive. It is a package word, a carrier, containing five actions: (1) the mental act of conviction that “Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16.); (2) the mental act of repentance (Luke 13:3); (3) the physical act

of confessing "with the mouth" that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Romans 10:9-10); (4) the physical act of being "buried" in "water" as Jesus was buried in a tomb, and then being "raised" up out of the water "in the same manner that Christ was raised from the dead" (Acts 10:47; Romans 6:4-6; Colossians 2:12); and (5) the physical and spiritual actions of being "faithful" to Christ "until death." (Revelation 2:10.)

The collective use of the verb *pisteuo*, "believe," in John 3:16 is also found in its noun form, *pistis*, "faith," in Ephesians 2:8: "By grace are you saved through faith." Very often the word "faith" is comprehensive, including everything required of a sinner to go to heaven, from beginning to the end, "by faith to faith, as it is written, 'The righteous shall live by faith.'" (Romans 1:17; compare 1 Peter 1:5; 1 John 5:4; Revelation 2:10.)

SO IS THE WORD "GRACE"

Similarly, as the word "faith" is a carrier word, so is the word "grace." As the word "faith" carries all of the human side of a sinner going to heaven, so the word "grace" carries all of the divine side of providing a way for a sinner going to heaven, namely: mercy, love, kindness, the cross and the blood of Jesus. (Ephesians 1:7; 2:4; Galatians 6:14; Titus 3:4-5.)

The collective, five-act, meaning of *pisteuo* in John 3:16, that leads to "everlasting life," is stated another way by one word, "obey": Jesus is "the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey (*hupakouo*) him" (Hebrews 5:9), while "the wrath of God" is reserved for them that "obey not (*apeitheo*) the Son." (John 3:36.)

Well-meaning preachers who contend that baptism is not included in *pisteuo* in John 3:16 are disputing the Bible statement that in baptism "sins" are washed away. (Acts 22:16.) Those who rejected the baptism of John the baptizer, a "man sent from God" (John 1:6), "rejected the counsel of God against themselves." (Luke 7:30.) With that statement in the Bible, how can preachers today be so bold as to minimize and to reject the baptism of another baptizer (John 4:1,2). Likewise sent from God, One greater than his cousin John? (Luke 1:21,36.)



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