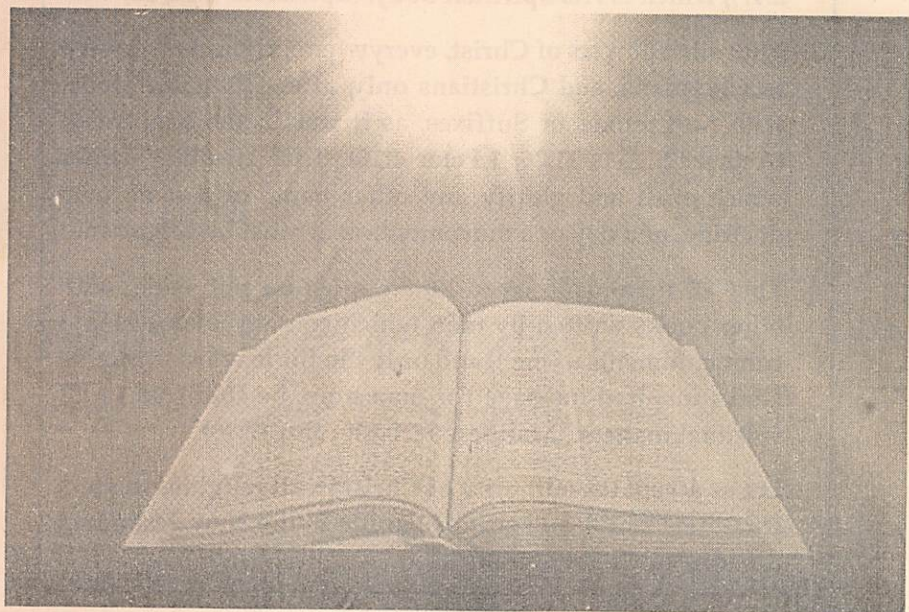


Monthly

May 2020

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THE BIBLE TEACHER



Our Plea

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; Col. 1:18). That congregations of the one church of the Bible 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; John 20:20, 21).
2. That there should be only one plan or guideline of salvation, as is revealed and taught in the Bible, followed everywhere. All must believe in Christ, repent of wrong, confess Christ the Son of God, and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins. (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-38). Those who obey these commands to be saved 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).
3. That all followers of Christ, everywhere, should be known as Christians, and Christians only, after His name alone, with no Prefixes or Suffixes, 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 which contain doctrines and commandments of 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).

THE BIBLE TEACHER

Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity

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Editorial

What Does the Bible Teach?

God Has Spoken

IT IS MOST IMPORTANT for every person to learn what the Bible teaches, because the Bible is the book of God's revelation of His will to man. Through the Bible we learn who is God, what is man, from where man came and what is his destiny. There was a time in the history of mankind when men did not have the Bible, God's instruction to man, in its written form as we have it today. But this does not mean that after creating man God had left man without His will. The writer of the Book of Hebrews says, "God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son." (Hebrews 1:1,2). This then means that God has always from the beginning communicated His will to man. He spoke directly to Adam and His descendants in the beginning, in various ways, such as through visions and dreams and signs. Then He chose Moses and revealed His will for His people through him, as it is written in the Old Testament of the Bible. Also He sent prophets, such as Isaiah, Elijah, Jeremiah, Daniel and many others, before He sent His only begotten Son Jesus Christ, the Savior and redeemer of the world, through whom God speaks today to all men.



The Son, Jesus Christ, while He was on earth, had chosen twelve men to be His spokespersons. He taught them and trained them for more than three years. To whom He had also promised that after He would go back to the Father, He would send upon them

the Holy Spirit, Who would guide them into ALL truth, teach them ALL things, bring to their remembrance ALL that He had taught them while He was on earth with them. Listen to what He had said to them: "These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you." (John 14:25-26). Again, He said to His apostles, "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth has come, He will guide you into all truth; For He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come." (John 16:12-13). This promise of Christ to His apostles was fulfilled fifty days after His resurrection from the dead, on the Jewish day of Pentecost, as we read in Acts 2:1-4. The Holy Spirit enabled the apostles to speak in languages they had not learned as they spoke to multitudes of people, who spoke different languages, and the people listening to them were amazed and said to one another, "How is it that we hear, each in our own language, in which we were born?" (Acts 2:8). He also gave them power to perform signs and miracles which confirmed the words they spoke. (Acts 2:43; 5:12; Mark 16:17-20). All of these miraculous powers, with which the apostles were endowed and which the apostles later also shared with them upon whomsoever they had laid their hands to impart spiritual gifts, (Acts 8:14-18; Romans 1:11; 2 Timothy 1:6), however, were to be withdrawn when the perfect revelation or the will of God, in its written form would have come, as we have it today in the New Testament of Jesus Christ. Regarding this the apostle Paul, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, had foretold, "Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail, whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part. **But when that which is perfect** has come, then that which is in part will be done away." (1 Corinthians 13:8-10). The twenty-seven books of the New Testament part of the Bible were being written at that time by the inspired men of God, and given to the church of the first century A.D., only a part at a time. A full and complete revelation of God was not made known to the apostles at once. Miraculous powers such as prophecies, speaking in foreign languages, and supernatural knowledge were some of the means by which God's will was revealed and confirmed. By the end of the first century when all of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament were completely written and God's will fully revealed,

miracles had served their purpose and therefore came to an end and ceased. Miraculous powers and supernatural knowledge were given to the apostles for a specific time and specific purpose. They were to go and preach the gospel to the whole world. (Mark 16:15-16). But who would believe their message? And how would they be able to speak to people who spoke different languages which the apostles didn't know? So the Holy Spirit of God gave them the power to work signs and miracles which confirmed the word of God they preached. (Mark 16:20). Also, the Holy Spirit empowered them to speak in languages they didn't know. (Acts 2:6-11). Likewise the Holy Spirit inspired them to write God's final will for all people, which God revealed by His Son. (2 Peter 1:21; 2 Timothy 3:16-17). Once it was completely written and given, then there was no longer any need for miraculous works and further revelation. Therefore they ceased, as the apostle had said, "But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away."

Some say that the "perfect" to which the apostle refers does not mean the will of God, but the coming of Jesus Christ, who is the "Perfect One." But this is not the case. Notice, Paul said, "when that which is perfect has come", he used the neuter gender. Jesus Christ is not neuter gender. He is masculine. In speaking of the will of God, in Hebrews 10:9-10, the inspired writer employs the neuter gender, as he wrote, ".....He takes away the first that He may establish the second. By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." Moreover, when Christ comes back on the day of judgment the Scripture says, everything up in the skies and on earth will pass away and will be burned up, (2 Peter 3:10), not just prophecies, tongues and knowledge, as the apostle said will be done away when that which is perfect has come.

When Christ established His church in the beginning of Christianity, they had only the Old Testament part of the Bible, which was the law God had given to Israel His chosen people of that time through Moses. However, after Christ's death, resurrection and ascension into heaven, the New Testament of the Bible was written and given to the followers of Christ, which is called "the perfect law of liberty." (James 1:25). Both the Old Testament and the New Testament contain the word of God. Both were written by the inspiration of God. "Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." (2 Peter 1:21). The Old Testament part of the Bible was given to the people who lived until the death of Christ. When Christ died on the cross He took away that law (Colossians 2:14;

Hebrews 8:7, 13), and in its place He gave another law, the New Testament law of Christ (Hebrews 9:16, 17; 10:9, 10) under which we live today. God has spoken and He speaks even today through Christ, His Son, by His written word. He has told us everything we need to know and believe and follow. Today in the New Testament we have all the truth into which the apostles were guided by the Holy Spirit, and it is to govern us in all our belief and practices. (2 Peter 1:3). God has warned that no one should change or alter or add into His word (Revelation 22:18-19). The apostle Paul said that even if an angel from heaven comes and tell us something that is not already written in God's book, we should not believe it. And let that individual be accursed. (Galatians 1:6-9). Aren't there preachers today who are deceiving people by saying that they have received a new message from God? The apostle said of such preachers that they are not serving our Lord Jesus Christ but their own bellies, because by their smooth words and flattering speeches (or writings) they are deceiving the hearts of the simple. And he further advises that such should be noted and avoided. (Romans 16:17-18). Remember: The Holy Spirit guided the apostles into all truth, and we have that truth revealed and confirmed today in the New Testament.



THE TWO COVENANTS

J.C. Choate

THE BIBLE IS COMPOSED of two main books—the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament is commonly called the Old Covenant while the New Testament is called the New Covenant. The term covenant has reference to an agreement made between two parties. In the Old Covenant, God simply made an agreement with his people of long ago. Coming on down to the New Covenant, God made a new testament or new will and sealed it with the blood of his only begotten Son.

The Hebrew writer speaks of the first and second covenants and shows the difference in the two, explaining that the second is much greater than the first. We read: "For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh : How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot

to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth." (Heb. 9:13-17). According to these verses of scripture the first covenant has been replaced by a much better one; in this case it took the death of its author to seal it and put it into effect.

Christ lived under the first covenant and he expresses his attitude towards it in this manner: "Think not that I am come to destroy, the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle, shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." (Matt. 5:17,18). Later, on the cross Christ said: "It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost." (John 19:30). What was finished? The law, or the first covenant. We know this was the case because after the Lord's resurrection he said to his disciples: "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me." (Lk. 24:44).

The apostle Paul explained unto the Colossians that Christ nailed the law to his cross. Listen to his statement: "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to the cross." (Col. 2:14). Thus, when some trouble came up in the church over circumcision and keeping the law of Moses, the apostle Peter stood up in the midst of the elders and apostles and other brethren who were gathered in Jerusalem, and asked this question: "Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?" (Acts 15:10). Peter wanted to know why anyone should want to bind a law on the Gentiles which the Jews themselves were not able to keep. The law demanded perfection and they were not able to keep it, consequently, it was taken out of the way being replaced by a law of grace. (John 1:17).

Every soul should make it a practice to follow Paul's advice: "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needed not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (2 Tim, 2:15).

We must study, but we must also learn to rightly divide the word as we study. Many have overlooked this important factor and as a result are striving to hold to the law of Moses with one hand and to the Lord with the other. But Paul informs us that if we go back to the law we are fallen from grace. (Gal. 5:4).

We must believe the entire Bible but we must also remember that the Old Testament is no longer binding. The inspired writer tells us that the first covenant now serves as an example, that we should not sin as many of former days did, but rather we should obey God. (1 Cor. 10; Rom. 11:22). Hence, we are to look to the New Testament, or the New Covenant, as being the perfect law of liberty for it is that covenant which is binding.

Faddish Worship

Rick Cunningham

FADS COME AND FADS GO. In my life hairstyles have gone from crew cuts to flattops, to ducktails, to bangs worn across the forehead, to shoulder length, to spiked, to white-sidewalls. Fads came and fads went. That's okay. I now just wish I had some hair to style!

I am alarmed, however, at the faddism in worship these days. Like teenagers searching for a new means of expression, worshippers are in some cases "expressing themselves" in childish ways.

In extreme cases a worship service may look like a staged production, complete with lights, cameras, and action. If the "preacher" is especially entertaining or the male and female choral leaders are especially enthusiastic, the audience may encourage them with applause. It's a show. True worship, however, is never for show (Matthew 6:1-18).

As fads come and fads go, true worshippers will continue to honor God through biblical expressions of worship; in song, prayer, communion, sermon, and giving. Worship will be orderly, God-centered, and will not resemble television talk shows or rock concerts. Worship should reflect Bible guidelines.

Christianity is not a fad. It is the two thousand year-old covenant between God and man. Let's not desecrate what is holy by patterning our worship after the fads of the day. Instead, let's continue to worship God as Jesus and His apostles taught, in spirit and in truth (John 4:24).

Christian Values OR Truth?

Justin A. Hopkins

MANY IN TODAY'S SOCIETY speak of the significance of Christian values, or of "Judeo-Christian values." This term is thrown about in political discussions, as many cry for legislation that reflects these values, values that are said to be based on the Bible. BusinessDictionary.com defines a value system as, "A coherent set of values adopted and/ or evolved by a person, organization, or society as a standard to guide its behavior in preferences in all situations."

Values, as such, can be deeply personal, or can be shared by an entire group, community, or culture. There are competing value systems, which hail from differing systems of religious and philosophical thinking. Each value system is understood to be equally valid for those who embrace it.

Notice that these values serve as a guide for behavior, but only for those who have, of their own free will, decided that they would live by those values. Even then, those values are not hard and fast rules, but are merely "preference." What does this mean for the "Judeo-Christian Value System"?

While these values may be true and valid for those who claim to be Christians, they have not been accepted and adopted by those not claiming to be Christians. Since these values are personal, and subjective, what right do we have to try to impose them on others? It is for this reason that the cry for a separation between Church and State has been so pervasive in western culture. After all, the government deals in matters that are objective and have an effect on all citizens, regardless of their value systems. This being the case, should not government be based on the realm of facts and objective truths, rather than the subjective realm of feelings and values?

If we approach these matters from a system of values, what right do we have to make claims on or demands of the lives of others based on our value system? Should they not live and be judged by whatever value system they have decided will work for them?

Is the Christian system merely a set of values? Is it simply personal preference in matters of moral and behavioral decisions? Or, do the teachings of the Bible reach farther than this? As we consider the concept of truth, then, we must ask the question that Pilate asked: "*What is truth?*" (John 18:38).

Truth is something that is always valid and accurate in all places, times, circumstances, and for all people. The problem is how can anybody know for sure that anything meets this standard for truth? Is anything really a universal truth, or is it simply true for you? The only possible source of universal truth would be an infinite being, one who knows everything, and is everywhere all the time, having infinite power. Only in the existence of the God of the Bible can any truth be found. Jesus summarized the matter when He declared, *"thy word is truth"* (John 17:1 7).

All truth, then, whether it is religious truth, moral truth, or mathematical truth emanates from the very person of God! Two plus two will always equal four because God decreed it to be so. In the same way, then, moral and religious truths, as revealed by Jehovah, are not merely values, or personal preferences. No, they are universal truths that are equally valid and true for all people in all times and places.

It is Just as Jesus said, *"He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. for I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak"* (John 12:48-49). When we come to the realization that Christianity is not merely a system of values, but a system of truth, we have a moral obligation to help others to understand these truths, for it is by these truths that they will be judged.

To be evangelistic, or to call for society at large to conform to Biblical standards of morality and living, is not to be bigoted and small minded by forcing your personal values onto others. Instead, it is compassionate care that seeks to help those around you prepare for the coming day of judgment!

Because the truths of Christianity are universal and objective, we are bound to the great commission. *"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned"* (Mark 16:15-16). We are to go into all the world because all the world is affected by the truths that we hold.

We go into all the world, because all of the world must answer to the Gospel. There is no limit to the influence that our Christianity is to have. We are to be Christians, and to live by and share the truth of Christianity in our personal lives, and in the public arena. Our Christianity should affect our actions when it comes to politics. Our Christianity should affect our actions when it comes to education

and the pursuit of knowledge. Our Christianity should affect our actions in the work place. Our Christianity should affect our actions in the home, and among our neighbors.

We must not be apologetic, accommodating, or compromising when it comes to the demands of the Gospel, because the souls of those around us hang in the balance, and the truths by which they will be judged do not, and will not change!

To relegate the Gospel to the realm of values is to rob it of its power and influence. No, Christianity is much more than values, *It is truth!*

Point of Pardon

Mac Layton

CAN WE KNOW WHEN?

HOW CAN I KNOW? How can I be sure? These questions are asked every day. It is human nature to want to KNOW. And what could be more important than knowing that the soul is saved?

When is one saved from past sins? When does one become a Christian? At what point does God pardon? Many answers have been given by men. One says at the moment one believes in Christ, one says after repentance, and another after baptism. Who is right? We know that God is right, and let us hear Him.

THE PRINCIPLE

Notice first the children of Israel and the brass snake. (Num. 21:4-9). Because they complained about the manna, God sent fiery serpents to destroy them. They repented. God instructed Moses to place a brass snake on a pole that the children of Israel could look at it and be healed. When they obeyed God by looking on the brass snake, they were healed.

Another beautiful example is found in the life of Naaman, a captain in the Syrian army. (II Kings 5). Naaman was a leper. He came to Elisha and was told God would heal him if he would dip in the river Jordan seven times. When he obeyed God by dipping seven times in the Jordan, he was cleansed.

OBEDIENCE

Jesus said, "Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father

who is in heaven." (Matt. 7:21). John said, "Hereby we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments." (1 John 2:3). Paul said, "He became unto all them that obey Him the author of eternal salvation." (Heb. 5:9). James said, "Faith without works is dead." (James 2:26). Thus, OBEEDIENCE is the point of pardon.

All living this side of the cross must look in the New Testament to know what to do to be saved. The Old Testament was given to Jews alone and was nailed to the cross (Col. 2:14). The book of Acts answers the question, "What must I do to be saved?"

THE POINT OF PARDON

Imagine a line drawn by God. That line separates the lost and the saved. When does man cross the line from the lost to the saved? The Word of God says that we must believe (John 8:24), repent (Luke 13:3), confess (Acts 8:36-38), and be baptized (Acts 2:38; 22:16). No one of these is more important than the others. All must be done to please God. The point of pardon is complete obedience. Water baptism is the final act before remission of sins. It is WHEN faith saves. It is the PLACE God has promised to meet man with the blood of Christ. It is the TIME of pardon. It is the LINE that separates the lost and the saved.

There was no power in the brass snake to heal Israel. There was no power in the waters of Jordan to cleanse Naaman. God alone has the power to heal, cleanse, forgive. There is no power in the waters of baptism to wash away sin, but in the blood of Christ. (Rev. 1:5). Water baptism is the time, the place, the line, the point of pardon and the completion of obedience for the forgiveness of past sins.

Then it is clearly seen **WHEN** God forgives.

BAPTISM THE EXACT MOMENT

Water baptism is:

1. The TIME one enters Christ. (Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:3).
2. The TIME one is saved. (Mark 16:16; 1 Pet. 3:21).
3. The TIME one's sins are washed away. (Acts 22:16; Acts 2:38).
4. The TIME one is born again. (John 3:3-5).
5. The TIME one is raised to the new life in Christ. (Rom. 6:4).
6. The TIME one is added to the kingdom of God. (Acts 2:41, 47).

The One True Church of the Bible

Louis Rushmore

Founder: Jesus Christ

Purchased it with His own blood (Acts 20:28)
Built by Jesus Christ (Matthew 16:18)
Christ is the Head of His church (Ephesians 5:23)
He is the Lawgiver (John 12:48)
He is the Rock on which it was founded (Matthew 16:18)
He is the Foundation (1 Corinthians 3:11)

Founded in A.D. 33 in Jerusalem

Fulfilling prophecy—Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:2,3)
Fulfilling prophecy—When (Daniel 2:31-45)
“To come with power” (Mark 9:1; Luke 24:49)
Came with power (Acts 2:1-4)
Birthday of the church (Acts 2)

Biblical Descriptions

“My [Jesus] church” (Matthew 16:18)
Kingdom (Matthew 16:18,19; Colossians 1:13)
Church (Acts 2:47; Colossians 1:18)
Body (Ephesians 1:22,23; Colossians 1:18)
Church of God (1 Corinthians 1:2)
Church of Christ (Romans 16:16)
House of God (1 Timothy 3:15)

Membership

Baptized men and women (Acts 8:12)
Baptized believers (Mark 16:16)
Repenting and baptized (Acts 2:38)
Professing Jesus as Christ (Romans 10:9,10)
Obedient souls (Romans 6:1; Hebrews 5:8,9)
The immersed (Romans 6:3-5; Colossians 2:12)
From every nation (Acts 10:34,35)
The saved (Acts 2:47)

Organization

Independent congregations (Acts 14:23)
Obligated to Jesus Christ (1 Peter 5:1-4)
Ruled by elders (Titus 1:5-9; Hebrews 13:17)

Served by deacons (1 Timothy 3:8-13)
Taught by teachers (Hebrews 5:12-14)
Taught by preachers (Romans 10:13-15)
Served by members (Romans 12:4-8)

Worship

In spirit and in truth (John 4:24)
Each first day of the week (Acts 20:7)
The Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:20-29)
Singing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16)
Giving (1 Corinthians 16:1.2)
Praying (Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 14:15)
Preaching (Acts 20:7)

Work

Take the Gospel to the lost world (Mark 16:15)
Rescue fallen Christians (James 5:19,20)
Learn God's Word (2 Timothy 2:15)
Help the poor (Galatians 6:10)

Doctrine

God's Word alone (Revelation 22:18,19)
New Testament (Hebrews 9:15)
The Gospel (Romans 1:16; Galatians 1:6-9)
Not human creeds (Mark 7:7)

Members Called

Saints (1 Corinthians 1:2)
Brethren (Acts 15:22,23)
Members (Romans 12:4,5)
Christians (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16)
Children of God (Romans 8:16)
Priests (1 Peter 2:9)

The Church Versus Denominations

The one true church of the Bible is not a denomination. Jesus established His church hundreds of years before any denomination existed. Denominations were begun by *men*, but *Jesus* founded His church. He compared religions of men to plants and said, "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up" (Matthew 15:13).

Jesus also said, "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:9).

IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

Did Jesus Christ found your church?

- Does Jesus make the laws for your church?
- Was your religion founded in AD 33?
- Was your religion founded in Jerusalem?
- Is your church the fulfillment of prophecy?
- Did your religion begin with power?
- Does your religion have a biblical name?
- Is your church an independent church?
- Is your worship biblical or in vain?
- Are you a baptized believer?
- Is your creed the Bible only?
- Do you wear a denominational name?
- Are you a member of the one true church?

THE PLAN OF SALVATION

Hearing God's Word

"So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17).

Belief or Faith

"I said therefore unto you, that you shall die in your sins: for if you believe not that I am he, you shall die in your sins" (John 8:24).

Repentance

"And the times of this ignorance God winked at but now commands all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30).

Profess Jesus to be the Son of God

"And Philip said, If you believe with all your heart, thou may. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 8:37).

Immersion for the Remission of Sins

"And now why do you wait? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16).

Faithfulness

"... be thou faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life" (Revelation 2:10).

The One True Church of the Bible

When	Where	Who	Name
33	Jerusalem	Jesus Christ	Various divine names

Manmade Churches

When	Where	Who	Name
606	Rome	Boniface III	Catholic
1520	Germany	Martin Luther	Lutheran
1534	England	Henry VIII	Episcopal
1536	Switzerland	John Calvin	Presbyterian
1550	England	Robert Browne	Congregational
1607	Holland	John Smythe	Baptist
1739	England	John Wesley	Methodist
1830	America	Joseph Smith	Mormon
1830	America	William Miller	Adventist
1866	America	Mary Baker Eddy	Christian Scientist
1872	America	Charles T. Russell	Jehovah's Witnesses

Maintaining Our Focus

Wayne Barrier

TODAY'S WORLD HAS FEW CONSTANTS. One constant is change. It's hard to comprehend the social, economic, technical, and medical change of the past 100 years, or even the past 50 years. Every day something else affecting hundreds of millions of people changes—a new way to communicate, a new drug to cure disease, a new discovery of some kind.

Changes are both good and bad. All create the need for continual learning and education. In every facet of life change requires constant evaluation and refocusing. Things that once were important are no longer important or even relevant to our lives.

WHAT ABOUT CHANGE AND THE CHRISTIAN?

Christians must deal with change effectively. We must learn to change some things, but always to maintain our focus on the unchanging priorities and goals of God and of the church.

Consider Paul's statement in Philippians 3:12-21. He says, "*Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected, but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.*"

"Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for

the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

"Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.

"Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is their shame—who set their minds on earthly things.

"For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself."

These inspired words remind us of our purpose, eternal citizenship, mission, attitude, standards of performance, goals, and some major distractions. Our world is home to over 6 billion people—most never having heard the Gospel of Christ. Our task is great and we must maintain our focus and press forward if all are to hear the message of hope.

Basis And Source Of Authority

Earl D. Edwards

"AUTHORITY" MEANS "power to influence or command thought, opinion, or behavior." For the humans who believe in a benevolent Creator it should be obvious that the very highest authority or power belongs to that Creator because He is the one who owns every being and everything on the earth, by right of creation. *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth"* (Genesis 1:1). *"Then God said, 'Let the earth bring forth living creatures...'"* (Genesis 1:24). *"And God created man"* (Genesis 1:27).

God's Authority

When Christ was on the earth He taught *"as one having authority"* (Matthew 7:29). And later, after His resurrection, He did indeed affirm that *"all authority* (Greek = *exousia*) *has been given to me in heaven and on earth"* (Matthew 28:18). Jesus spoke elsewhere of the authority He had "over all mankind" and said, as He spoke to God,

the Father: *"Thou gavest" Me "authority over all mankind"* (John 17:2). Later Paul wrote that *"God is the head (Greek = kephale) of Christ"* and *"Christ is the head (Greek = kephale) of every man"* (1 Corinthians 11:3). The term "head" as used here means "one who stands over another in the sense of being the ground of his being."

From the above passages it is clear, even if one accepts them only as valid historical documents, that Christ and Paul believed in a hierarchy of authority, with God the Father being at the top where "the buck stops."

Christ's Authority

But likewise it is clear from the above passages that the Father gave *"all authority"* in *"heaven and on earth"* to Jesus (Matthew 28:18). So at the point in time at which He uttered the words under consideration here, He already had absolute authority, the absolute right to speak and command.

The Apostles' Authority

Immediately, after the above-quoted affirmation of Jesus that He possessed all authority, He began using that authority to tell His disciples to *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations..."* (Matthew 28:19). He likewise told them that He would send upon them *"the Spirit of Truth"* (the Holy Spirit) who would *"guide"* them *"into all truth"* (John 16:13). A short time later the Spirit came upon them and they *"were all filled with the Holy Spirit"* (Acts 2:4). They therefore went and preached and wrote epistles, as one of them said, with *"authority the Lord gave"* to them (2 Corinthians 10:8).

Authority of the Writings of Inspired Apostles

When Jesus was on the earth, He had confirmed that all of the writings of the thirty-nine books we call the Old Testament carried the approval of God, and were therefore authoritative. In fact, on one occasion, He said, *"the Scripture cannot be broken"* (John 10:35), thus confirming that all books recognized as Scripture by the Jews were actually from God. A bit later He made it clear which books He regarded as being included in "Scripture": *"all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses, and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled"* (Luke 24:44). It is a recognized fact that these three categories included all thirty-nine books which are today described as the Old Testament.

But in addition to the above thirty-nine books, Jesus, as noted earlier, had promised that the promised Holy Spirit would *"guide"* the apostles into *"all truth."*

One of those apostles later wrote that God *"has granted to us*

everything pertaining to life and godliness through the true knowledge of Him who called us..." (2 Peter 1:3). In other words, that *"all truth"* has been received. In fact, just a few verses later he said, *"the truth"* is *"present with you"* (2 Peter 1:12). Likewise, another apostle declared, *"the things which I write unto you are the Lord's commandment"* (1 Corinthians 14:37).

Delegated Authority

"Delegated authority" refers to authority by which one person is "acting for another." From the above reasoning it is clear that God delegated authority to Christ, who, in His turn, delegated authority to His apostles to reveal His will for us. No wonder, then, these apostles clearly affirmed that to disobey their writings would be equal to disobeying *"the Lord's commandment"* (1 Corinthians 14:37).

God doesn't speak to us directly today, but He does speak through His Son, Who in turn speaks through the written Word of God. That is why the apostle Paul told Timothy that the way he [and all who would come after him] must deal with false doctrine in the future of the Christian age would be to *"preach the word"* (2 Timothy 4:2). That *"Word"* which Paul had in mind clearly included the **Old Testament** that he had mentioned just a few verses earlier (2 Timothy 3:15), as well as the **New Testament** which was being written at that time through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit: *"all Scripture is inspired by God"* (2 Timothy 3:16). This *"all Scripture"* certainly included the apostles' writings, which as earlier noted, that same apostle had affirmed were *"the Lord's"* (1 Corinthians 14:37), and therefore carried His authority. Thus, since neither God nor Christ any longer speak directly to us, **the written Word is our authority base.**

False Authority Standards

In Jesus' day there were some who held to teachings (or "traditions") which did not originate with God. Concerning these, Jesus plainly said, *"In vain do they worship me teaching as doctrines the precepts of men"* (Matthew 15:9). Just so, today, we have those who dedicate a certain kind of worship to Mary, or baptize infants, or add instrumental music to the singing commanded in the New Testament. In order to justify their practices, such people must go beyond the bounds of Scripture authorized by God, thus violating the clear commands in Revelation 22:18,19. They, therefore, worship *"in vain... teaching as doctrines the precepts of men."*

OUR WINNOWING FAN

Joe C. Magee

"HIS WINNOWING FAN IS IN His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire" (Matthew 3:12).

Harvest was an important event to the farmers of Christ's day. The grain with the stalks would be carried to a place prepared where it would be spread out and, either by animals treading over the harvest or by pulling a kind of sled over it, the grain would be separated from the stalks. This would be followed by using a two- or three-pronged fork called a winnowing fan with which the kernel and the chaff would be separated by tossing them into the breeze. John's listeners probably had little trouble understanding the parallel. But what of us today? What spiritual significance does this statement have for us?

When we submit ourselves to the threshing floor of God's kingdom, the winnowing fan of the inspired Word will separate us from:

The chaff of ignorance: *"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:5).*

The chaff of indolence: *"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15)*

The chaff of selfishness: *"Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:1,2).*

The chaff of hatred: *"If someone says, 'I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen: And this commandment we have from him: that he who loves God must love his brother also'" (1 John 4:20,21).*

The chaff of moral laxity: *"Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things" (Philippians 4:8).*

The chaff of hopelessness: *"Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober and rest your hope fully upon the grace that*

is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:13).

The chaff of fear and uncertainty: *"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing"* (2 Timothy 4:7,8).

Let us use the winnowing fan of God's Word to separate the chaff while in this life, lest the Lord come and, with the winnowing fan of judgment, separate us from life in God's eternal heaven.

PRAYER

Mike Johnson

PRAYER IS MISUNDERSTOOD, misused, misdirected, oversimplified, greatly exaggerated, underestimated, underappreciated, and overlooked. In other words, prayer is tough! And yet, for a Christian, prayer should be as natural as having a conversation with a parent. After all, God is our Father.

So, what makes prayer so difficult? Sometimes prayer is tough because of something in your life that keeps you from talking to your father out of guilt.

Sometimes prayer is tough because you don't know how to do it. Prayer is something that you must learn.

Prayer is tough for some people because they are not comfortable with their own parents and do not feel close to God as their Father. At other times, prayer is tough because we do not plan time to pray.

There are many verses of scripture that should encourage us in our prayer life. *"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God"* (Philippians 4:6).

"Continue earnestly in prayer being vigilant in it with thanksgiving" (Colossians 4:21).

"Pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

"Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray" (James 5:13).

We should work on developing a prayer life that is inspiring, powerful, fruitful, encouraging, specific, comfortable, natural, deep, simple, clear and consistent. This type of prayer life will strengthen our Christian life.

Is It Important How I Worship God?

Aubrey Smith

REVELATION 4:11 TELLS US THAT God created everything and is entitled to our worship. *"You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things..."*

Now open your Bible and read Romans 11:36. *"For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever."* The Bible also reveals to us that we bring honor and glory to God only when we do His will, and when we do our best to be like Christ, (Romans 15:7 and 2 Corinthians 3:18).

Does it really matter how we worship? **Let's see what the Bible has to say.** Read John 8:31,32. Notice that Jesus said, *"If you abide in My word you are My disciples..."*

What is Jesus saying? Simply, the King of kings is telling us that He has revealed to us what He wants us to do and how He expects us to act if we want to be saved. Jesus is telling us that we must study the Bible and follow the pattern it describes. This simple truth applies to how we are saved, how we must live, and how we must worship. John 12:48 tell us: *"He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day."* These are life and death statements. Jesus, the Son of God, is plainly telling us that if we do not follow *all* the patterns that have been revealed to us in the New Testament, we cannot be His disciple. And, if we are not His, we will not live in eternity with Him in heaven.

I don't know about you, but I've already figured out that I'd rather live with Jesus in heaven than live with Satan in hell. If you've not yet decided where you'd prefer to live in eternity, please read the eighty words of terror spoken by a man who is in hell (Luke 16:19). This is the only record that we have of someone speaking to us directly from torment. He was in hell, he's still in hell, and he'll always be in hell. Think about that and you will quickly see how important it is that we study our Bible and apply its truths to our lives.

If you believe, as I do, that the Bible has revealed to us God's plan, let's see how God wants us to worship Him. We can find out by simply studying from the Bible.

Worshiping God is of first importance, and He wants our worship to be from our heart, not given as an obligation. Let's read John 4:24: *"God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."* It's not altogether **where** we worship, but **how** we worship that is important to God. The truth of the matter is that we should have a worshipful attitude toward God all day, every day (Romans 12:1). Everything we do should be our attempt to honor Him. According to the passage we just read, our worship must be with sincere love, following the pattern given us in God's Word.

Let's take a look at the worship patterns in the Scriptures and as they are practiced each Sunday morning in Christian worship services.

First, Hebrews 10:25 reminds us that we are to **assemble together**. Those believers of old met on the first day of each week to eat the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7).

1. Learning God's ways: Let's read Matthew 7:24-26: *"Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock.... But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand."*

Now read Romans 1:16 and 1 Thessalonians 5:21. Finally, Jesus said in Matthew 7:21 *"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."* Clearly, there is a way that we must learn if we want to be right with God. That's why first-century Christians were called followers of "The Way". That's what preaching is all about. In true worship, preaching declares God's truth clearly, adhering faithfully to His Word.

2. Praying: God does not want us to be wordy and He doesn't want us to be repetitious (Matthew 6:5-8). He listens to the attitudes of our hearts. Jesus taught His disciples to pray in Matthew 6:9-13. Now our prayers are to be offered through Christ (John 14:14). In James 5:13-18 you will find rich instructions concerning your prayer life. Study your Bible and you'll soon see that God has promised to hear and to respond to every Christian's prayer that is according to His will.

3. Praising God in song. In the previous verse from James, please note he also advised us to sing praise to God. There is every indication that the first-century Christians were singing

assemblies of God's children. Read Colossians 3:16. This may also surprise you, but one of the primary purposes of singing is *to teach*. Singing also admonishes and encourages Christians. Read Ephesians 5:19: "*Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.*" The use of mechanical instruments such as pianos and organs were not accepted into church worship for over one thousand years. It is clear from both history and the Bible that the first-century Christians did not use any form of instrumental music in their worship to God.

4. Remembering Christ. The worship of the early church was really very simple. "*And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers*" (Acts 2:42). This important memorial is described by Paul in 1 Corinthians 11: 23-25, and we are told in the eleventh chapter of 1 Corinthians, verse 28 that we are to examine ourselves as we partake of the feast.

Where did this practice begin? The Bible tells us Jesus started this memorial feast at the Last Supper before His death. "*And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it; and he gave to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; this is my body.' And he took a cup, and gave thanks, and gave to them, saying, 'Drink ye all of it.'*" (Matthew 26:26,27). Also read Luke 22:17-20. This is all very clear to those who *want* to be guided by what the Bible teaches. When we go outside of the Scriptures and strive to guide ourselves, we've wandered into forbidden territories. "*For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.*" (1 Corinthians 11:26)

5. Cheerfully giving. "*On the first day of every week let each one of you put aside and save, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come*" (1 Corinthians 16:2). Giving is dependent on the level of your prosperity. "*Let each man give according as he hath purposed in his heart: not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver*" (2 Corinthians. 9:7).

May God bless us as we worship Him in spirit and truth, and may our fellowship always be in Christ Jesus.

Kidnapped By Perversion

Jack English

A CHRISTIAN FRIEND OF MINE was recently fired from his job as a manager of a very popular national clothing store. The reason being given is because of his association through his sons with the Boy Scouts of America. Now why would this be a reason for terminating a long-term employee in a managerial position? The explanation was because of the National Boy Scouts organization's opposition to permitting homosexuals to serve as scout leaders. The popular clothing store for young people is very sympathetic to the homosexual agenda and is under pressure to disassociate from all those who are not, including employees and managers.

It still surprises many Christians to learn to what lengths "gay" activists will go to **push tolerance for the homosexual lifestyle while denying tolerance to those who oppose it.** Much of the real homosexual agenda remains buried in the homosexual subculture to which most Christians are seldom exposed. Yet prominent homosexual leaders and publications have voiced support for **pedophilia, incest, sadomasochism** and even **bestiality.** Gay activists routinely call for legally binding "marriage" between homosexuals while at the same time ridiculing Biblical and traditional standards of fidelity.

The normalization of homosexuality in our culture is among the most profound moral issues of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Despite the fact that virtually, all societies throughout history have condemned homosexuality, gay activists continue to make progress in convincing politicians, big corporations, and even some Christians to abandon efforts to resist their demands. I, for one, refuse to accept this perversion of God's creation of human beings and violation of God's law for humanity. Let God speak about human relationships:

"And Adam said: 'This is now bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man.' Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (Genesis 2:22-24).

"You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination. Nor shall you mate with any animal, to defile yourself with it. Nor shall any woman stand before an animal to

mate with it. It is perversion. Do not defile yourselves with any of these things; for by all these the nations are defiled, which I am casting out before you. For the land is defiled; therefore I visit the punishment of its iniquity upon it, and the land vomits out its inhabitants....

"For whoever commits any of these abominations, the persons who commit them shall be cut off from among their people. Therefore you shall keep My ordinance, so that you do not commit any of these abominable customs which were committed before you, and that you do not defile yourselves by them: I am the LORD your God" (Leviticus 18:22).

"For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting" (Romans 1:26,27).

"Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 6:9,10).

A recent study released by the American Psychiatric Association says what many (and the Bible) have been saying all along: that homosexuals *can* change their sexual orientation. **God does not hate homosexuals, but He does hate the sin of homosexuality.** Like all sinful behaviors, repentance is a prerequisite to having a relationship with God and any hope of being saved (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). I recognize that there are physical, psychological and spiritual complexities for those leaving homosexuality. But everyone has a choice over his behavior and the empowering work of the Holy Spirit and the, grace of Jesus enable even homosexuals to change.

I regret that my friend has lost his job because of the perverted and sinful agenda of others. But **I regret more the apathy that many Christians may be adopting toward a destructive and abominable sin which is kidnapping our culture.**

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