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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?

***“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday,
today and forever”***

How different the world is today than it was some years ago! There was a time, just a few years ago, when there were no aeroplanes, automobiles, trains, televisions, radios, telephones, and computers, etc. Yet people lived without them. What if these things are withdrawn from our society today? Certainly, our lives would become miserable. We wouldn't want to live without these things. In fact, we have become so much accustomed to these things, rather dependent on them so much, that we can't think of surviving without such things. Just a few years ago, while visiting in the U.S.A., this writer was asked by a lady, if we have Wall-Mart in India? When I told her that we don't. Her immediate response was: How do you survive? Modern Americans have become so much accustomed to Wall Marts that they think it is a must to have a Wall-Mart to survive! Sure, some changes are good and make life easier. We are certainly, in a way, living in most modern time. Not only do we have access today to things such as aeroplanes, automobiles, trains, televisions, telephones, and computers, but we have also improved in medical technology and food production, etc. Today people live longer. We have obviously improved upon our creature comforts, and are typically not so crowded in our houses. Yet, while so much

has changed some things remain unchanged, same as they were in the beginning, and will never change. As the writer of the book of Hebrews, in Hebrews 13:8, observed: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever." Christ has not changed His will, even in the year 2001. For becoming His disciple or follower His demand is the same what it was more than 1900 years ago: "If anyone desires to come after me," He had said, "let him deny himself, and take up his cross, daily, and follow me." (Luke 9:23).

Those who wish to know today what one must do to inherit God's kingdom of heaven? His reply to them is the same as it was over 1900 years ago when he walked the earth: "Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father in heaven." Therefore, said He, "Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter but will not be able." Likewise, He said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. . . . unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God." (Matthew 7:21; Luke 13:24; John 3:3,5).

Also, there is no change in the Lord's plan of salvation. That is, he still saves those who do what he has commanded one must do to be saved from sin. His plan is the same as it was in the beginning when He had given it to His apostles. Though people through the years have tried to change it, and are pretending to have succeeded with words like: "Pray this simple prayer and Jesus will save you," or "Accept Christ as your personal Saviour in whatever condition you are and Jesus will save you." But, remember, the Lord, the Saviour has not said this. And to change His will is to reject it. Hear what the apostle Paul had said at Galatians 1:6-8 "I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. 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."

What the Lord, and His apostles by His inspiration had said in the beginning is still the same and true, and it hasn't changed one bit. To His disciples Christ had said, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is

baptised will be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemn." (Mark 16:15 & 16). Then when the first believers, after hearing the gospel, had asked the apostles: "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" In reply, they were told: "Repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:37 & 38). Jesus Christ and His will, His demands and promises have not changed. Though men have tried to change them, but they remain the same, according to the Bible. Didn't Christ say, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words by no means pass away" (Matthew 24:35)? It is futile to try to change what the Lord has said.

Did You Hear What I Said?

J.C. CHOATE

The letters we receive in response to the articles in The Bible Teacher usually have to do with miracles, the church, mechanical music in worship, and one even wanted to know how could Paul have been an Apostle since he was not an eye witness from the time that Christ was baptized by John. We answer these questions again and again in our writings. Did you hear what I said? I am going to say some of these things again just for those of you who missed it the first or second times.

The sad thing about all of this is that the religious world has taught error so much and for so long that to most people error has become truth and truth has become error. As Paul wrote concerning some people of his day, they have "changed the truth of God into a lie . . ." (Romans 1:25).

Are miracles being performed today? What is called miracles are not miracles at all. If someone narrowly escapes being killed, it is said that he escaped by a miracle. Miracles in the Bible had to do with that which was contrary to the law of nature. Jesus performed miracles, and so did the Apostles and those they laid their hands on. These miracles were performed to make believers and to confirm the word. Concerning the miracles that Jesus performed, please note that they were done in the presence of his disciples, to make believers out of them.

We read, "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).

Speaking of Christ and the Apostles, the record says, "So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen." (Mark 16:19,20).

Why were miracles necessary? Since the New Testament had not been yet given in written form then miracles were performed to make believers and to confirm the spoken word, that is, to convince those who saw those miracles that truly Jesus was the Son of God and that the Apostles were preaching the word of God. Christ did have compassion on the sick, the blind, etc., but he did not heal all. On the occasions that he healed, and the same with the Apostles later, this was to prove that they were from God and teaching the word of God.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit was promised to the Apostles only. Read John 14:16-26; John 15:26,27; 16:1-16. Then read Luke 24:46-49 and Acts 1:8. With the Apostles gathered in Jerusalem, that power was poured out on them and they began to speak in tongues and languages of all of those who had gathered there from many countries. (Acts 2:1-8). As a result of all of this, the Apostles preached to all of those people and wanting to know what they should do, and as believers, they were told to repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins and some 3000 gladly received the Lord's word and were baptized and added to the church. (Acts 2:37, 38, 41, 47).

Now as you continue to read through the book of Acts please notice that it was Peter and John (Apostles) who healed the lame man at the beautiful gate (Acts 3:1-10) and that "By the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people . . ." (Acts 5:12), and that it was the Apostles who laid their hands on the seven of Acts 6 that they might have the power of the Holy Spirit so they could help the Apostles in this work. But apart from the Apostles, those that they laid their hands on, and Cornelius and his household, to prove that the

Gentiles had been accepted of God as well as the Jews (Acts 10,11), no others received the baptism of the Holy Spirit or the laying on of hands by the Apostles that they might have the power of the Holy Spirit. Then by the time the Apostles died, and those they laid their hands on had died, the New Testament had been given in written form, and miracles and signs and wonders have not been necessary since that time. We are now told that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. (Roman 10:17).

Does that mean that God cannot perform miracles today? It is not a matter of God not being able to do something since he is God and is all powerful. But it is a matter of whether that is his will or not. The fact is, God has already created the heavens and the earth, man and woman, and all other things. He does not have to constantly perform miracles, or to have his people to perform miracles, to prove he is God. Then does God not heal the sick today? He does through doctors and nurses, medicines, and other means that he works through to accomplish such things. When we really believe in God and we are willing to do his will, such things as miracles and signs and wonders will not come up because such things are not necessary to be saved and to have the hope of eternal life.

Still if there are those who persist in miracles, then bring those who are dead, who are blind, who have no feet and hands, and raise them up, and give them life, sight, and new feet and hands, and then you can make your point. But you can't, and no one can, and you know that. I challenge you to read through the book of Acts and find anyone who performed miracles besides the Apostles and those that they laid their hands on. You can't, and neither can you find anyone today who can do miracles because that is not the Lord's will and he is not going to enable someone to do something against his will.

Concerning the church, the Lord, built only one (Matthew 16:18,19), Christ is the Saviour of it (Ephesians 5:23), head of it (Colossians 1:18), it wears his name (Romans 16:16), and he is coming back for it one day to deliver it up to God. (1 Corinthians 15:24). It was promised that it would stand forever (Daniel 2:44; Luke 1:33) and it exists today and those who obey the Lord are saved and he adds them to his church. (Acts 2:47).

Concerning worship, a part of that is singing praises to God. Paul says that we are to sing and make melody in our heart to

the Lord. (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16). No where in the New Testament do you find the Lord's people singing with mechanical instruments of music. Church history, after the completion of the New Testament, shows that for the first few centuries that believers in Christ sang only. Man introduced mechanical music into worship, not God. Do we do what God wants us to do or what man wants us to do?

When the Apostles were choosing someone to take the place of Judas, it was explained that such a person would have to be one who had been with them from the baptism of John up to that time. Two qualified men were chosen and of the two Matthias became the Apostle. But didn't Paul become an Apostle? He did. But he wasn't with the Apostles from the Baptism of John, so how could he have become an Apostle? Paul says again and again that he was called to be an Apostle. (1 Corinthians 1:1; Galatians 1:1; Ephesians 1:1). He said that he was "appointed a preacher and an apostle, and a teacher of a Gentiles." (2 Timothy 1:11). He further says that he was an apostle of the Gentiles (Roman 11:13), one born out of due season. (1 Corinthians 18:8). Out of humility he said that he was the least of the apostles having persecuted the church of the Lord. (1 Corinthians 15:9). On another occasion he defended this Apostleship by saying that he was not behind the chiefest apostles. (2 Corinthians 11:5). Therefore we must conclude that Paul indeed was an Apostle of the Lord. God's word says so, and we cannot deny it.

There are many other questions that might be discussed, but remember that God has spoken on all things that pertains to salvation. Read and study God's word and do what it says and you will be right, and right only then. We pray that you will.

Especially For Women

Search For Truth History of Denominationalism

BETTY BURTON CHOATE

Andrew could hardly control the excitement in his voice when he came from work. "Look, Rachel! Look at this book!

found at the bookstore on the way home! It tells about the denominations and how they started! This will answer many of our questions!"

Rachel reached for the book eagerly. "**History of Christianity**," she read. "Yes, this should be an interesting history to read. We can start tonight!"

"Well, this book, quoting from other sources, says that the Catholic Church claims to be the first one and that Peter was the first Pope. That's what I was taught all my life as a Catholic, but we know by the Scriptures that that wasn't so," Andrew said, as he reads the first few pages while Rachel cleaned the dishes after they ate. "Before we go on to read this history, we should actually get in mind what the New Testament teaches about the history of the church."

"At least the inspired history is recorded through the first several years," Rachel agreed.

"Acts 2 shows the beginning of the church," Andrew began. "And we know from Colossians 1:18 that Jesus—not Peter—is the only true head of the church. 1 Corinthians 3:11 also says that there is no foundation for the church except Christ. So on this point, the Catholic church is wrong. There can be no man sitting in the place of Christ, claiming to be the head of the church and having authority as God over the church.

"So when Paul warned in—let's see—here in Acts 20:29,30. *'For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.'*—he was saying that among the leadership in the church itself, even among the elders or bishops, error would develop. He said something similar in the letter to Timothy, I think. Yes, here in 1 Timothy 4:1: *'Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.'*

"Another reference is in 2 Thessalonians 2:3: *'Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day [the day when Christ returns to take the Saints together with Him in the clouds, V. 2]*

will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God'. He even goes on to warn in verse 7, 'For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work . . .'

"This is amazing, Rachel! In these three specific doctrines, he is describing the Catholic Church! They have one who sits as the head of the church, exalting himself as God; and they forbid their priests to marry; and for centuries they also forbade the eating of meats on Friday!"

"So the Catholic Church actually was the first 'denominational' group—as some of the leaders in the true church began to teach error and to lead congregations after them!" Rachel exclaimed.

"This book says that the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D was recognized at the first official council of leaders to make laws for the church—so this was the first 'official break with the total authority of the Scriptures, as inspired by the Holy Spirit. Then in 606 a Bishop named Boniface proclaimed himself to be the 'universal bishop' or 'pope'. In 1054 there was a major division in the Catholic Church. The Eastern part came to be called 'The Holy Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Eastern Church' [or the Greek Orthodox Church], and the branch in Rome became 'The Holy Catholic Apostolic and Roman Church'. This division was primarily over their disagreement concerning **Sprinkling of water for baptism instead of a burial, and the use of mechanical musical instruments in the worship.**"

"Of course, as a result, *in addition* to the **original church of Christ**, there were now **two other churches**, with their own heads and organization! So the division was well under way!" observed Rachel.

"Let's see what happened after that," Andrew continued. "This chapter says that the Lutheran Church is the oldest 'protestant' church—that is, a Catholic priest named Martin Luther objected to some of the practices in the Catholic Church and tried to 'reform' it to be more like the Bible teachings. At that time the Pope was selling 'indulgences': people could pay a set amount of money and be forgiven for sins they intended to commit in the future! The money was being collected for the

construction of the huge cathedral of 'St. Peter's' in Rome.

"Luther saw the evil in this practice and wrote his 'protests' called his '**95 Theses**' and nailed them to the door of the cathedral in Wittenburg Germany. In 1521 he was banned from the Catholic Church. He didn't intend to begin a new church, but those who were following him continued after his death, and became known as the Lutheran Church."

"What are some of the teachings of that church?" asked Rachel.

"In many things Lutheran worship and practices were much like the Catholic Church, but changes have taken place through the centuries. In fact, the Lutheran Catechism says that the Evangelical Lutheran Church is the one established on Pentecost!"

"So, both the Catholic and Lutheran leadership recognize that the true church had its beginning on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2!" Rachel exclaimed. "But the doctrines we've read, and the names they wear, are not the same."

"That's so," agreed Andrew, "In fact, one of the primary Lutheran doctrines is that *we are justified by faith alone*. This was Luther's way of reacting to the *Catholic doctrine of salvation by works and payment of money*. But Luther must not have believed what James wrote by inspiration in his book, '*Thus also, faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead*' (James 2:17,18,20). And, '*You see then that a man is justified by works and not by faith only . . . for as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also*' (Verses 24,26).

"It was the teaching of **some Catholic doctrines**—like sprinkling for baptism instead of immersion, and sprinkling infants—and **adding some of his own ideas** that were in violation to the Scriptures—and then his followers **giving Luther's name to the group**, that resulted in the formation of a **new church** rather than turning the people back to the *original* church which was started on Pentecost, as Luther thought he was doing."

"So whenever people **add to the doctrine**, or take away from it, or change the doctrine of the New Testament in some way, and develop churches that believe and follow those doctrines, they are starting new churches?" asked Rachel. "Is that how all the denominations started?"

"It must be," answered Andrew. "This book says that John Calvin, who lived in 1509-1564, was one of the earliest reformers. He was born to Catholic parents and was converted from Catholicism in 1533. The doctrine of 'Calvinism', which is taught by many denominations, was developed by him. According to this, the Westminster Association, in session from 1643-1649, framed the Westminster Confession of Faith. This became the doctrinal standard for both English and American Presbyterianism. . . . There have been seventeen distinct segments of Presbyterians from near the beginning of the movement.

"Calvin encouraged a simple form of worship in his churches. There was *congregational singing only*, a departure from his early experience in the Roman Catholic Church. Calvin opposed the use of mechanical instruments as a departure from New Testament worship. He broke away from *the altar worship pattern*, and placed the *reading and preaching in the central place*. Strict *moral discipline* was exercised against curing, adultery, playing cards on Sunday evenings, spending time in taverns, betrothing to a Papist, wife beating, etc., so that Calvinists were to have a high moral standard.

"Five points of Calvinism are listed: **Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, and Perseverance of the Saints.**"

"So, what do those things mean?" asked Rachel.

"Well, this says that *election* means that God has predestined and foreordained the eternal salvation of some men and angels out of His free grace and love, without any foresight of faith in either of them, and others are foreordained to everlasting death; **and the number of either is so certain and definite that it cannot be increased or diminished**, according to the Westminster Confession of Faith, Article 3,4,5; Chapter 3; Article 2, Chapter 10."

"But that can't be true!" Rachel declared, jumping up to take the book and read it for herself. "What is the purpose of Jesus' invitation, '*Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden,*' if it's impossible for some to come? That doctrine contradicts the whole heart of the Bible!"

"So do the other four points of Calvinism," Andrew said. "*Total Depravity* means that all people—even babies—are totally

depraved and evil from birth. That's why babies are christened in most churches that follow Calvin's teachings, so they won't go to hell if they die! *Limited Atonement* means that only those God chooses can be saved by the blood of Christ. *Irresistible Grace* means that when God chooses to save somebody, it's *impossible* for that person to resist God! And *Perseverance of Saints* means that once a person has been saved, *he cannot leave God*; he can not sin so that he will ever be lost, no matter what he does."

"But these doctrines are putting all the responsibility on God!" objected Rachel. "HE is the one who decides who will be saved; no one can resist HIS CHOICE; and once HE has saved a person, that person does not have the free will to leave God—I've heard it expressed even in the Baptist church: 'once saved, always saved.' But all of these things are so different from what we've been reading in the Scriptures! The free will of each one of us, to choose God and to obey Him, is what is stressed over and over!"

"Yes", agreed Andrew. "From the beginning when Adam and Eve were allowed to choose whether or not they would obey God, the free choice has been given to all men. How sad, that such a doctrine as Calvinism would ever have been developed, and that many denominational groups would have taken that as the foundation of their beliefs. These things oppose the very heart of God's appeal to man through Christ."

Lost, Saved But Lost Again

FRANCIS DAVID

There is a famous doctrine among believers of Christ and according to this a child of God cannot fall or "Once saved always saved." The inspired word of God disapproves this doctrine. We read in the Bible that there were certain people who believed and obeyed but again gone back to the world. Paul tells us about Demas his associate and how he left his faith and gone back or loved the world more. (2 Tim. 4:10). There are people who once came to Christ and obeyed the gospel but they left the church.

The book of Romans tell us about the people who became

Christians but after sometime they were turning back to Judaism and Paul while admonishing them said "You are fallen from grace." The book of Galatians also tells us about many who were going back to Judaism. We cannot deny that a Christian can fall from grace. Becoming a Christian doesn't mean that a person had got a free plane ride to heaven. One needs to guard himself/herself and be a faithful Christian till death (Rev. 2:10). This world is full of temptations. Everywhere we see the world is full of worldliness. We need to be careful because devil who is our adversary as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. (I Pet. 5:8).

Apostle John warns Christians that they should not love the world or the things of the world. In I John verses 15 & 16, he says: "Do not love the world or the things of the world. If any one loves the world, the love of Father is not in him for all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but of the world." As a Christian we must set our minds on the things above (Col. 3:2). By doing this we can avoid falling away.

Are you a Christian? If yes, then you need to guard yourself. you might think you cannot fall or nothing can come between you and your God but see what Paul tells you "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (I Cor. 10:12).

It is sad to see that people who were lost in the world, they came to Jesus, accepted him and obeyed the gospel (good news), were baptised but after sometime, months or may be years they have left the faith and gone back and lost again. They were members of the church of Christ (the family of God), but they have left the church. They were not able to withstand the pollutions of this world. Apostle Peter talks about such people by saying: "For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. *For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness*, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: "A DOG returns to his VOMIT, and, a sow (Female hog), having washed, to her wallowing in the mire." (2 Peter 2:20-22). What a pitiful and sad picture Peter gives of those who have left their

faith. We really feel sorry for such people. These people have forgotten that when they were baptised their sins were washed away and they were added to the church of Jesus Christ. (Acts 22:16; Acts 2:47). Their condition is now worse than before. Lets be careful, watchful, lest we fall from grace. .

The Hebrews writer thru inspiration writes to Christians: "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful." (Heb. 10:23).

Dear friend, Christian life is a beautiful life. If you are not a member of the Lord's church, we urge you to read the word of God. The word of God says, one must believe in Jesus, confess him as the Son of God, repent of his old sinful life, and be baptised in the name of Father, of the Son, and the Holy Spirit, or baptised in the name of Jesus or by His authority. It is one and the same thjng. (Mat. 28:19; Acts 2:37; Mark 16:16). When you become a Christian and member of the church then it would be required of you to be faithful to the church and the Lord. Without your being faithful, you cannot expect the Lord to save you and offer you eternal life. If you were lost, and were saved and then again you have gone back to the world, then I would urge you to come back. God your Father is waiting for you to return. He would receive you if you sincerely repent. There is always a welcome for the prodigal to come back home. The beautiful lines of this song tells us that we can come to Jesus and ask for pardon.

"Softly and tenderly Jesus is calling

O for the wonderful love He has Promised,

Promised for you and for me; Though we

have sinned, He has Mercy and Pardon,

Pardon for you and for me

Softly and Tenderly Jesus is calling."

God Bears His Pains Alone

THOMAS R. DOHLING

“Do Not Grieve the Holy Spirit of God. . .” (Ephesians 4:30a)

How often do we pray to God saying, “Father, I hurt so badly. I wish that I could die,” or, “Father, see my wound and hurt. Bind up my wound and heal me, God.” We must admit that each one of us has at one time or the other been hurt deep inside; wounded by rejection or defeat which has led us to pray to God for comfort and God has been faithful because He is a compassionate God. However, during these times of hurting and pain, our focus tends to fall on us, the self. We have a God to turn to during these times; our heavenly Father to sooth our pains and fill us with His peace. He is always around to comfort us.

Have we ever realized that God also hurts when He is rejected? Who does He turn to when He hurts? When He is wounded by the many darts hurled at Him by believers and unbelievers alike; who comforts Him? I know many of you would say, “Oh, He is God Almighty and, therefore, He is self-sufficient.” But let me tell you something. It is very hard to comfort oneself and bear the wound alone. Try that some time when *you* are deeply hurt. We just can't do it. Oh, we may pretend to, but we know that we have to turn to another for succor. That is why we share our problems with our near and dear ones, our friends, and others so that we may find relief. **GOD BEARS HIS PAINS ALONE!** Have you ever thought of that? The realization of this truth made me think of ways to bind His hurt, His wound, for a change and I asked Him how I may do that. He simply whispered to me, “when you do it to the least of these my brothers, you do it unto me” (see Matthew 25:40). You see, when we hurt, God hurts. He sympathizes with our infirmities.

We should be committed to binding up the wounds of our hurting brothers and sisters in the Lord and also of those who are not yet in the fold. So, next time you are hurting badly through some wound inflicted by thoughtless people or some loss, remember not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God by questioning His ways. Instead, remember to turn your attention from yourself to God and go out and comfort those people who are hurting and in need of your help.

Let The Bible Answer

ROBERT MEREDITH

What does Ephesians 4:4 mean when it says there is one Spirit? The apostle Paul in the first part of Ephesians four is showing how it is possible to have the unity that the holy Spirit endorses. Paul wrote, "*Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and One Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all*"(Eph. 4:3-6). If one desires to be united with God, then he must realize and follow these seven one's found in this chapter. If one says that there is a plurality of bodies, a plurality of Lords, more than one baptism in effect today, or several sources of revelation, then he is not united with God and His people.

When the apostle Paul wrote that there is one Spirit, he was showing unity of revelation. The Holy Spirit is God just as the Father and Jesus. The Spirit is the member of the God-head who revealed God's will to prophets and inspired men. In 2 Peter 1:21 one reads, "*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.*" Peter here shows us that the Holy Spirit was responsible for the Old Testament scriptures and Jesus promised the apostles that the Holy Spirit would direct them in their teachings (Mt. 10:19-20). Furthermore, the apostle Paul declared that the Holy Spirit revealed the mind of God to him and the other inspired penmen (I Cor. 2:10-13).

There is only one source of inspiration and that is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, being God, is not going to contradict Himself or lie to us (Heb. 6:18). The Spirit does not say one thing to one group of people and something else to another; this would make Him the author of confusion. Therefore, we can trust His revelation and live it out in our lives, knowing that when we do, we are obeying the spirit, not resisting Him (Acts 7:51-52). Man needs to hold to the teachings of the Spirit (2 Thess. 2:15; 2 Tim. 2:2; Titus 2:1), realizing that only by following His revealed word and obeying it (Rom. 10:16; 2 Thess. 1:7-9) can one access God's wonderful grace by faith (Rom. 5:2; Rom. 1:5; Rom.

16:26). God is not the author of confusion (1 Cor. 14:22) and when one follows the One Spirit (unity of revelation) the Lord will add the convert to His one body (Acts 2:41,47).

Christians And Government

ROD RUTHERFORD

May a Christian serve in the government? May Christians vote in elections in their country? May Christians salute the flag of their nation and sing the national anthem? These questions are asked because Christians are aware that some politicians are dishonest and some government officials are corrupt. What does the Bible say?

When Jesus lived upon the earth, His nation (Israel) was ruled by Rome. The Jews hated the Romans. Roman officials often were corrupt and oppressive. On one occasion when the Pharisees wanted to get Jesus in trouble, they asked Him a question: "Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not" (Matthew 22:15-22)? If Jesus said it was wrong to pay taxes, He would be in trouble with the Roman rulers. If He said it was good to pay taxes, He would be in trouble with the Jews. They thought He was trapped. Jesus asked them to bring a Roman coin to Him. He asked them whose picture and name were on the coin. They replied, "Caesar's." Then Jesus replied: "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21).

Every Christian lives in two kingdoms (nations). One kingdom is spiritual. The other kingdom is physical. We are citizens of the kingdom of Christ, which is the church of Christ (Matthew 16:18-19; Colossians 1:13). At the same time, we are citizens of an earthly nation such as Zambia, France, China, India, etc. We must be good citizens in each kingdom. We have duties to fulfill in each kingdom.

The apostle Paul also lived during the time that Rome ruled much of the world. He was a Roman citizen (Acts 22:25-29). Nero, one of the most corrupt rulers who ever lived, was on the throne when Paul wrote: "Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God,

and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake. For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing. Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour" (Romans 13:1-7).

The apostle Peter also commanded Christians to "... submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. For this is the will of God that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men—as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bond servants of God. Honour all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king" (1 Peter 2:13-17).

Sometimes the question is asked: "What if the government commands Christians to do something which is against God's law? What if the government forbade Christians to worship God? What should we do?" If there is a conflict between man's law and God's law, then God's law must be obeyed! The Jewish officials arrested the apostles for preaching Christ. They said to them: "Did we not strictly command you that you should not teach in this name? And look you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!" But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:28,29). We must obey both God's law and man's law. If there is a conflict, then God's law must be obeyed even if we must disobey man's law. This is the only exception.

Some say worldly people can serve in the government, but Christians cannot. The Bible does not teach this. God has just one law. It is for all men. If it is wrong for the Christian to serve in

the government, it would be wrong for anyone. If it is right for a non-Christian to serve in the government, it would be right for a Christian to do the same.

Surely, there are many temptations to do wrong if one has authority over his fellow men. It is easy to abuse power. There are also temptations to get rich by using one's authority in a dishonest way. Christians must be honest and fair in all their dealings with their fellow men. This is true in business. It is also true in government.

Must a Christian pay taxes? May a Christian show respect for his nation by saluting the flag and singing the national anthem? May he vote in an election? May he serve in a government or political office? The answer to all these questions is "yes." However, a Christian must put God and His kingdom first (Matthew 6:33). He must also be honest in all things (2 Corinthians 8:21).

Foundation Principles Of The Home

J.K. GOSSETT

God established the home upon certain pillars or principles. These principles must be respected if the home is to be as God would have it. No one has the right to disregard God's expressed will on these matters.

First, the divine arrangement in the garden of Eden, the prototype of the home through the ages, was one man and one woman, a male and a female, Adam and Eve (Genesis 5:2). The home was begun with two people who were qualified before God to be married. This is a foundation principle.

Marriage is a leaving and a cleaving. "Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). No one should ever contemplate marriage without being willing both to leave and cleave. The marriage vows forever establish to whom one's first allegiance belongs.

The permanency of marriage is another foundation principle of the home. Jesus said, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matthew 19:6). The Lord was

speaking of a man and his wife. "For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband" (Romans 7:2).

Still another principle of the home is the fact that the husband, the wife, the parents and the children, have certain roles to satisfy. Read and heed: "WIVES, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. HUSBANDS, love your wives, and be not bitter against them. CHILDREN, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord. FATHERS, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged" (Colossians 3:18-21).

Finally, the home is an educational institution. This school is in session everyday. Parents are the teachers and the children are the students. The Bible is the primary text book. Here young people should be taught how to live and how to make a living.

Blessed are the children who's parents are like the parents of John the baptizer. "And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless" (Luke 1:6).

Conditional Guarantee

CHARLES J. AEBI

Jonah got himself into a whale of a predicament because he knew that prophecy was conditional. When he tried to flee to Tarshish instead of going to preach to Nineveh, it was because he knew that his prophecy—"Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown" (Jonah 3:4 ASV)—would be conditioned on Nineveh's continuing in sin. When he did prophesy to them and Nineveh repented, and God had mercy on them, Jonah was angry because he wanted them destroyed. In his prayer to God, Jonah said the reason he had fled to Tarshish was that he knew God was gracious and merciful and would not carry out His threat if Nineveh repented (4:2).

The conditional nature of prophecy had been pointed out much earlier. The land and national blessings included in the promise to Abraham were conditioned on Israel's obedience to

God (Deuteronomy 28:1-14). Moses plainly warned them that they would be defeated, scattered, and destroyed if they disobeyed and worshiped other gods (28:15-68). The promise to David (2 Samuel 7:10-17) was likewise conditioned on obedience and faithfulness to Jehovah: "But if ye shall turn away from following me, ye or your children, and not keep my commandments and my statutes which I have set before you, but shall go and serve other gods, and worship them; then will I cut off Israel out of the land which I have given them" (1 Kings 9:4-7).

The conditional nature of prophecy was also clearly stated after Jonah's time. Jeremiah 18:5-10 reads, "Then the word of Jehovah came to me, saying, O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith Jehovah. Behold, as the clay in the potter's hand, so are ye in my hand, O house of Israel. At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up and to break down and to destroy it; if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; if they do that which is evil in my sight, that they obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them." God's prophecies of blessing or punishment are here stated by God Himself to be conditioned on the responses of the people he would bless or punish. Prophecy is conditional; God says so.

God promised Abraham descendants, land, and personal protection (Genesis 12:1-4; 22:16-18). This prophecy (among others) has been cited often by Zionists as proof that God intends for the Jews to possess all of the land of Palestine today. They disregard the conditional nature of prophecy and the events of 4,000 years of history on which the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham are conditioned.

The promise to Abraham was repeated to him several times (Genesis 12:1-7; 13:14-18; 15:18; 17:5-8; 22:15-18) and was also given to Isaac (26:1-5, 24) and to Jacob (28:3-4, 13-15; 35:9-12). God fulfilled His promise by protecting Abraham and his descendants, by developing them into a nation, and by giving them the land of Canaan. Joshua 21:43-45 says God gave Israel all the land he had promised (though they neglected to occupy it

all then). Later, David conquered, and Solomon reigned over, all the territory promised to Abraham (2 Samuel 8-10; 2 Chronicles 18-20; 9:26; 1 Kings 4:21). Even after the Babylonian exile it is acknowledged that God had kept all His land and national promises to Israel (Nehemiah 9:7-8). All that remained of the promise to Abraham was a descendant to bless all nations, and that was fulfilled in Christ (Acts 3:25-26).

Zionists and premillennialists continue to insist that the land and national promises to Israel are unconditional and that all the land promised to Abraham will one day be restored to Israel. But how could that be? Israel forfeited their rights by repeated rebellions, not the least of which was their rejection of Jesus as the Christ. Since much of the books of Judges to Esther is the history of how Israel disobeyed God and worshiped idols, God would be untrue to His own conditional promises if He gave them the land over which David ruled. Prophecy is conditional, and we should expect it to be fulfilled according to the conditions God himself laid down.

Perhaps it is not generally looked upon as prophecy, but when Jesus predicted salvation in Mark 16:16, he conditioned it on faith and baptism: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned." Paul went a step further in 1 Corinthians 15:2 when he said the gospel was that "by which also ye are saved, if ye hold fast the word which I preached unto you, except ye believed in vain."

Prophecy is conditional, whether it concerns land promised to children of Abraham (Deuteronomy 28:7-9) or eternal life promised to those who are children of God by faith and baptism (Galatians 3:26-29).

Convincing Evidence

DUANE WARDEN

It is clear that both Jesus and His apostles considered the fulfillment of prophecy to be convincing evidence that Jesus was the Christ and that the church was the promised kingdom of God. After His resurrection, Jesus appeared to the disciples and ate with them. It was an appropriate time for Him to remind them

of what He had spoken to them about many times before. "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled" (Luke 24:44). Although we do not have all that Jesus might have spoken to the apostles about His fulfilling Scripture, we do have this statement in John 5:39, "you search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of Me."

There is no doubt that Jesus' contemporaries, even His disciples, had trouble grasping the magnitude of Jesus' claim, "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30). The incident at Caesarea Philippi (Matthew 16:13ff) is enlightening. Jesus seems to be challenging the disciples, prodding them to think about the implications of the signs they had seen and the teachings they had heard. The disciples answer cautiously. What were they supposed to think? Jesus was, perhaps, John the Baptist returned from the grave, or He was Elijah. Clearly, Jesus was no ordinary man. And then the big question came: "But who do you say that I am?" Peter blurts it out, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:15-16).

The disciples did not easily come to the conclusion that in the person of Jesus, God had appeared in the flesh. Such a momentous thought! They should not have accepted it lightly. In the ancient world, as in the modern one, anyone can make whatever claims he chooses. Over the centuries, false prophets have come and gone. Those who have been clever and skillful have found a following. For the discerning there comes a time for the testing of the prophets (1 John 4:1) God hardly expected the followers of Jesus to reach the conclusion that He was the Son of God without giving them reason to believe. Jesus appealed to the miraculous deeds he performed and to the witness of John the Baptist (John 5:33-36), but in addition, He appealed to the testimony of Scripture.

If Scripture is "God-breathed" (2 Timothy 3:16) and Jesus was the Son of God, it is hardly surprising that Scripture should anticipate, proclaim in advance, the single most significant event in human history. When we have said that Scripture is "inspired" or "God-breathed" what have we said about it? We have said that some of the adjectives that describe God also described the

Scriptures He breathed Himself into. As God is true, as He promised the Spirit of truth to His disciples (John 15:26), as His anointing is "true and is not a lie" (1 John 2:27), so His Word is truth (John 17:17). When we have said that Scripture is true, we have said that it contains no lie and no error. Scripture is inerrant. To say that Scripture is inerrant is a statement of faith, just as it is a statement of faith to say that Scripture is inspired. The implication is that every statement in Scripture recorded in advance by the prophets about the Christ and about the people He would bring into being were fulfilled in Jesus and His church. Jesus said it clearly in Luke 24:44.

When Paul spoke to King Agrippa and the Jews with him at Caesarea, he asked them, "Why is it considered incredible among you people if God does raise the dead?" (Acts 26:8). In the spirit of Paul, we ask, "Why should it be considered an incredible thing that God has breathed Himself in Scripture? Why should it be considered incredible that Scripture is inerrant?" We have made the great statement of faith once we confess that God is Creator, once we grant that He exists. It requires yet more faith to confess that the historical person, Jesus of Nazareth, was God manifest in the flesh. Having made confessions of that magnitude, the confession that Scripture is true, seems to be a small step. Indeed, we are left in a subjective quagmire unless we are also willing to grant that God has spoken to His people with a dependable word that is nothing less than truth.

Having made these affirmations, it is important to notice that not every citation of the Old Testament in the New is necessarily a prophecy about Christ and His people. Sometimes the Old Testament is cited for support when ethical imperatives are set before Christians. When Paul writes, "He who loves his neighbour has fulfilled the law" (Romans 13:8), and then cites several of the Ten commandments, clearly the apostle is not saying that these words were predictions about Jesus or the people of Jesus. At other times the Old Testament is cited because its words, in that instance, are suitable to the event being described. When Matthew cites Hosea 11:1, "Out of Egypt I called My son," the author may be referring to the similarity of the events when the people of Israel, God's Son, came up out of Egypt in a way somehow analogous to Jesus' coming out of

Egypt. Matthew hardly feels compelled to do an exegesis of the Old Testament text according to modern standards.

The taking of words from their original context because of their appropriateness to a new situation is a common device of language. For example, the epitaph of Christopher Wren, the famous London architect, is a Latin phrase *si monumentum requiris, circumspice*, which means, "If you seek monuments, look around." Wren designed many of the great buildings of London. Those buildings were his monuments. He needed no tombstone. If I were giving a eulogy for a faithful Christian worker whose family was faithful to the Lord, who had converted the lost to Christ, who established churches where there had been none before, a man who had fed the poor and clothed the naked, I might say of him, "If you seek monuments, look around." I have taken the words out of context. There is no pretense on my part that the Wren's epitaph was written to describe my Christian friend. I take the words because they speak appropriately to the current situation. In a similar way, Matthew cites Hosea 11:1.

The way the New Testament cites the Old introduces complex questions, but it is clear that Jesus and the authors of the New Testament understood many events in Jesus' life and in the establishment of the church to be the direct fulfillment of statements made beforehand in the prophets. The Christ, when He came, was to be born in Bethlehem, the city of David (Matthew 2:6; Micah 5:2). He would speak to the people in parables (Matthew 13:35; Psalm 78:2). The Christ would be rejected by His contemporaries, but God would do marvelous things through Him (Matthew 21:42; Psalm 118:22-23). When he was killed, God would raise Him from the dead (Acts 2:25-28; Psalm 16:8-11). Through and because of the Christ, God would make a new covenant with His people (Hebrews 8:8-12; Jeremiah 31:31-34). The list could be expanded, but these passages are enough to demonstrate that the coming of Jesus and what He accomplished had been foreseen by the prophets of old who had spoken inerrantly about the work of the Christ.



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