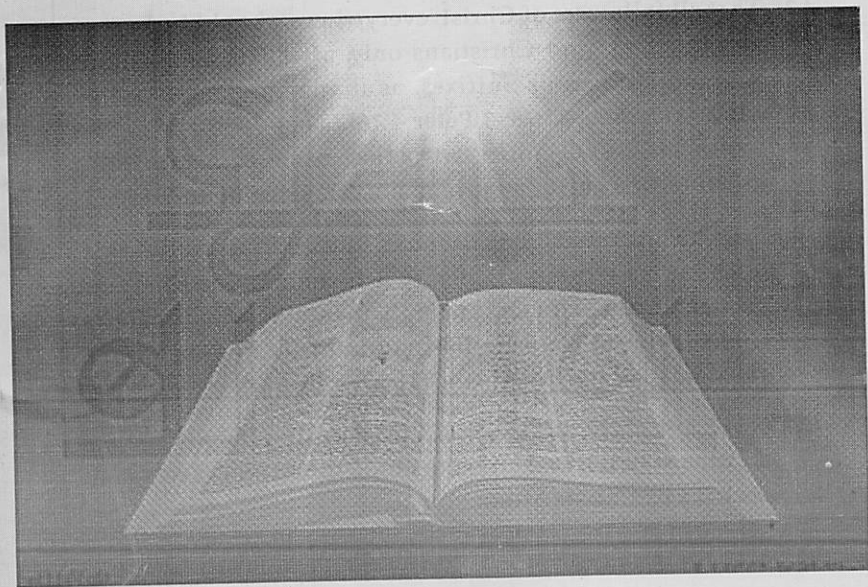


Monthly

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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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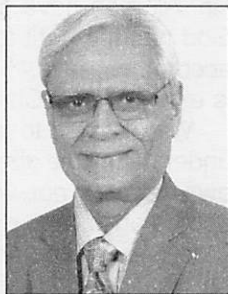
No. 10

## Editorial

### What Does the Bible Teach?

#### *It Is Not In Man Who Walks To Direct His Own Steps*

THE WISE MAN WROTE: "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death." (Proverbs 14:12). This is an account of the way and end of a great many self deluded souls. Their way in their own eyes is seemingly fair. They please themselves with a fancy that they are on a right path, but their way of ignorance and carelessness, the way of worldliness and earthly mindedness, the way of sensuality and flesh pleasing, which seems right to them, is actually the way of death and destruction. Many are spiritually deceived, they believe, their religious external performances and blind zeal will bring them to heaven. They flatter themselves in their own eyes that all will be well at last. But their end will be fearful, because it is the way of death, eternal death. (Matthew 7:22,23). Their iniquity will certainly be their ruin, and they will perish with a lie in their right hand. Self deceivers will prove in the end to be self-destroyers.



The apostle Paul preached, "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." (1 Corinthians 1:18). The Bible has only one message, and that is the message of the cross, in which is revealed the power of God for the salvation of all mankind. Yet a great majority of people have rejected God's message of the cross, even ridiculing and making fun of it, thinking it to be a foolish message. They would rather follow their own conscience, their own

ways, than what God wants them to do. Men through the centuries have evolved various ways to reach heaven, their own ways of worshipping God to please Him; doing acts of self-debasement, mortification, penance by cutting and bleeding members of their bodies, by depriving themselves of food and water, by making long painful journeys to "holy places", all to achieve salvation from sin and to become worthy of heaven.

Jeremiah, the man of God, said, "O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps." (Jeremiah 10:23). This is one of the most profound statements in the Scriptures and the one that needs continually to be heeded by all men. As long as men seek to be guided by their own counsels and by what seems right to them, they are destined to frustration and defeat and finally to destruction. We need to understand that we cannot of ourselves do anything for our own redemption from sin. All men have sinned against God (Romans 3:23); and only God has the right to fix the terms of pardon and relief. The Bible accordingly says, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23).

We all need to learn that we are not at our own disposal, but under the divine direction of our creator. We are not masters of our own destiny, nor we should resolve that everything should be according to our own mind and way. We must therefore refer ourselves to God and acquiesce to His will. As long as men seek to be guided by their own counsels and what seem good to them, they are destined to destruction. Man cannot be his own savior and neither a man can save another man, just as one blind cannot lead another blind to the right direction. Man was created by God, and man has sinned against God. Only God can forgive man and save him from sin, to make him worthy of heaven. Jesus Christ, whom God sent to earth from heaven and allowed him to die on the cross for the propitiation of man's sins, is the answer to man's problem of sin. (John 1:1, 14; 1 John 4:10). In God's account, Christ's sacrificial death on the cross was His propitiatory act for man's sin. (2 Corinthians 5:21). According to the Bible, when a person believes in Christ to be the Son of God, who died for man's sins, and repents or turns away from every wrong practice, and is baptized (buried in water for the remission of sins) as Christ commanded, God saves that individual from all past sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3-5); and as a follower of Christ God expects that individual to live each day by following Christ's teaching (1 Peter 2:21). Jesus, therefore, rightly said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." (John 14:6).



## WHAT IS THE CHURCH OF CHRIST?

J.C. Choate

No doubt you have been wondering about the group of people near you who refer to themselves as being members of the church of Christ. You have probably asked yourself: Who are these people? What do they believe and practice? What is the church of Christ? Well, that is the thing we want to talk about at this time.

**First**, the church of Christ is non-denominational and non-sectarian. This church is neither Protestant, Jewish, nor Catholic; it endeavours to speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent. Neither does it substitute in any form, shape, or fashion. (Rev. 22:18,19; Gal 1:7-9).

**Second**, the church of Christ is the church which Christ promised to build. Christ spake these words unto Peter: "That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matt. 16:18).

**Third**, the church of Christ is that church which was established on the day of Pentecost, A.D. 33. The record reveals that Peter preached the gospel for the first time and around three thousand obeyed the Lord and were added to the church. (Acts 2). That same church has been in existence ever since.

**Fourth**, the church of Christ is the spiritual body of Christ. The apostle Paul, in speaking to the members of the church at Corinth, has this to say: "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." (1 Cor. 12:27).

**Fifth**, the church of Christ is the one body of the scriptures. This is the truth about the matter inasmuch as the Bible speaks of but one body. "There is one body". (Eph. 4:4). But the body is the church. (Eph. 1:22,23). Therefore, there is one church—one, and only one.

**Sixth**, the church of Christ recognizes Christ as its head. "And he is the head of the body, the church." (Col. 1:18). Christ is the supreme one.

**Seventh**, the church of Christ acknowledges Christ as its saviour. "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body." (Eph. 5:23).

**Eighth**, the church of Christ is a blood bought institution. Christ

purchased it with his own blood. (Acts 20:28). The church then is important.

**Ninth**, the church of Christ is composed of Christians who have obeyed the Lord's will and have been added to the church. (Acts 2:47; 1 Cor. 12:13). One cannot join the Lord's church.

**Tenth**, the church of Christ honors the name of Christ. The church itself wears the name of Christ. Not only so, but each member likewise wears his name. (Rom. 16:16; 1 Pet. 4:16). Man made names and titles are rejected.

**Eleventh**, the church of Christ accepts the Lord's plan of scriptural organization. (1 Tim. 3). Elders, etc.

**Twelfth**, the church of Christ engages in the greatest work on earth, that of carrying the gospel to the lost. (Matt. 28:18-20; Eph. 2:10).

**Thirteenth**, the church of Christ worships God in spirit and in truth. This is done each first day of the week through praying, studying, singing, giving, and partaking of the Lord's Supper. (John 4:24; Acts 20:7).

**Fourteenth**, the church of Christ practices Christianity. Each member of the church must be faithful unto death. (Rev. 2:10;22:14).

Dear friend, consider the church of Christ in light of these statements, and above all, in light of what the Bible teaches. Attend the services of the church of Christ and you will be considered an honored guest, and at the same time, be scripturally taught.

You can be a member of the Lord's church by believing in Christ, repenting of your sins, confessing Christ, and being baptized for the remission of sins. (Mk. 16: 15,16). The truth will make nothing but New Testament Christians.

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## *Build Your Hopes On Things Eternal*

**Maxie B. Boren**

IN THE LATTER PART of the fourth century B.C., Alexander the Great led the Greeks on a world conquest. He was very successful, extending the influence, culture, and language of Greece widely. But now, centuries later, only remnant pieces remain to tell us of the grandeur that once was.

And preceding the Greeks were a number of others, such as Egypt under the Pharaohs. What enormous wealth was theirs! And the splendor of their kingdom was of great renown. But now, only museums filled with relics and the ingeniously built pyramids tell the story.

Perhaps the most famous empire of all time was that of the Romans. Truly it was a great one, lasting for some five hundred years! More than likely, the people who lived in the first century B.C., and in the first, second, and third centuries A.D. thought it would never end. But it did! Its glory faded. And all of its beautiful buildings, great theaters, stadiums, and statues and monuments began to succumb to the devastating ravishes of time. And today, we see only what is left... crumbled ruins!

I often reflect on the words of a well-known hymn (written by a faithful Christian, F. L. Eiland, who died in 1909) — "Time is filled with swift transition, naught of earth unmoved can stand...build your hopes on things eternal, hold to God's unchanging hand!" How true, how true!

So many things upon which people place such importance in reality matter little. Over the "long-haul", what difference does it make how fine a house we lived in, how much money we had in the bank, or what treasures we accumulated, ad infinitum? The only thing that matters, in the final analysis, is whether or not we have prepared for eternity by loving God and doing His will!

Brother Eiland penned words of wisdom when he wrote that beautiful song, "Hold To God's Unchanging Hand". His message in music was "right on target"! Thus, to all who may chance to read this brief article, may I remind that time is rapidly passing by, and we each are drawing nearer to eternity with every fleeting moment. "*Now is the acceptable time, now is the day of salvation*" (2 Corinthians 6:2).

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## **Jesus Christ Is Coming Again**

**David Pharr**

AMONG THE THINGS WHICH Christians believe is that Jesus is coming again. The Bible tells us that as the apostles watched Jesus ascend, "*two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven*" (Acts 1:10,11).

Christians happily embrace the sweet promise of Jesus, who said, "*And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also*" (John 14:3). Thus, we are "*looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ*"

(Titus 2:13), because *“we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is”* (1 John 3:2).

The greatness of Jesus' return will be more than human imagination can grasp. It would be folly to suppose that we could understand all that is involved. The splendor and power of His coming will be more than earth's languages can explain and more than human minds can understand. Yet God has told us some things about what will happen when Jesus comes. From the Bible we can be sure of certain doctrines about the Lord's return and about the end of the world.

1. The Bible plainly promises that Jesus is coming (Acts 1:9-11; Philippians 3:20; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 4:16; Hebrews 9:28; Revelation 1:7). Many do not believe what the Bible says about the certainty of Christ's coming (2 Peter 3:3,4), but Peter shows that what seems to be a long day is only because of the longsuffering of God, and that the day of the Lord indeed will come (2 Peter 3:8-10).

2. No one knows when Jesus is coming, not even angels, not even Jesus Himself (at least during His earthly ministry), only God the Father (Matthew 24:42-44; Mark 13:32,33; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-3). It is strange that people have attempted to foretell the date. All such efforts have been foolish and vain. Only God knows the day He has appointed (Acts 17:31).

3. All of the dead will be raised. *“There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust”* (Acts 24:15). This shows that there will be one resurrection day for all men, including good and bad people. Jesus made this absolutely plain in John 5:28,29. When Jesus comes, the dead in Christ will be raised. At the same time, the righteous who are alive will be changed. Then the righteous who are raised from death and the righteous who are changed will be taken up to meet the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 Corinthians 15:51-54). At the same time sinners will face Christ for judgment (2 Thessalonians 1:7-10). All the dead will come before the *“great white throne”* (Revelation 20:11-13), and there will be a judgment of all people (Matthew 25:31-46). Because they will be judged, the wicked will cry because of His coming (Revelation 1:7), but the people of God will be glad with *“exceeding joy”* (1 Peter 4:13).

4. The universe will be destroyed (2 Peter 3:10-14; Revelation 21:1). There will be a *“new heaven and a new earth”* but it will not be here. Instead, the new dwelling place of God's people will be the



place Jesus went to prepare (John 14:1-3). Then we will be in heaven where Jesus is now.

5. The rule of Christ over His kingdom on earth will come to an end. Christ established His kingdom, which is sometimes called the kingdom of heaven, or the kingdom of God, on the day of Pentecost. He had foretold that the kingdom would come within that generation (Mark 9:1). In the same text He said it would come with power. The power was to come when the Holy Spirit came on the apostles (Acts 1:8), and that happened on the day of Pentecost, according to Acts 2. At that time Peter explained that Jesus was raised *"to sit on his throne"* where He will reign until all His enemies are His footstool (Acts 2:31,34,35). Paul shows the significance of this in 1 Corinthians 15:23-26. The last enemy to be destroyed is death, which will be accomplished in the resurrection. *"Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God"* (1 Corinthians 15:24).

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## *Cultural Church Changes*

**Tom Holland**

WHEN THE CHURCH OF Christ began in the first century there was an inevitable clash with the culture. The church was comprised of saints (1 Corinthians 1:1,2; Ephesians 5:25-27). Their values were a contrast to those of the world out of which they had, by the Gospel of Christ, been called. Greed was replaced by the joy of giving. Lust was crucified by the sense of integrity, and the profane fled from the determination to honor God and His Word.

However, the culture was not about to accept the demand for change without a fight. Tactics such as intimidation, fear, and even physical torture were utilized in an effort to break the spirits of God's children. The saints' condemnation of an ungodly culture caused them to be subjected to wooden neck and leg stocks, beatings, torture racks; lion's dens; imprisonment, and often death.

If God's people in the first century had operated on the principle of some people in the 20th century, the book of Revelation would not have been written, because compromise with the culture would have prevented the conflict. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit would not have inspired Peter to write a book on suffering. Paul's inspired warning, *"Yea, and all who live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution"* (2 Timothy 3:12), would be meaningless language.

The culture wants change, but it wants the church to do it,

according to the needs of the culture. Unfortunately the culture does not have values of quality that really enhance life now, much less offer any real hope for an eternal future. What can people who live for now exclusively offer people who want to live eternally? The silence is the answer.

Change is needed for sure. However, a God who has all knowledge must be trusted to identify the change that is needed (Isaiah 55:8-10). The true revelation of the necessary change is bound in the Bible.

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## *Elders As Leaders*

**Jimmy Jividen**

ELDERS ARE LEADERS, whose leadership is to be quite different from most leaders. Their leadership model is not that of a business executive, a military officer, or a politician, but that of a servant, exemplified by Jesus Himself. Jesus taught, *"Whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve"* (Matthew 20:26-28).

An elder's leadership is not that of a democracy in which the leaders are elected to do the will of the people. The elder's allegiance is to the Lord, not man. The will of the people is not always the will of God.

Like a shepherd who protects his sheep from wolves, elders protect those they shepherd from teachers who would lead them astray. Blessed are those who have shepherds they can follow even through the valley of the *"shadow of death"* without being afraid.

An elder's leadership is not modeled after the Gentile rulers of whom Jesus spoke. They sought to *"lord it over"* and *"exercise authority over"* those under their charge (Matthew 20:25). He is not like Diotrephes who loves *"to be first,"* but like Jesus, who took upon Himself *"the form of a bondservant"* (2 John 9; Philippians 2:7).

An elder *compromises* his leadership role if he only reflects the will of the people. He *abuses* his leader role if he becomes a dogmatic boss who strives to control by political power and force. He *neglects* his leadership role if he refuses to be "out front" leading the way. He must live a life that can be imitated.

Elders are spiritual leaders who should show the way to others. They should be respected and honored for their work's sake. Two

passages emphasize this: *"Remember those who lead you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the outcome of their way of life, imitate their faith"* (Hebrews 13:7). *"Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor"* (1 Timothy 6:17).

## **The Household of God**

**Harvey Porter**

THE SCRIPTURES USE MANY illustrations to describe the church. It is sometimes called a building, with each Christian as a stone in the whole structure. It is pictured as an army with Jesus as the commander and all of us as soldiers; It is a vine with Jesus as the core and His followers as the branches which should bear fruit. One of the most beautiful and easiest to be understood is the picture of the church as the family of God.

Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus and said, *"Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone"* (Ephesians 2:19).

Paul again used this figure when he wrote Timothy, *"Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you these instructions so that, if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth"* (1 Timothy 3:15).

All of us have had a father and a mother. They are necessary for us to come into existence. God had and still has a wonderful plan for what the home ought to be. Unfortunately many homes have not been as He directed, and many parents and children have had misery. But those who have had good parents learned love, comfort, and being wanted and cared for. They have learned responsibility. They are a part of the family. There is unity and each is a vital part. There are no unimportant parts.

The church is a family. It follows the same basic principles of those who love each other and live in unity and harmony, helping and caring for each one, and laughing and crying together. In a spiritual way they all have been born into the same family, they have the same Father, they have the same spiritual blood line (cleansed by the blood of Jesus, their elder brother). They are all in line for the inheritance of the Father, so rich and wonderful that it defies description.

This family has responsibilities like any good family on earth. Everyone has to work and share the load. This world abhors "freeloaders," and so does heaven's family. A family ought to love and trust each other. In fact, we all know that the earthly family cannot last long without these two necessary ingredients. Love is at the heart of all we do — every relationship. The God of love not only expects it of His children, He demands it. He disowns us if we do not practice it.

These truths need to be emphasized. We all need to be aware of the great joys and benefits of knowing and acting like the family of God. Our earthly families may have been broken and unhappy, but God has given the whole world a family that should and can have all that we all are seeking in a family. It will demand a lot of all of us. It is easier to love those that are close to us, but we can have an attitude of love toward those we may not yet know. It will require some effort on the part of all of us.

## **CHURCH AND KINGDOM: ARE THEY THE SAME?**

**William Woodson**

NO SMALL AMOUNT OF importance is attached to the question above concerning the church and the kingdom of God. This is especially true in what is termed Dispensational Premillennialism: that the kingdom of God was promised in Jesus' day, but the promise was withdrawn; that the church was given instead, and now in the age of the church believers wait for the coming of the kingdom of God — the supposed one-thousand-year reign of Christ on earth. What is one to make of this view, especially the relation of the church and kingdom?

There can be no doubt that the kingdom was announced as "at hand" (Matthew 3:1,2; Mark 1:14,15). Was this promise/provision kept? Indeed so. We are translated into the kingdom (Colossians 1:13); we are called into it (1 Thessalonians 2:12); John was "in the kingdom" just as clearly as he was "in tribulation" and "in the isle called Patmos" (Revelation 1:9). The "kingdom of God" was not and is not identified in Scripture as the supposed thousand-years reign of Christ on earth.

How, though, does the kingdom relate to the church? The answer is: The kingdom relates to the church in the same way that the

church relates to the body of Christ, the temple of the Lord, the family of God, etc. That is, each term (church, kingdom, body, temple, family, etc.), designates the same group of people from different viewpoints as they relate to each other, and especially to God. Those believers who are in the body are not different from those who are in the church, the temple, the family; and in the same way those in the church are not different from those who are in the kingdom. The church designation indicates the fact of being called by the Gospel to come to God and serve Him; the kingdom designation indicates the fact of being completely submissive and loyal to the rule of God over His people by Christ and the Gospel.

Jesus indicated He would partake of the bread and fruit of the vine with His followers *"in my Father's kingdom"* (Matthew 26:29; Mark 14:25; Luke 22:16-18). We know, further, that the Lord's supper was/is to be observed when brethren *"come together in the church"* when God's people have *"come together in one place"* (1 Corinthians 11:18,20). The same people who partake the Lord's supper with Christ in the kingdom do so in the church when they are assembled to do so. Hence, the church and kingdom are the same people viewed from different standpoints; and in no way are those words to be distinguished so as to mean we are in the church now but not in the kingdom.

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## ***WHAT IS RIGHT WITH THE CHURCH ?***

**Jerry Jenkins**

IN A WORLD WHERE there are so many things wrong, it is marvelous to find something that is right. When we focus on the faults, we cannot see the good. We can become so obsessed with the negative that it blinds us to many things that are good and right.

**THE PLAN IS RIGHT:** The church originally existed in the mind of God. It is not accidental nor an afterthought. Paul affirmed: *"To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Ephesians 3:10,11). After sin entered into the world, God's answer was the powerful message of the Gospel. This message was communicated by His family — the church. The time was right (Galatians 4:4), the method was right, and the mission was right.

**THE PRICE IS RIGHT:** God gave His only begotten Son for the church, and Jesus gave His life's blood for it.

**THE PEOPLE ARE RIGHT:** Because you know some who do not properly represent the Lord's work does not mean that all the people are wrong. God's people are right because they are saved (Acts 2:47). The church is as a hospital which extends help to those who need it. The finest people anywhere are in the church.

**THE PLEA IS RIGHT:** We are not the only people who are honest and sincere in our beliefs and practices, nor are we smarter, richer, or better-looking. That which distinguishes us is our plea to follow Christ and His Way to the very best of our abilities. To propagate the church in its purity as it was built is our goal.

**THE PURPOSE IS RIGHT:** The mission of the church is to glorify God and to make known His message to a lost world.

**THE PROMISES ARE RIGHT:** The promises to God's family include the promise of Pardon, the promise of Prayer, the promise to extend all Scriptural Blessings.

Indeed there are many things right with the church. We urge you to come and help us in the greatest work known to mankind.

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## *Encircled by Faithful Witnesses*

**Clem Thurman**

*"THEREFORE LET US ALSO, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, 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 perfecter of our faith" (Heb. 12:1-2). The Scriptures here picture the Christian life as a "race set before us," and we are urged to run that race with our eyes fixed on Jesus. The apostle Paul declared that we must "strive lawfully" (2 Tim. 2:5), if we would receive the prize, and that surely includes the idea of leaving behind our sins. The same inspired apostle writing of the Christian life as a race, said: "Know ye not that they that run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? Even so run; that ye may attain. . . I therefore so run" (1 Cor. 9:24-26). The scene pictured in our text, Heb. 12, is that of a race track, completely encircled (or, compassed about) by spectators (witnesses). This scene was familiar to most people in the Roman Empire, and especially in the Greek culture where the Olympic games originated. The picture could be represented by a coliseum of this modern day, where the Olympics or other big track meet is held. The "witnesses" of our text are those who are mentioned throughout Heb. 11 as the "heroes of faith." It is as though, while*

we are in *"the race"* (the Christian life), these witnesses such as Abel and Abraham and Moses are sitting in the stands and watching us run.

Quite often, when people are urged to enter the race (become Christians) and run it (live the Christian life), they often make excuses. The words of Heb. 12:1-2 make it clear that the witnesses which encircle us can answer every excuse we might make. Let us try some oft-heard excuses and hear these witnesses answer.

### **"I Would Condemn My Family"**

How many times Christians hear this complaint from one who has been taught God's truth and is encouraged to surrender to Christ. The excuse usually has to do with a relative - mother, wife, etc. - who is not (or was not) a Christian. The concept is that "my obedience would condemn" them, because they did not obey. Of course, it is evident that obedience by one cannot condemn another, yet the excuse is still used. But let's call up one of these "witnesses" that encircle us.

*"By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he had witness borne to him that he was righteous, God bearing witness in respect of his gifts: and through it he being dead yet speaketh"* (Heb. 11:4). From this passage, and Gen. 4, it is evident that Cain and Abel had received some instructions from God about the sacrifices they were to offer. Now, Abel could have reasoned, "If I do what God wants, I'll condemn my brother, for he isn't bringing the sacrifice God wants." But Abel didn't reason that way. He realized his obligation to God was not dependent on Cain's obedience.

Some today will say that the test is too much, that they shouldn't have to choose between following the path taken by a relative and the path the Lord marked. But Abel answers: *"He being dead yet speaketh."* Our witness says, "Get into the race. You won't condemn your family, only their disobedience can do that. The cost is worth it. Run the race!"

### **"It Requires Too Much Work"**

In this age of 40-hour work week and time and a half for overtime, in which we have more leisure time and more funds than our foreparents would have dreamed possible, this excuse is heard more and more often. "Living the Christian life just demands too much!" Many think that the God who gives them 168 hours a week is asking too much of them when He demands that a portion of that time be used for Him! Does God demand too much? Let's look

around the bleachers and hear from another witness.

*"By faith Noah, being warned of God concerning things not seen as yet, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; through which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith"* (Heb. 11:7). If you will read carefully Gen. 5:32 and 7:11-13, you will see that the work took Noah more than a hundred years! Imagine a football stadium—the ark would reach from the end zone seats at one end to those at the other; it would reach almost to the first rows of seats on each side, and it would be about as high as the average press box! That is the building job which God gave Noah. And we complain at the work we are expected to do?

Sure, we get tired sometimes. But don't you think Noah got tired, before he got the ark completed? We get discouraged. But don't you think that *"preacher of righteousness"* (2 Pet. 2:5) got discouraged at the little response he got from his hundred years of preaching? This witness declares, "Get into the race and run it. All the effort you make, all the time you spend and all the sacrifices required will be rewarded."

### **"It Is Just Too Hard"**

There is no question that the Christian life sometimes makes difficult demands. It is hard to make the decision to *"seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness"* (Matt. 6:33). It is also hard, when one has become a Christian, to *"present your bodies a living sacrifice"* (Rom. 12:1). There are definitely hard demands placed on the follower of Christ, and this keeps many from serving the Lord. The Lord Jesus said, *"Enter ye in by the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many are they that enter in thereby. For narrow is the gate, and straitened the way, that leadeth unto life, and few are they that find it"* (Matt. 7:13-14). No, that *"straitened way"* (narrow, constricted, difficult) doesn't promise an easy life here. But is it really too hard? Let's ask another witness.

*"By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed to go out unto a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. . . By faith Abraham, being tried, offered up Isaac"* (Heb. 11:8,17). In the reading of Gen. 12 and Gen. 22, we find the depth of the faith of this man. God told him to leave his home, his country and his family and go to a strange land. That was hard, but Abraham did it. God told him to offer his son of promise, Isaac, through whom God had promised to bless the world,



as a burnt-offering sacrifice. Again Abraham demonstrated his faith by doing what God said. Have you ever been called on to meet that severe a test?

No one denies that the Christian life can sometimes be difficult. But before you say, "It is too hard," listen to this witness, Abraham. "Get into the race. There is nothing you will be called on to do that is too much, no sacrifice too great, for God will help you and reward you. You can do it, with His help, if you are willing to do it."

### **"I've A Good Position"**

The apostle correctly observes, *"Not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called"* (1 Cor. 1:26). Jesus shows that we cannot serve two masters (Matt. 6:24), and this is undoubtedly the reason many refuse to become Christians. They enjoy their station in the world, and Christianity demands first place in their lives. Some even have "good positions" that are actually founded upon ungodliness, and these would have to be given up in order to serve the Lord. So, some refuse Christ in order to keep their positions. But here is another witness.

*"By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to share ill treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; accounting the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt"* (Heb. 11:24-26). Here was a man who, as the king's grandson, could have had great wealth in a good position - maybe even could have been king! But he gave it all up to serve God. He spent his life leading an ungrateful and constantly complaining people out of Egypt and into the land of Canaan - which he would not even live to enter.

Was it worth it to Moses? Listen to the song that is sung at the throne of God, *"And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb"* (Rev. 15:3). Moses gave up far more than practically any of us can ever dream of having, but who can question whether he thought it was worth it!

When one complains today about giving up a good position, Moses answers: "It is worth it. Any fine position offered by the world cannot compare with the position which God offers to the faithful."

### **"There Are Too Many Trials"**

Some complain about trials as though, because one has become a Christian, God **owes** them an easy time here in this life. God never made a promise that we would not have trials. In fact, the opposite is true: *"All that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer*

*persecution*" (2 Tim. 3:12). The apostle Peter writes, "Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial among you, which cometh upon you to prove you, as though a strange thing happened unto you" (1 Pet. 4:12). But he later shows that "the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world" (1 Pet. 5:9). In other words, you will not escape difficult trials, whether or not you serve the Lord. Refusing to follow Christ is no guarantee of freedom from trials. But, are the trials of a Christian too much?

Another witness arises. Job's story is told in the book which bears his name. Satan wanted to tempt this man of God, and the Lord permitted it, within limits. First, Satan destroyed the wealth of Job, then he killed the children of Job. Finally, he afflicted Job with boils "from the sole of his foot to his crown" (Job 2:7). When told by his wife, "Curse God and die," Job replied, "What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" (Job 2:9-10). Not many of us have had as severe trials as Job did. Even the suffering apostles (2 Cor. 11:23ff) could hardly say that they were tried more severely than was Job.

When we try to hide behind the excuse of "too many trials," let's consider Job. Our paltry difficulties don't compare. This witness tells us, "Get in the race. Serving the Lord will bring greater reward than you can imagine. God will restore all that Satan takes away. He did for me!"

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## **DISREGARDING THE DIRECTIONS**

**Bill McFarland**

ONE OF THE MOST moving accounts in all the Gospel record is the story of the Lord's cleansing of the leper, as told in Mark 1:40-45. Mark vividly tells us how the leper came confessing his convictions that Jesus could make him clean. The Lord, moved with compassion, reached out to touch him and heal him. He then strictly charged the man to say nothing to anyone and to do the things the law of Moses required.

The story, however, does not end there. Despite the Lord's instructions, this fellow went out "and began to publish it much, and to spread abroad the matter" (Mark. 1:45).

I can understand why he might have done it. He must have been so excited over what had happened that he felt he just had to tell people. Maybe what the Lord said just had not made any impression on him.

But the fact of the matter is that the Lord's direction can't be disregarded without unfavorable consequences.' In this case the result was that Jesus' ministry was hampered. What the leper did caused such a stir that the Lord could no more enter openly into a city to teach.

Today if we are not careful, we begin to assume that certain of the Lord's directions don't make much difference. We decide to do what WE think is fitting. The thought seems to be that unless WE see some good reason for obeying the Lord, we need not do so.

What we need to remember is this: there are always reasons for what the Lord asks of His people. His ways are good and wise. When His will is ignored there are always consequences, either for ourselves or for others.

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## *Salt and Light*

### **Wayne Barrier**

Christians are described in many different ways in the Bible. These descriptions range from "peculiar people" to "saints". Each descriptive term helps the student of God's word understand the way Christians should worship, live, think, relate to each other, and deal with the world. The description of believers as recorded in Matthew 5:13-16 is especially important as Christians often find themselves as a minority in society. Jesus says:

*"You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lamp-stand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."*

These verses of Scripture are among many that indicate that Christians will often find themselves in the minority. Human reasoning and conventional wisdom tell us that we must be in the majority, and aligned with the "group having consensus" to have influence and power to effect the behavior and belief of others. Jesus teaches otherwise. These verses are especially encouraging as we struggle with the seemingly overwhelming majority who are not Christians.

First, if we are "salt with flavor," we can do just as a small quantity of salt when used to flavor and preserve food. We can change the

majority. We can keep our flavor by maintaining our faith in God. We tend to become discouraged and retreat when we realize we're in the minority position as a faithful Christian. We must realize our responsibility in this situation. If we don't, we are good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men.

Christians are not only the salt of the earth, but the light of the world. A small candle can give enough light for many to find their way in darkness. A few faithful Christians can make a lot of light in a world of darkness. Christians must let their lights shine so others can know how to live in light too. Today's world is filled with darkness—every sin imaginable. Christians are the only hope that the darkness can be penetrated. We can stop some of the merciless killing, human abuse, dishonesty, godless-ness, infidelity, and the multitude of other sins destroying the world and the quality of life today.

Our lights cannot be seen and our salt will not be spread where needed without effort. As Christians we are commanded in Matthew 28:19,20 to *"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, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."* Going and teaching requires sacrifice and effort. Christians have a great responsibility and wonderful opportunity to give light to the world and hope to the hopeless. Being a minority is not a disadvantage. Christians have God's help, always.

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## **Heads and Bodies Separated**

**Basil Overton**

CAN ANYONE RECALL EVER seeing a human head moving around not connected to a human body, or a human body moving around not connected to a human head? If all human bodies and heads were disconnected, neither the heads nor the bodies would continue to live.

The New Testament portrays Jesus as the head of His body, which is His church. There are those who think they can have Jesus without having His church, but that is not possible. If you have Jesus, you will also have His church. You will be in His church, and you will honor Him as head of the body, the church (Colossians 1:18).

Nobody can preach the true Christ who does not preach His church.

If one preaches on Christ's love, he would have to preach that Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it (Ephesians 5:25).

If one preaches Christ as Savior, he will have to preach that He is the Savior of His body, which is His church (Ephesians 5:23).

If one preaches on the blood of Christ, he will have to preach that He purchased the church with His blood (Acts 20:28).

If one preaches on Christ as king, he will have to tell that He is king over His kingdom, which is the church (Colossians 1:13,18; 3:15).

One cannot preach the true Christ without preaching His church! Even so, one cannot be in Christ and not be in His church! One cannot be in Christ until he is baptized into Christ! (See Romans 6:3,4).

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## THE COMMON SALVATION

**Clarence DeLoach, Jr.**

*"...I GAVE ALL DILIGENCE to write unto you of the common salvation" (Jude 3).*

Jude identified himself with those to whom he wrote as a recipient of the *"common salvation."*

It is our common salvation for these reasons:

**(1) It deals with a common sickness.** It delivers from sin, and *"all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God"* (Romans 3:23). Like sheep, we have all gone astray. Our relationship with God is severed (Isaiah 59:1,2). This is the common experience of all humanity.

Many false diagnoses have been given by erroneous teachers. They are physicians with no cure. One says the patient is suffering from a lack of education. Another says his environment needs to be changed—give him better living conditions. But these suggestions fail to deal with the basic need. **The root of human misery lies within the heart.** The king's robe, the pauper's rags, the soldier's uniform— all cover a heart that is evil and needs cleansing.

**(2) It presents a common remedy.** There is only one Gospel, and one Savior. All men are saved alike. There is one *"great physician."*

That common story is presented in the book of Acts — stirring, arousing, and leading people of all backgrounds to the Savior.

Only Christ can impart "abundant life" (John 10:10). Salvation is in "no other name" (Acts 4:12).

Society is sick. The world lies in darkness. But, there is light. "...*Christ in you, the hope of glory*" (Colossians 1:27).

**(3) It is brought about by a common faith.** Paul spoke of the "common faith" that produces the common salvation.

Faith, as often used in the New Testament, includes the sum of man's response to God. It is produced by "*hearing the word*" (Romans 10:17). It is demonstrated through obedience. Faith brings about the grace of God in us (Ephesians 2:8).

Christians all over the world possess a "*like precious faith*" and are partakers of the "*common salvation*."

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## "BUT WE SEE JESUS"

**Johnny Ramsey**

THE HEBREW LETTER BEGINS with the glory of Jesus Christ and closes by magnifying "*that great shepherd of the sheep*" (Heb. 13:20). In between Heb. 1:1 and 13:20, we are exhorted to "*look unto Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith*" (Heb. 12:2), who is "*higher than the heavens*" (Heb. 7:26). The epistle to the Hebrews was primarily an exhortation to faithfulness. Jewish Christians were leaving the gospel system and reverting to the former allegiance toward the law given at Mt. Sinai. The inspired writer of Hebrews argues eloquently for the better things of Christianity. The heart and core of this powerful treatise is the beauty of Jesus, the only perfect One ever to live upon the earth from Creation to Judgment Day!

One of the most definitive verses in all of the sacred text regarding the way of redemption is this: "*But we see him who hath been made a little lower than the angels, even Jesus, because of the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God he should taste of death for every man*" (Heb. 2:9). What loyalty we therefore owe to Him! How foolish to even contemplate leaving the Savior! Rather, such consideration of the Redeemer's matchless love should naturally draw us hearer to Him.

On the mount of transfiguration, after seeing Jesus talking with Moses and Elijah, Peter and James and John, "*Turned and saw only Jesus*" (Matt. 17:8). After all, Christ said, "*I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me*" (John 14:6). The apostles preached, this about Jesus, "*In none other is there salvation, neither is there any other name under*

heaven, given among men, wherein we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). It is significant that the Hebrew writer did not tell the readers to behold such faithful people as Abraham, Moses, David, Elijah or John the Baptist. Jehovah God gave Christ Jesus the name "*which is above every name*" (Phil. 2:9) and that is the one name whereby we are told to glorify God (1 Pet. 4:16; James 2:7).

In the opening stanza of the grandest life ever spent on earth, we learn that the name of the Master means "*Savior*" (Matt. 1:21). He explained His mission on earth in these simple words, "*The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost*" (Luke 19:10). Paul wrote cogently of our desperate need and heaven's gracious gift in 1 Tim. 1:15 and 2 Cor. 9:15, "*Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. ... Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift.*"

Many prophecies of the Old Testament foretold the coming of the One who had always been (Micah 5:1-3). Yes, Jesus was the very One on whom Jehovah would place our sins for Him to carry to the cross: "*All we like sheep have gone astray... and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all*" (Isa. 53:6). The last book of the Old Testament promised that one would come in the spirit and power of Elijah to "*prepare the way of the Lord*" (Mal. 3; Isa; 40). In Matt. 17:13 and Luke 1:17 we learn that John the Immerser was the man likened to Elijah. His clarion call, upon seeing Jesus, contained the marvelous words: "*Behold, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world*" (John 1:29).

Under the Old Covenant, the scapegoat in a metaphor "*carried the sins*" of the people away into the wilderness on the Day of Atonement. But the Lord actually "*gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world*" (Gal. 1:4). When we compare John 1:1, 1:14 and 17:5, we can see the pre-earthly existence of our Savior set forth. Yes, "*In the beginning, the Word was with God and the Word was God.. .the Word became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth . . . And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.*" The world truly needs to see Jesus in all of His glory!

The first century church was so ardent in its evangelistic fervor that the good news of heaven's love was sounded forth everywhere (Rom. 10:18; Col. 1:23). The success story of Christianity never loses its appeal to the loyal child of God. If we can truly say, "*But we see Jesus,*" then telling the story of the cross should be a natural

thing to do. "But having the same spirit of faith, according to that which is written, I believed, and therefore did I speak; we also believe, and therefore also we speak" (2 Cor. 4:13). Do our closest observers recognize that we "have been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13; Gal. 2:20)?

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## **What Are We Going To Proclaim, And Why?**

**Ron Bryant**

THE CHILD OF GOD longs to tell others of his Father, and of Jesus his Lord. The joy of being a child of God is very real and satisfying, and the child of God not only lives in that joy, but longs to tell others of it.

The power of the Gospel rests upon two parts: What Jesus has **done** for us in the purchase of redemption, and what Jesus has **taught** us (the life He wants us to live). What He has done is to be communicated as of "first importance" (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:1-4). And, what He requires of us rests upon and is established as valid by the power of His death, burial, and resurrection. His teachings are designed to change our lives, and to secure for us life and immortality (2 Timothy 1:7-11; Hebrews 5:8-9). It is the intrinsic truth of the Gospel that sets the Christian faith apart from every other religious system.

The child of God has a message of hope to proclaim, not just a personal perspective to share. The joy of evangelism is involved with the message of hope, the Gospel of Christ. The truth of the Gospel is what others need to hear, and is the message that the child of God must communicate. *The proclamation of the Gospel is a necessity, not an option, with the child of God.* The aim in life of God's child is the fulfillment of a Divine Command—The Great Commission.

If we are children of God, our obedience to Christ is a manifestation of our love for Him. We go with the Gospel because we love Christ. We do not tell others of Jesus for their sake, nor even our own sakes, but for His sake. We tell others of Jesus and of His will for our lives because we are under the control of His love. We are His servants and we want to honor Him. We seek to set forth faithfully what He has done and what He has taught, that He might be honored as others obey Him.



# ***YOU CAN BE AN ANDREW!***

**C. Ellis McGaughey**

UPON LEARNING OF JESUS, Andrew was not satisfied until he revealed his discovery to Simon Peter, his brother. He wanted to tell him that the Christ had come. Jesus had brought him such joy and happiness that he wanted his brother to share the good news.

His efforts were blessed. The visit paid dividends. A good and honest heart heard the message, So convincing was his story of Christ that a responsive chord was struck in Peter's heart. He offered no excuses. It was the word his soul longed for. He wanted to know Jesus. It was a great day in the lives of both of these men.

The New Testament records no sermons of Andrew. No accounts of his missionary journeys are given. We have no record of his writings. As far as history is concerned, his outstanding accomplishment was that he brought his brother to Jesus. He set an example of personal evangelism that warms the heart of all Bible students. His example should inspire us to go out in search of those whom God has placed in our reach. They may be brothers, friends, schoolmates, or business associates.

One of the greatest needs of the church today is more Andrews. There is someone waiting just for you to bring him unto Jesus. It is altogether possible that there are souls who will never be brought to Him unless they are brought by you. Have you done anything about it?

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## ***BIBLE BAPTISM***

**David Marube**

### **1. The Meaning and Mode of Baptism**

THE WORD BAPTISM GOES back to the Greek word "baptize" which means to immerse, to submerge, to bury, to dip, etc. Baptism is not sprinkling or pouring. Baptism requires much water in order to be done biblically (John 3:23).

It requires going "into" the water and "coming up out of" the water (Acts 8:38,39). It's a burial (Romans 6:3-6). Baptism pictures the

death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. One dies to his sins, is buried with his Lord by baptism, and then is resurrected from the watery grave to walk in newness of life.

## **2. Who is the Right Candidate for Baptism?**

It is those who have heard the Gospel (Romans 10:14). It is those who have believed in God, in Christ, and in His Word (Romans 10:17; Hebrews 11:6; Mark 16:15,16; John 14:7). It is those who have repented of all their sins (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; 24:47; Acts 17:30). It is those who have confessed Christ publicly as Lord (Acts 8:36,37; Romans 10:10; Matthew 10:32). Any person who is not old enough to hear, believe, repent, and confess doesn't need baptism.

## **3. Is Baptism Necessary for Salvation?**

Yes, it is. According to the Bible, one must be baptized in order to be saved (Mark 16:16). Baptism is one of the commands of the Gospel. Those who refuse to obey the Gospel will be punished (2 Thessalonians 1:8,9; 1 Peter 4:17,18).

## **4. Can Baptism be Done Twice?**

Baptism cannot be administered for the second time unless: a. It wasn't done in the right way — by immersion — the first time. b. It was done at the wrong time, when one was too young and hadn't come to the age of accountability to know what he was doing, c. It was done for the wrong purpose, other than for salvation (Mark 16:16), and for forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16).

## **5. How Many Baptisms are Authorized by God?**

Only one (Ephesians 4:5)! Satan deceives people to believe that it doesn't matter how one is baptized as long as he is honest in his heart. This is a lie! Jesus said, *"Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of Heaven; but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven"* (Matthew 7:21). To do God's will on baptism is to be baptized scripturally, by being immersed, submerged, buried, dipped in water. Any other mode of baptism is not scriptural, and so it isn't done according to the will of God, and those who practice it will have no share of eternal life.

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