

THE BIBLE TEACHER

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Editorial

What Does the Bible Teach?

“He who believes and is baptized will be saved”

The Bible teaches this at Mark 16:16. And these are the words of Jesus Christ the Saviour. Christ said this when He had given the great commission to His disciples. According to Matthew's account, after the death and burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, He appeared to His disciples and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." (Matt. 28:18-19). And according to Mark's account, Christ said to them: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved." (Mark 16:15-16).

Notice, Christ did not teach His followers to go and baptize little babies and when they grow up teach them to believe in Me and follow Me. Rather, He said He who believes and is baptized will be saved. The gospel of Christ is not for little children. Little children need no salvation from sin. They are safe. (Matthew 18:3 & 19:14).

One must believe in Christ and repent of sins (Acts 2:38), and then must be baptized in the name of the Father and of the

Son and of the Holy Spirit, or the Godhead. (Romans 1:20; Colossians 2:9).

There is only one baptism (Eph. 4:5). But the one baptism of the Bible is immersion in water (Acts 8:35-39). It is a burial (Romans 6:3,4; Colossians 2:12). Not sprinkling of water. Again, the one baptism of the Bible is for those who are able to believe and repent, as we have seen above, and not for little children who cannot believe and repent. Therefore, those today who were "baptized" as little babies, were never really baptized. First, as babies they didn't need baptism, because baptism is for the forgiveness of sins or to receive the forgiveness of sins, according to Acts 2:38, and as little children they had not personally committed any sin. They were just pure little babies. Secondly, when babies are "baptized" in a ritual ceremony they are sprinkled with a little water over them, not buried in water, as the Bible teaches.

As you can see, baptism is put together with salvation, in the Bible, it is therefore a very important matter. It can make the difference of heaven and hell. It is not just an outward sign of what has already taken place inside, as some would believe. Christ taught, "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." (John 3:5). The Spirit of God through the Bible teaches man what man must do to be saved from sin (2 Pet. 1:20,21) and when man understands and believes what the Spirit says and does that; believes and is baptized in water for the forgiveness of sins, thus he is born of water and the Spirit.

For more information and assistance regarding this most important teaching of the Bible, please write to the editor.

To Whom Should We Pray?

J.C. CHOATE

We who are Christians-children of God, members of the Lord's family, His church-have the blessed privilege to come into His presence. God speaks to us through His word and we are able to talk to Him through prayer. We are allowed to praise and

honor Him, to offer our thanks for all He has done, and continues to do for us, and to let our requests be made known to Him, all through the avenue of prayer.

Our God is not dead but He lives and is always there to hear us and to answer our prayers, if we pray according to His will. (1 John 5:14, 15). Since he made us, he knows us and he knows our needs. Because we have obeyed Him (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38,47), He has become our Father and we are His children. Being members of his family, we have a very special relationship with Him. He loves us and we love him, and therefore he is always concerned about us and wants to hear us and to answer our prayers when we pray.

God is an eternal Spirit. (John 4:24). We do not bow down to the moon and stars and nature, or to man-made objects, or to human beings in the form of religious leaders and so-called holy men. Those kinds of things, or human beings, cannot save us and they cannot hear us and answer our prayers.

We are told that there is one God and one Lord. To children of God that one God is our Father, and his Son Jesus is that one Lord. (Ephesians 4:1-6). Since Jesus is God's Son and that one Lord, He is our mediator, advocate, and the propitiation for our sins. In other words, we have access to God our Father through Jesus Christ, and therefore all of our prayers must be directed to God through Jesus. The Apostle John wrote to the Christians of his day, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for our's only, but also for the sins of the whole world. And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." (1 John 2:1-3). Again, the Hebrew writer said, "But now hath He (Jesus) obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises." (Hebrews 8:6). The writer goes on to say that Christ is the mediator of the New Testament (Hebrews 9:15; Hebrews 12:24), the covenant which guides us in our relationship with God.

Coming back now to our original question, to whom should we pray?, the answer would be that Christians are to pray to God.

the Father, through Jesus Christ his Son. To pray to any other would be mockery and a waste of time. Prayers to God without going through Christ will be unheard, because we have no other mediator between ourselves and God but Jesus Christ. If we expect our prayers to be heard and answered, we must pray according to the Father's will.

Is It Essential For Me To Be Part Of The Church?

FRANCIS DAVID

Jesus our Lord promised to build His church (Matt. 16:18), when Jesus said, He would build His church he did not mean any building or social organisation. His church was established on the day of Pentecost, and three thousand souls were added to this church on that day. (Acts 2). I have heard some people talking about taking membership in a church, just like they do in a club or institution. They like to do it for some personal reasons, such as marriage, children's admission and burial etc. When we talk about the Lord's church, we are not talking about denominational churches. In order to be saved, one must be a member of the Lord's church, that means it is essential for one to be a part of the Lord's body, the church of Christ. The saved are in the church added by the Lord Himself (Acts 2:47). Jesus is the head of the church (Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22, 5:23). The church is blood bought institution. (Acts 20:28). Therefore, we must know that one has to be a part of the church.

There is an example in the Old Testament of the Bible about a man and his family members. In Genesis chapter 6 we read about Noah and his family. Noah was commanded to built an ark, to save himself and the family from the flood that God was going to send on the wicked people. The ark was prepared and was prepared exactly the way God commanded Noah to designed. When the great flood came Noah and his family members were in the ark. Suppose if some of the family members, said, "No, we don't think it is essential

to be in the ark with you. We are not scared." What would have happened to them? So we see in order to be saved from the flood they were in the ark. In I Peter 3:20, we read as it says, "who formerly were disobedient when once the long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water." They were saved because they were in the ark.

Salvation is in Jesus, because Jesus saves us but when we are saved we become the part of the body of Christ. When a person is baptized into Christ, he or she puts on Christ, and this baptism puts that person into the body which is the church of Jesus our Lord. After the baptism we become the part of the body of saved people. How can one say that it is not essential to be a part of the church?

The Bible says, the church is the bride of Christ and this is very sacred relationship between Christ and His church. In Eph. 5:2-3, we read, "For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Saviour of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything." Here we see the kind of relationship Christ has with his church. We know how important the church is for Jesus. This church is the kingdom of Christ and in order to be saved eternally, we need to be in His kingdom. Paul says, "He has delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins." (Col. 1:13-14). Are you a part or member of the body of Christ? If not, you can become a part of this body by believing in Jesus, confessing Christ as the Son of God, repenting of your sins and by being baptized for the remission of your sins.

The Wind And Waves Obey Jesus

CHARLES BOX

Jesus did many convincing miracles. Nicodemus said, "...We know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do

these signs that You do unless God is with him." (Jn. 3:2.) One of Jesus' miracles was the calming of the wind and waves. This miracle was for help or relief for Jesus' disciples who were in a storm.

THE MIRACLE STATED

Mark records the miracle in these words. "On the same day, when evening had come, He said to them, Let us cross over to the other side. Now when they had left the multitude, they took Him along in the boat as He was. And other little boats were also with Him. And a great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling. But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said to Him, Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing? Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, Peace, be still! And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. But He said to them, Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith? And they feared exceedingly, and said to one another, Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!" (Mk. 4:35-41.) What beautiful words—"Peace be still!"

THE MIRACLE EXPLAINED

Jesus had been preaching from a ship. He asked the disciples to get into the boat and go to the other side. During a great storm the boat was filling with water. Jesus slept on a pillow in the back of the boat. There were also other little ships in the same storm. The disciples begged Jesus to awake and help. Jesus gave a simple command—"Peace be still!" A great calm followed along with a rebuke to the disciples for their lack of faith. "And they feared exceedingly, and said to one another, Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!" (Mk. 4:41.)

THE MIRACLE APPLIED

Let us learn: (1) Teaching and preaching drains your body and mind. (2) Storms sometime come following great works. (3) You are likely not in the storm alone — there are other little boats. (4) Jesus was sleeping, but He was not unconcerned. (5) Only Jesus Christ, the prince of peace, can bring true peace — "Peace

be still." (6) We also may need a rebuke from Jesus because of a lack of faith. (7) Allow Jesus to make the same impression on you He made on these early disciples.

The need for faith is ever present. Jesus' miracles should convince us He is the Son of God. "...we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Jn. 6:69.) Get in the boat with Jesus and have complete confidence He will take care of you!

Mercy, Not Sacrifice

KEVIN CAULEY

Our Lord was no stranger to difficult situations. The Pharisees and Sadducees would often present him with questions regarding various different aspects of the Old Law. Each time, our Lord answered with the utmost wisdom and absolute truth. Perhaps one of the most difficult (if not the most difficult) situations into which these enemies of righteousness placed our Lord is recorded for us in John 8:3-11. The scribes and Pharisees had brought a woman taken in adultery and demanded of Jesus that he judge her case and execute the penalty decreed under the Old Law. Lest we forget, the Old Law plainly stated that those who were caught in such circumstances were to be put to death (Leviticus 20:10). Jesus was literally being asked to judge as to whether or not someone should live or die and the scribes and Pharisees were planning on executing upon his advice. Jesus was in a difficult circumstance because on the one hand He was obligated to uphold the Old Law. He came not to destroy the law, but to fulfill it (Matthew 5:17). However, on the other hand, Jesus' purpose, was not to condemn any man, but to offer mercy, pardon, forgiveness and salvation (John 3:17). The dilemma was real. How could Jesus fulfill the demands of the Old Law in this case, yet at the same time uphold the principles of mercy, pardon, and forgiveness?

The scribes and Pharisees had brought a woman taken in adultery. They had caught her in the very act. Evidently they had

a witness or witnesses to this because they were not to make such accusations without at least two witnesses and someone was not to be put to death at the mouth of just one witness (Deuteronomy 17:6). They reminded Jesus that Moses commanded that she should be stoned. This was true provided they had the witnesses (Leviticus 20:10). And then they asked Jesus what He would do. The text also says that their true motives were to tempt Jesus so that they might be able to accuse him of wrongdoing or at least, poor judgment. At first, it appears that Jesus ignored them. Jesus did not wish to judge this case. There were judges who could hear such things, but Jesus was not one of them (Luke 12:14). So he was not properly the person to whom such matters should be brought. So the text says that he stooped down and wrote in the sand. The scribes and Pharisees, however, were insistent that He judge this case and they would not leave. So Jesus answered them as follows: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."

The statement that Jesus made was not designed to suggest (as many today insist) that no one ought to ever be judged for sin unless they have lived a sinless life. The statement actually has its roots in Deuteronomy 17:7. This passage states, "The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So thou shalt put the evil away from among you." Here was a catch that the scribes and Pharisees had failed to take into consideration. The witnesses, being the ones to cast the first stones, had to come forward, and a proper examination of their involvement in the whole affair could then be made. Two people rarely witness the sin of adultery unless they are somehow unwittingly privy to that knowledge (unlikely here since they were putting this case to Jesus as a "test"), or they are complicit in the whole affair. If they are complicit in the whole affair of adultery, then they must also be put to death for their participation in such a situation. Hence, Jesus' wise answer neither removes His obligations to the Old Law, nor allows those who are guilty themselves to prosecute the offense without self-condemnation. So slowly, one by one, from the oldest to the last, the scribes and Pharisees leave the scene. This leaves only the woman and Jesus. Jesus, no longer having

any witnesses to the event He mercifully refuses to condemn the woman to death, but equally as mercifully instructs her to commit no more sin.

We learn many great lessons from this text, but perhaps the greatest is this. Just because someone is guilty of sin doesn't necessarily mean that we must apply the whole penalty to that sin. Herein is one of the great attributes of God. Psalm 103:8-13 states, "The LORD *is* merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide: neither will he keep *his anger* for ever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth *his* children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him." Personally, I am thankful that God doesn't deal with me, as I know that I deserve. However, the lesson that we should learn from this is that neither should we deal with each other this way. It should be our great aim and desire to have as much mercy, compassion, and pity upon those who are involved in sin as much as it is to teach them the truth. Let us learn this great lesson from the life of Jesus for God desires mercy and not sacrifice (Hosea 6:6; Matthew 9:13; Matthew 12:7).

"I Promise—You Win!"

DAVID THURMAN

Throughout the Old Testament, God promised the coming of a Messiah (Christ) who would redeem God's people and save them from sin. God made many such promises; but the first is one of the best. God's first promise tells us that we can win our battles in life, and even, in death.

"And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. Then the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, 'Where are you?' And he said, 'I heard the sound of Thee in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid

myself And He said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?' And the man said, 'The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate.' Then the LORD God said to the woman, 'What is this you have done?' And the woman said, 'The serpent deceived me, and I ate.' And the LORD God said to the serpent, 'Because you have done this, Cursed are you more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; on your belly shall you go, and dust shall you eat all the days of your life; and I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.' To the woman He said, 'I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth, in pain you shall bring forth children; yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.' Then to Adam He said, 'Because you have listened to the voice of your wife,, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, "You shall not eat from it"; Cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field; by the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return" (Gen. 3:8-19). These verses tell us of the first sins committed. They describe the effects of that sin. But, they also tell us that a Savior will give us the victory. First, notice the need we have for the gift of a Savior.

OUR SHAME BEFORE GOD AND OTHERS

Adam and Eve had been naked and unashamed (Gen. 2:25). They had no reason to be ashamed. There were no barriers, no inhibitions between them. They even shared this openness with God. It seems God would come to the garden to visit with His creation. The man and woman enjoyed a life without shame.

Suddenly, once they sinned, they begin to feel their shame. It starts with the realization they are naked. It worsens as they hide from God. For the first time in history, man was ashamed and afraid. He was ashamed of his guilt, and afraid of his God. All this was because of the sins they had committed.

This still describes our need for a Savior. We are ashamed before God and each other. People hide from God by pretending He doesn't exist. They hide from God by attempting to redefine God in ways that tolerate sin. They hide from God by trying to prove they are good people and not sinners. Shame still drives a wedge between us and God.

Worse, shame will still drive wedges between people. We hide our mistakes or we pretend we don't make mistakes. We deny we sinned, or we explain away our sin as nobody's business. But the end result is that we are still ashamed of our feelings, our motivations and our actions. Like Adam and Eve, we are still trying to cover our nakedness before each other and before God.

OUR BLAME TOWARD GOD AND OTHERS

An interesting thing happens in these verses. Adam and Eve, who had lived in a sinless paradise, now start pointing the fingers of blame at each other and at God. Adam starts by blaming his wife (that must have made her feel real good). Further, Adam hints this was God's fault, since God put the woman there in the first place. It is as if Adam was saying, "We were doing great until you put that woman here." Adam blames God and his wife.

Eve doesn't do much better. She doesn't admit her guilt, but puts the blame on the serpent. Again, there is a hint she is blaming God, since the serpent was part of His creation. And, she is following the poor example of her husband, by pointing the finger at something, or someone, else.

This is what happens when sin comes into our hearts and actions. We begin to blame others for our mistakes. It was our parents' fault for raising us poorly. It was the school system that let us down. It seems in our culture there is always someone out there we can point our fingers at and avoid responsibility for our own choices. We need a Savior, since we are ashamed and tend to blame others.

OUR PAIN DUE TO OUR LOSS

Adam and Eve suffered greatly for their choices. They were banished from Paradise. Their lives would never be the same. Adam would now struggle to provide for his family. Life was going

to be hard work from now on. Eve would know pain from her family. This pain would begin in childbirth, but would continue beyond, as sin invaded the lives of her children. Adam and Eve were the first to experience the pain of failure.

This is still a hard lesson. Often we suffer because of poor choices we make. No one trusts us, but that is usually because we have proved untrustworthy. No one likes us, but that is often because we behave in ways that put people off. We wake up hung over, only because we chose to overindulge. We are harsh with our children, then wonder why they are not close. We go easy on our children and wonder why they won't take responsibility for their lives.

In so many ways we suffer pain because we sin. Sin leads to shame, which leads to blame, which leads to pain. That is why we need the gift of a Savior. Notice what the promise of Jesus does for us, even today.

SIN SEPARATES, BUT JESUS HEALS

We see the effects of sin. Adam blames Eve, who blames the snake, and both blame God. All these relationships are disrupted because of sin. That is Satan's goal. He wants to corrupt our relationship to God and our relationships with each other. If Satan can introduce doubt, jealousy or suspicion, he wins. Sin causes separation.

But, Jesus heals the split between us and God and between people. *"If we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin"* (1 John 1:7). Jesus' blood cleanses us from sin. This allows us to have fellowship with God again. Our sin is removed, our guilt erased. We have nothing of which to be ashamed. The blame has been put on Jesus. The pain of sin is eased.

But we also have fellowship with each other. I can forgive others, because I have been forgiven. I am not ashamed of my sin, it is forgiven. The sins of others does not require blame, that sin is forgiven. That is why you and I need a Savior so much. Only Jesus can heal the division between us and God.

SELFISHNESS CURSES, BUT JESUS BLESSES

Adam and Eve suffered for their selfishness. Both of them tried to protect themselves by covering up and blaming others. In their self preservation, they brought curses down upon them. Adam would struggle to make a living, Eve would suffer pain from childbirth. The sad irony of selfishness is that it brings more suffering. The more I look out for myself, the more curses I bring on myself.

We needed a Savior to remove the curse. Jesus came to take away the consequences our selfishness brought on us. *"For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive"* (1 Cor. 15:22). Adam brought death. Jesus brings life. Adam's selfishness caused the curse to fall on man. Jesus' sacrifice causes life to be granted to those who come to Him.

God understands our need to escape the curse. So, Jesus brings refreshing change. *"Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come"* (2 Cor. 5:17). In Christ we are made new. The old curse is removed and all things become new. God does not want us to just get through life God wants us to have an abundant life. This is what Jesus promised. *"I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly"* (John 10:10).

SATAN ATTACKS, BUT JESUS WINS

God tells us that Satan won round one. That was in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve sinned. They are cast out of the garden. They are cut off from the presence of God and must deal with the consequences of their sins. God tells us that Satan would indeed bruise the heel of the One who would come.

Satan attacked then, and Satan still attacks now. *"Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour"* (1 Pet. 5:8). Satan's task in the garden is still his task today. He wants to bring guilt and shame into your life. He wants to disrupt your relationships, to God and others. He wants to increase your suffering. Satan will never stop in this life. The devil will always be on the attack to make your life miserable.

The good news is that Jesus wins. God told Satan that he would bruise the heel of the Promised One, but that Jesus would crush Satan's head. In other words, Satan would do some harm, but Jesus would completely win the battle. While Satan has influence in this world, Jesus has the final say.

ACCEPT YOUR NEED

Do you ever feel guilty? Do you ever see your relationships suffer? Do you ever feel pain and sorrow due to your poor choices? If so, you are just like the rest of us. And, like the rest of us, you need a Savior. You need God's greatest gift, His Son, Jesus Christ. To accept this gift, you must first admit that you are a loser. You have departed from His will, you have sinned, you are ashamed and you have tried to blame God or others or society for your problems. Instead of that, repent (change your mind) about your past and turn to the God who wants to give you the gift of salvation.

ACCEPT THE SAVIOR

You can escape your shame. You can be free of the blame game. You can begin right now easing the pain you have experienced in your life. You can stop being a loser. You can be a winner, right now. All you need to do is put your trust in Jesus, turn from your former life and be baptized into the name of the Christ.

You can experience that new life Jesus promised when you die to self and are immersed in His name. *"Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life"* (Rom. 6:3-4). Stop being a loser. God's promise to you right now is you can be a winner. Come to Jesus and find victory.

Can We Be Trusted?

JOHNNY RAMSEY

God challenges us with this statement from His word: *"But even as we have been approved of God to be intrusted with the gospel, so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God who proveth our hearts"* (1 Thes. 2:4). To win lost souls to Jesus is a very rewarding endeavor, *"He that winneth souls is wise"* (Prov. 11:30). To go through life never even attempting to lead men out of darkness into God's light is a shameful misuse of our time on earth (Acts 26:18). As an old song demands our sincere effort:

There are souls to rescue,
There are souls to save.

When we reflect upon time and eternity, we understand the urgency of Mark 8:36, *"For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"*

Many members of the church have never even invited neighbors to study the Bible with them. We must pay the price to learn the Scriptures and then zealously convey that knowledge to those who do not even know that a Savior died for them at Calvary! A tremendous song of entreaty tells the story for us:

Soul, a Savior thou art needing,
Soul, a Savior waits for thee,
Hear His words of tender pleading,
Hear His gracious, "Come to me."

Sadly, many people are unaware of their lost condition, and very few are willing to share with the lost the good news of redemption. The message of Matt. 7:12 applies to this serious matter: *"All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them: for this is the law and the prophets."* Doing unto others certainly involves telling the lost the gospel plan of salvation. Silence is not golden when lost souls are involved. Keeping quiet can keep people from salvation. Too many members of the church are silent partners instead of

reaching out to those about us who have never obeyed the gospel. Yes, sadly, we are spiritually tongue-tied.

When we hide the gospel we assist the devil, who is engaged in that very work: *"And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled in them that perish: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of the unbelieving"* (2 Cor. 4:3-4). But when we strive to be evangelistic, we will shine as the splendor of heaven (Dan. 12:3). Let us, therefore, ring out the glad tidings of redemption. A most stirring song should spur us on:

*When in a better land
Before the Judgment bar we stand,
How deeply grieved our soul will be,
If some lost one there,
Should cry in deep despair:
You never mentioned Him to me.
You met me day by day
And knew I was astray,
And yet you never mentioned Him to me!
Ring out the message!*

A New Creature

J. C. WATKINS

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (II Corinthians 5:17). In sin man is separated from God, without Christ and without hope (Ephesians 2:12). Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:10). It is in Christ that man finds redemption, the forgiveness of sins (Ephesians 1:7). It is in Christ, and only in Christ, that one can have spiritual blessings (Ephesians 1:3). Therefore, the only place that the sinner can become a new creature is in Christ!

The Christians at Rome were ***"...baptized into Jesus Christ..."*** (Romans 6:3). They were baptized into the death of

Christ where His blood washed away their sins and **"...they were raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father . . . to walk in newness of life"** (Romans 6:4). One gets into Christ by being baptized into Him (Galatians 3:27). The Christian is one who has been **"Buried with him in baptism, wherein also are ye risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead"** (Colossians 2:12).

In the act of baptism one's sins are forgiven and that one becomes a new creature in Christ. That one then is to **"...put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him"** (Colossians 3:10). That one has **"...obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness"** (Romans 6:17-18).

As a new creature in Christ, one becomes a servant of righteousness in living **"...soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world"** (Titus 2:12). The only way for one to become a new creature is to be baptized into Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). When one obeys the gospel he or she is a new creature whose life is wholly given to doing the will of God in the remainder of one's life on earth (1 Peter 4:2).

Looking To Jesus

KEN WILLIS

Nathaniel Hawthorne told the beautiful story of the Great Stone Face. The setting was a little community in a valley surrounded by mountains. In that village was a little boy named Ernest. As one looked up at one particular mountain side there could be seen an image of a huge figure, it had a forehead a hundred feet high and the rest of the head was in proportion. Ernest had been told by his mother, a legend which had been told first by Indians. That legend was that one day someone would come who was such an ideal character that he would resemble the face in the mountain.

Ernest played as a boy and as he grew to manhood he

looked longingly to the Great Stone Face. He searched the features of every person who lived in the little village. He looked upon the face of a very rich man, who had been declared to be an ideal citizen. But Ernest knew he was not that man, for he had a narrow spirit and a cold heart. Ernest continued to look and search. He looked upon the face of a great soldier; he looked upon a great statesman, but none had the features of the Great Stone Face. Ernest grew to be an old man with gray hair, and felt disappointed that no one could be found that had the ideal features.

Ernest was just a simple farmer, but one that others turned to for his wisdom, virtue, and his love was known and admired far beyond the boundaries of his little valley. A poet came out to see him and learn of Ernest. It so happened that Ernest had an appointment to speak to the people of the village that evening. His address was so simple, so wise, so pure, and so tender that as the poet listened, he was so impressed by this simple farmer's wisdom. As he looked down the valley as the sun's last rays focused on the mountain, the poet saw the image. He said, "Ernest is the exact image, he is the Great Stone Face!" The people agreed that he was the most truly great man of all that land. The reason Ernest became the image of the Great Stone Face in the mountain was that from a boy he had looked upon it and admired it day by day, and kept his eyes and heart upon it.

THE GREATEST IDEAL

Looking has a great power as we fasten our eyes upon some object, or person, or ideal. As we fasten our mind's eye upon some lofty purpose or some goal, there is a power to transform. The Hebrew writer knew this, *"Whereby seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God"* (Hebrews 12:1-2). The inspired writer says that by staying focused on Jesus, we can be transformed. Paul spoke of this in Romans chapter eight. "For

whom he did foreknow, he did also predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified" (Romans 8:29-30)

CONCLUSION

Are you looking to Jesus? He says that if man is to be lifted up, it will be by the drawing power of Jesus. "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:14-15). "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32). We are not talking about looking at Jesus, but looking to Jesus! Looking to Jesus "the author and finisher of our faith." If you look to Jesus you must place your trust and your confidence in Him and in His power. It means that you believe in His supreme authority. It means that you believe the words of Peter in Acts 4:12: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." It means that we completely submit to Him. Have you surrendered to Jesus?

Does The Bible Contradict Itself?

WAYNE JACKSON

Infidels frequently claim: "The Bible is filled with mistakes and contradictions!" Yet when they are challenged to cite such contradictions, critics will usually generalize by suggesting, "Oh, there are many of them." Or else they will introduce a difference between passages, which will not, in fact, constitute a contradiction at all.

It ought to be initially observed that the principle of "innocent until proven guilty" surely must be applied to the Bible. As we

normally assume a person to be truthful until it is demonstrated otherwise, so also, a book-including the Bible-should be assumed to be internally consistent until it conclusively shows itself to be self-contradictory.

THE NATURE OF A CONTRADICTION

Many people do not have an accurate view of what constitutes a genuine contradiction. This truth must be constantly emphasized: a mere difference does not a contradiction make! Well, exactly what is a contradiction? The law of contradiction is essentially this: "That the same thing should at the same time both be and not be for the same person and in the same respect is impossible." Careful consideration of this rule will reveal that it is composed of several elements. When one is confronted with an alleged contradiction, for example, he must be absolutely certain that: (a) the same person or thing is under consideration; (b) the same time period is in view; and, (c) the seemingly conflicting language is employed in the same sense.

Let us apply these principles to the two following statements to illustrate our point: John is rich. John is poor. Do these statements contradict? Not necessarily. First, two different people named John may be under consideration. Second, two different time frames may be in view; John may have been rich, but became poor. Third, the words "rich" and "poor" might have been used in different senses; John could be financially poor, but spiritually rich! The point is this: it is never legitimate to assume a contradiction until every possible means of harmonization has been fully exhausted. Now, let this principle be applied to the Bible.

SAME PERSON OR THING

An infidel once gleefully announced that he had discovered a discrepancy in Scripture. When challenged to produce it, he suggested that whereas Noah's ark with all of its inmates must have weighed several tons (Gen. 6), the priests were said to have carried the ark across the Jordan River (Josh. 3). The poor fellow did not even know the difference between Noah's Ark and the Ark of the Covenant! Two different arks! The Bible asserts that the sinner is saved by works; then again, that the sinner is not saved

by works. Is this a contradiction? No, for the Bible speaks of different kinds of works. Salvation does involve works of obedience of Christ's commands (Phil. 2:12, Jas. 2:14f), but it cannot be obtained by works of the Mosaic law (Rom. 3:28; 4:2f), or by human works (Eph. 2:9).

SAME TIME REFERENCE

The Bible records: "God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good" (Gen. 1:31), and then: "And it repented Jehovah that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart" (Gen. 6:6). The unbeliever cites both verses and suggests that the Lord was simultaneously satisfied and dissatisfied with his creation. But the fall of man, and several hundred years of human history separate the two statements! Man was viewed in two entirely different time frames. Some have charged the Bible with a mistake in connection with the time of Jesus' trial and death. Mark writes that Jesus was crucified at the third hour (Mk. 15:25), while John's account has the Lord being tried at the sixth hour (Jn. 19:14). John's record, however, was based upon Roman civil days, while Mark computed according to Jewish time. Thus, different time references were involved. There is no contradiction!

SAME SENSE

If the Bible is to be understood, it is imperative that recognition be given to the different senses in which words may be employed. Normally terms are used literally, but they can be employed figuratively as well. For instance, in Matthew 11:14, John the Baptist is identified as "Elijah," yet, the forerunner of Christ plainly denied that he was Elijah (Jn. 1:21). These verses are easily harmonized. Though John was not literally Elijah, physically reincarnated, nevertheless he was the spiritual antitype of that great prophet; he prepared the way for Christ "in the spirit and power of Elijah" (Lk. 1:17).

CONTRADICTIONAL QUALITIES

Another implication of the law of contradiction is the concept that "nothing can have at the same time and at the same place

contradictory and inconsistent qualities." A door may be open; a door may be shut. But the same door cannot be open and shut at the same time. Here is the principle: opposites are not necessarily contradictory. Let this truth be applied to certain Biblical matters. Does the Bible contradict itself, as is sometime claimed, when it represents God as both loving and hating? No, for these words are used with reference to different objects. God loves the world (Jn. 3:16), but he hates every false way (Psa. 119:104). He loves righteousness, but hates iniquity (Psa. 45:7), he thus responds toward such with either goodness or severity (Rom. 11:22). But there is no contradiction.

SUPPLEMENTATION NOT CONTRADICTION

A proposition cannot be both true and false at the same time. If one declares: "I have a son," and then states, "I do not have a son," he has contradicted himself. If, however, he says: "I have a son," and then he announces, "I have a daughter," he does not contradict himself, for he may have both a son and a daughter. This is an example of supplementation, and this is not contradiction. Many so-called Bible discrepancies can be explained in this fashion.

The case of the healing of the blind men of Jericho, often cited as a Bible contradiction, represents an interesting case in supplementation (Mt. 20:29f; Mk. 10:46f; Lk. 18:35f). Two problems have been set forth. First, while Mark and Luke mention the healing of only one blind man, Matthew records the healing of two. Secondly, Matthew and Mark indicate that blind men were healed as Christ was leaving Jericho, whereas Luke appears to suggest that a blind man was healed as the Lord drew nigh to the city. As these points are considered, remember this-if there is any reasonable way of harmonizing these accounts, no legitimate contradiction can be charged! In the first place, the fact that two of the gospel accounts mention only one blind man, while the other mentions two, need not concern us. Had Mark and Luke stated that Christ healed only one man, with Matthew affirming that **more than one** were healed, an error would surely be apparent. But such was not the case. Obviously Mark and Luke mentioned only the more prominent of the two blind men.

Secondly, there are several possibilities for harmonizing the accounts regarding where the miracles occurred. A popular view among reputable Bible scholars is the fact that at the time of Christ there were actually two towns called Jericho. First, there was the Jericho of Old Testament fame (Josh. 6:1f), which, in the first century, lay largely in ruins. About two miles south of that site was new Jericho, built by Herod the Great. The Lord, therefore, traveling toward Jerusalem, would first pass through OT Jericho, and then, some two miles to the south-west, go through Herodian Jericho. The miracles, therefore, may have been performed between the two towns. Accordingly, the references of Matthew and Mark to leaving Jericho would allude to old Jericho, whereas Luke's observation to drawing near to Jericho would refer to the newer city.

CONCLUSION

In dealing with so-called contradictions in the Bible, therefore, let these principles be carefully remembered:

- (1) No contradiction exists between verses that refer to different persons or things.
- (2) No contradiction exists between passages that involve different time elements.
- (3) No contradiction exists between verses that employ phraseology in different senses.
- (4) Opposites are not necessarily contradictions.
- (5) Supplementation is not contradiction.
- (6) One need only show the possibility of a harmonization between passages that appear to be in conflict in order to negate the force on an alleged Bible discrepancy.
- (7) Finally, the differences in various scriptural accounts of the same events actually demonstrate the independence of the divine writers. They were not in collusion!

God, though using human writers in the composition of the Bible, is nevertheless its ultimate Author. And since the perfect God cannot be the source of confusion (I Cor. 14:33) or contradic-

tion (Heb. 6:18), it must be acknowledged that the Bible is perfectly harmonious.

If seeming discrepancies are discovered, let us apply ourselves to diligent study to resolve them. But let us never foolishly charge God Almighty with allowing errors to be incorporated into his sacred Book!

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(See Rule 3)

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