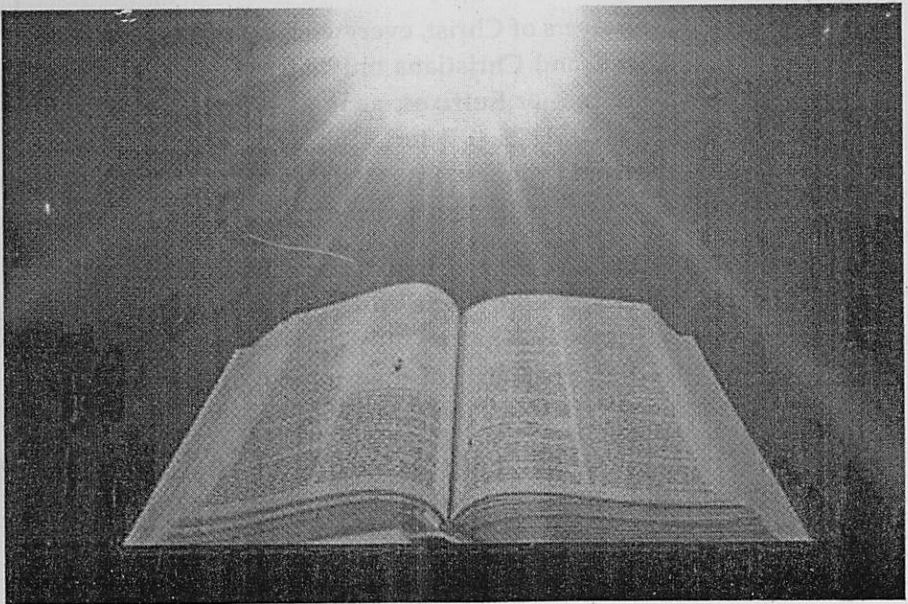


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THE BIBLE TEACHER



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?

One Is Not Saved By Faith Only

CONTRARY TO THE TEACHINGS and opinions of men that one is saved at the very moment one believes in Christ or when one prays the sinner's prayer, the Bible very clearly teaches that to be saved in Christ one must hear His gospel message and believe it, and repent of sins, confess Christ to be the Son of God and be baptized into Christ for the remission of sins. This does not mean, however, that this is all one has to do to be saved and to go to heaven, but each and every one must follow these initial steps to begin the Christian walk. When Christ was going back to heaven, He had charged His disciples to "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" and then He added, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved." (Mark 16:15-16). Christ didn't stop at "He who believes," but said "He who believes **and is** baptized will be saved." Preachers who offer salvation by "faith only" are therefore deceiving people (Romans 16:17-18). Then there are those who are insisting on having a supernatural experience to be saved or to be "born again," an idea most irrational and unbiblical. This concept, variously advocated supposes that "at some particular moment," "with emotions better felt than told," in answer to prayer, "under the emotional appeal of revivalism" or in some other bizarre circumstance the sinner suddenly, "experiences faith." And at that moment all his sins are forgiven; he is transformed spiritually, born



again and saved eternally. Some claim to have such an experience during their sleep, when they suddenly saw, as they say, the sky opened and heard someone speaking to them to assure them that they were now saved. This is totally absurd. No biblical precept or example even hints at such a thing ever. In all of the cases of conversions as mentioned in the book of Acts of the apostles no one ever came into Christ or became a Christian in the manner of such a false conception. On the other hand, no experience that any man ever had could rival that of Saul (Paul) on the Damascus road. He actually saw the Lord. But three days later, as we read, he was still a praying penitent and grieving sinner, and so he remained till he heeded the command of the Lord given to him through Ananias to "Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins." (Acts 22:16). Acts 9:18 says, "And he arose and was baptized." The fact of the matter is that one must both believe and obey to be saved. Not just believe. (James 2:24, 26).

There are many other examples found in the New Testament book of the Acts of the apostles, commonly accepted as "the book of conversions," which shows that in all cases where people were saved from sin and became Christians, all had to believe and obey the gospel. For instance, when a large gathering of people, after hearing the gospel of Christ, had asked the disciples, "What shall we do?" The answer given to them was: "Repent, and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:37-38). Again, when the Evangelist Phillip had entered the city of Samaria and preached **Christ** there, we read at Acts 8:12: "both men and women were baptized." A little later, in the same chapter of the book of Acts we read about the conversion of Eunuch. There we read, beginning with verse number 35, Phillip preached Christ to eunuch as they were traveling in his chariot, and, "Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, "See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?" Then Phillip said, "if you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Phillip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him." (Acts 8:35-38). Clearly one can see from all of these examples of conversion that there is a scriptural pattern given in the Bible to learn, when and how is one saved. When one believes in Christ he changes his mind, when one repents of sin he changes his will, and then when he is baptized, immersed in water, to be saved; for the

forgiveness of sins; to have sins washed away, he changes his relationship or his place, from being of the world now he is in Christ. During baptism one shares in the death of Christ, thereby contacting the saving blood of Christ which He shed in His death for the sinners. So does the Scripture teach: "Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." (Romans 6:3-4). By being baptized an individual is lowered into the body of water, and the water closes over his body. Just as a dead person is buried, so one is buried in baptism. Then he is raised up from the watery grave to walk in the new life of a Christian. All of this portrays, the man died to one kind of life and rose to another kind of life. He went down into the water a man of the world and rose a man in Christ, a different person, a new man (2 Corinthians 5:17). God's way is the only sure way.

THINGS THAT SAVE

J.C. Choate



One cannot put his finger on any one certain thing which saves him from his past, or alien, sins. Some attempt to do it but they only make fools of themselves when their theories are placed beside the scriptures. You see, the Bible informs us that it is a combination of things which saves. With this in mind please consider the following:

1. **Faith saves.** Paul and Silas told the jailor: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house". (Acts 16:31). Please observe that faith "only" was not mentioned.

2. **Repentance saves.** "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation. (2 Cor. 7:10). The Lord said upon one occasion that one must either repent or perish.

3. **Confession saves.** "For with the heart man believed) unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Rom. 10: 10). The Lord promised that if we will confess him before men he will confess us before his Father.

4. **Baptism saves.** The apostle Peter says: "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience

toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. 3:21). Some reject baptism, but regardless of what man says the Bible still teaches that one must be baptized to be saved.

5. **Blood saves.** "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." (1 Pet. 1:18,19).

6. **Grace saves.** "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." (Eph. 2:8, 9). Observe that we are saved by grace through faith.

7. **Mercy saves.** "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." (Tit. 3:5).

8. **Work saves.** "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." (Phil. 2:12). To obey God's commands is to work out our salvation.

9. **Love saves.** Christ says : "If ye love me, keep my commandments." (John 14:15). To love him is to obey him.

10. **Hope saves.** "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." (1 John 3:3). Had it not been for hope man would have given up long ago.

11. **Truth saves.** "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:32). The word of God is truth.

12. **Christ saves.** Paul says: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of which I am chief. (1 Tim. 1:15).

13. **God saves.** "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." (1 Tim. 2:3,4).

No, the Bible does not say that any one thing saves, but it lists a number of things which have to do with the saving of a soul. One cannot come along and accept part of the truth and be saved by it. But if a person wants to obtain the remission of his sins he must have a knowledge of the truth; he must believe the will of God; and finally, he must obey the law of God in order to be counted with the righteous.

WHAT ABOUT INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC IN CHRISTIAN WORSHIP?

Louis Rushmore

The church belongs to Christ (Matthew 16:18; Romans 16:16) and is obligated to conduct itself according to what Jesus authorized (Colossians 3:16-17). People living in the Gospel Age must heed the words of Jesus Christ rather than the words of Moses or the words of Old Testament prophets. God the Father emphasized this at the Transfiguration of Jesus Christ when He uttered, *"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!"* (Matthew 17:1-5 NKJV).

Remember that Moses (the lawgiver of the Old Testament) and Elijah (representing all the Old Testament prophets) were present at the Transfiguration. Hence, the Father essentially said, "Listen to my Son, Jesus Christ, rather than to Moses or to the prophets." Jesus Himself stressed His supremacy during His earthly ministry when He said, *"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"* (John 12:48).

Further, Jesus Christ is the Lawgiver (James 4:12) and Mediator of the New Testament (Hebrews 9:15). Little surprise, then, that He condemned alteration of divine revelation (Judaism *then*, Christianity *now*) with *"the commandments of men"* (Matthew 15:9), and that the apostle Paul also condemned false Gospels (Galatians 1:6-9) and following human will instead of God's will (Colossians 2:23). One must turn **exclusively** to the New Testament to learn what God has authorized, including the topic of worshipful music under Christianity.

The Old Testament and heaven are incorrect places to look for what God has authorized for worshipful music today.

The Old Testament has been replaced with the New Testament for people now living. It has been *"done away"* (2 Corinthians, 3:6-11), *"abolished"* (Ephesians 2:15) and taken out of the way by nailing it to the cross (Colossians 2:14). People living today have been *"delivered"* from all of the Old Testament, including the Ten Commandments (Romans 7:6-7). Further, the New Testament is a *"better covenant"* (Hebrews 8:6,7). **Therefore, the Old Testament is an incorrect place to look for what God has authorized in worship today (including worshipful music).**

What may or may not occur in heaven is irrelevant regarding the Christian Age, and often passages about heaven are misrepresented in a vain attempt to justify what God has not authorized for Christian worship. Every soul will be judged at Final Judgment respecting the law of God under which he or she lived (Revelation 20:12-15). Therefore, supposed references to instruments of music in heaven are meaningless regarding what is **authorized** in worship of God today.

First, Revelation 14:2 really discusses "voice" compared to "harps." Second, the Book of Revelation is highly figurative and comprised largely of symbols, so that the mention of "harps" in heaven does not literally refer to instruments of music (Revelation 5:8; 15:2). **What may or may not occur in eternity is irrelevant regarding Christian worship today.**

Singing is the only type of music that God has authorized for use in worship today.

Early in human history, Jubal invented "*the harp and flute*" (Genesis 4:21). King David introduced instruments of music into Jewish worship (1 Chronicles 23:5; 2 Chronicles 7:6; 29:26; Amos 6:5).

Obviously, these mechanical instruments still existed in the first century when the church was begun by Christ, and they could have been authorized by our Lord for Christian worship. However, He made no such authorization!

All worshipful music associated with the Lord's church in the New Testament is **singing without accompaniment by mechanical instruments** (Matthew 26:30; Mark 14:26; Acts 16:25; Romans 15:9; 1 Corinthians 14:15; Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 2:12; James 5:13). A sample of a first century Christian worship assembly identifies singing as the type of worshipful music that had apostolic sanction or authority (1 Corinthians 14:15).

"*Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs*" in the early church were **spoken through singing**, and *the instrument used to make melody* was the "**heart**" (Ephesians 5:19). In addition to wording praise to God, the singing of these hymns was intended to teach spiritual truths (Colossians 3:16). Mechanical instruments [and the clapping of hands] were incapable of doing this. Irrespective of the place or occasion, first century worshipful music involved only the *singing* of "psalms" (James 5:13; Hebrews 2:12).

The first century church did not use instrumental music in worship because there was no biblical authorization for it. For hundreds of

years after the establishment of the Lord's church, no congregation added mechanical music to its worship. Even famous religious leaders throughout history realized that instrumental music in worship is **not authorized** by the New Testament. There was a time when neither the Catholic Church nor denominational churches used instruments in worship.

"Luther called the organ an ensign of Baal; Calvin said that instrumental music was not more fitter to be adopted into the Christian Church than the incense and the candlestick; Knox called the organ a kist [chest] of whistles. The Church of England revived them, against a very strong protest, and the English dissenters would not touch them." (**Music, Instrumental**, *McClintock and Strong Encyclopedia*)

No one has ever been authorized to add instrumental music to Christian worship! Everyone who respects biblical authority and wants to please God will render to the Almighty the worshipful music He has authorized—singing. Not using instrumental music in worship is a legitimate matter of faith, rather than a mere preference. **The churches of Christ are obligated to practice what Jesus Christ has authorized, and He has not authorized instrumental music in Christian worship.**

"Like All The Nations About Us"

Clem Thurman

"THEN ALL THE ELDERS of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah; and they said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations. But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto Jehovah. And Jehovah said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee; for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not be king over them" (1 Sam. 8:4-7).

After the death of Joshua, God had ruled over Israel by various judges whom He raised up and guided for that purpose. Samuel was one of those judges, and he had been a great judge. Faithful to God, he had guided the nation of Israel through many hard and difficult times. Samuel had kept the worship of God pure while he was in the prime of life, but in his old age he began to let things slip.

The people had great respect for Samuel, but not for his two sons, Joel, and Abijah.

When the people saw that Samuel was about to depart this life, they came to him with the request in our text (above). They didn't want Joel and Abijah to rule over them, and were seeking a viable alternative. As they looked around to the nations about them, they could see the "advantages" of having a king. So the request. But that was not God's plan.

Samuel and His Sons

What was wrong with these sons? Samuel had the ambition that is at the heart of every father—that his sons would carry on his work. He had turned over to these two sons the work of judging Israel. This was a great responsibility, calling for pure hearts and strong courage. But these two boys didn't have those qualities. The job called for clean hands, but they didn't have them, either. *"And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted justice."* (1 Sam. 8:3)

Bribery of those in positions of power, with its consequent perversion of justice, has always received the condemnation of honest and God-fearing people. Moreover, the Lord, in the very law which gave these young men their commission as judges, expressly condemned such things. *"Keep thee far from a false matter; and the innocent and righteous slay thou not: for I will not justify the wicked. And thou shalt take no bribe: for a bribe blindeth them that have sight, and perverteth the words of the righteous"* (Ex. 23:7-8). But these young men loved money, which often leads to the downfall of otherwise good men: *"But they that are minded to be rich fall into a temptation and a snare and many foolish and hurtful lusts, such as drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil: which some reaching after have been led astray from the faith, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows"* (1 Tim. 6:9-10).

How humiliating this must have been to the old man, Samuel. It is hard for us to see that our boys can do wrong, though we can easily see it in the sons of others! His own sons, whom he had raised and trained and in whom he trusted, had prostituted the highest office in Israel, and had perverted God's appointment for their own selfishness and dishonest gain. The people were suffering the injustice of their corruption, and the elders of Israel came to Samuel with their legitimate complaint.

The Change That Was Proposed

How long this outrageous condition had gone on, we are not told. But it was long enough for the people to be thoroughly aroused. The elders were the leaders of God's people. Samuel was His appointed judge. So they came to Samuel. As they should. When they presented the charge against his sons, they made their demand. But they didn't ask for reform—they demanded a revolution! They didn't ask for a remedy for the abuse of power, they asked that the form of government be changed! They didn't ask for honest judges, they asked for a king. That was not God's plan. But they were through with God's plan, for it wasn't working! They wanted things *"like all the nations about us."*

There is something majestic about the pomp and pageantry of a king and his court, that gives the subjects of the king a feeling of satisfaction, and can even cause them to forget the high taxes and oppression. Israel had seen from afar the splendid trappings of the kings in other nations. But they knew nothing of the sordid manipulations of the court that resulted in the perversion of justice for the common people. To them the heathen nations seemed to have "solved the problem." It never seemed to have occurred to them that they were rebelling against God. So they said, *"Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations."*

They Got Their King

How Samuel must have cringed when God told him, *"They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not be king over them."* This was open rebellion against God. Their indignation had gone too far. They were right to be hurt and desire change, but they were woefully wrong in the kind of change they sought! Their attitude was not to fix the abuse, but to change the system. And their minds were firmly made up.

Samuel warned them that kings were not what they needed, but they wouldn't listen to his advice. Then God told Samuel, *"They have rejected me, that I should not be king over them. According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, in that they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee"* (1 Sam. 8:7-8). In spite of the solemn warning of Samuel, they kept to their rebellious course: *"But the people refused to hearken unto the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay: but we will have a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles"* (1 Sam. 8:19-20). So, they got their king!

An Application for Us Today

When things seem to be “going to pot” in the Lord’s church today—in the worship, in the leadership, lack of interest in attendance, etc., etc. -there is the tendency to seek the solution by becoming “*like all the nations about us.*” The singing drags, the sermons are “the same old thing,” and the Lord’s Supper is just a “going through motion rite” that has lost meaning. So we look to the denominational world for a solution to our problem, just like Israel in Samuel’s day. Surely, the singing can be better with an organ or a choir. We can pep up the sermon by preaching pabulum instead of meat, and sprinkle in some good jokes for those who are not really interested in what the Bible says. And why not celebrate the Lord’s Supper on Thursday night by candlelight? And if the men are not effective leaders, let’s make leaders of the women of the church. If these things work for the denominations, then why not give it a try?

The truth is that congregational singing is the finest worship music on earth—and it is authorized by the Lord (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). If the singing is poor, “fix the abuse,” don’t rebel against God’s plan! If some part of the worship lags, some folk are perfectly willing to borrow something from Babylon or Rome to take its place. But that is the exact same mistake which Israel made when they asked for a king, “*Like all the nations about us.*”

The next step for many congregations and their leaders is to “*make alliances*” with the (religious) nations about them. But God had warned Israel: “*Thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor with their gods.... Ye shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall break down their altars*” (Ex. 23:32; Judg. 2:2). Does He expect the same principle with regard to us today? Read it:

“Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers: for what fellowship have righteousness and iniquity? or what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what portion hath a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement . hath a temple of God with idols? for we are a temple of the living God; even as God said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, And touch no unclean thing; And I will receive you, And will be to you a Father, And ye shall be to me sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty” (2 Cor. 6:14-18).

I am afraid that we have many in the church today—even in the

eldership and the pulpit -who do not really believe what that passage plainly states. We cannot be the Lord's church if we denominationalize it by extending fellowship to denominations! *"Come ye out from among them"* the Lord demands! Some decry the fact that we "isolate" ourselves from the religious world around us, and therefore build a barrier to reaching them with the gospel. But when Paul was a prisoner in Rome, some of the Jewish leaders came to him and said: *"But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, it is known to us that everywhere it is spoken against"* (Acts 28:22).

They thought of the Lord's church as a denomination (sect). But the apostle Paul had faced this charge before: *"But this I confess unto thee, that after the Way which they call a sect, so serve I the God of our fathers"* (Acts 24:14). He never referred to the Lord's church as a sect (denomination), nor would he admit that it was one. But if others charge him with belonging to a sect (denomination), that would not change his loyalty to Christ and His word! Friend, that must be our response today!

Those among who are clamoring for change are doing exactly what Israel did in Samuel's day. They so want the approval of the religious groups around them that they cry: *"Like all the nations about us."* But we just cannot change the church which Jesus built, we cannot change the worship which He has ordained and we cannot change the pattern of leadership which the Lord has given. In short, brethren, we cannot be *"like all the nations about us"* and still be the people of God.

REAL POWER

Johnny Ramsey

LET US, LIKE THE PROPHET Daniel, *"With purpose of heart, cleave to the Lord"* (Acts 11:23), as we depart from iniquity. We surely owe to the people of our own day a courageous stand for holiness and godly demeanor: *"Denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world"* (Titus 2:12). If we could raise up a generation that put the Lord first absolutely, with approval always upon *"more excellent way"* (Phil. 1:10), we could overcome Satan, self and sin and come over to walk with the Lord. May this be our consuming passion.

Satan would like to convince us that we are worthless, to discourage us from even trying to live as Christians. He is the

originator of the inferiority complex and the pessimistic viewpoint. If the devil can convince us that we are useless, we will automatically be in his devious service. In the last paragraph of Num. 13, we learn a vital lesson concerning the power of the human mind: *"Because we were little in our own eyes, as we were in their eyes."*

We are what we think. When we have low self-esteem, we will never accomplish what we should. Earthly endeavors are futile when we approach life in a negative disposition. If we say that we cannot do something, we then have already set up enough road-blocks to guarantee failure. Edgar Guest had the classic rejoinder for that kind of thinking: "So he tackled the thing that couldn't be done—and he did it!" Determination, optimism and "a smile on his face" provided victory for the man in that poem.

Paul, the peerless apostle, often in prison for the sake of Truth, had the perfect formula for success: *"I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength"* (Phil. 4:13). All of us must realize that a longing for heaven is not enough. Many who claim a yearning for that fair land will never make it. However, a legitimate part of Christianity is a deep desire to walk the golden street of glory. One of my mother's favorite gospel songs states:

*O land of rest, for thee I sigh,
When will the moment come,
When I shall lay my armor by
And dwell in peace at home?*

Christians can even have boldness in the day of Judgment, if we fervently live and die in Jesus. Here are major reasons I want to go to heaven:

1. I am tired of this wicked world
2. I long for the divine and eternal
3. I long for the loving fellowship there
4. The alternative is not acceptable.

In assembly worship we sing a challenging hymn that reminds us that *"this world is not my home, I'm just a-passing through."* Many passages of Scripture document this principle. For example, notice this admonition: *"Beloved, I beseech you as sojourners and pilgrims, to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul"* (1 Pet. 2:11). We read of faithful Abraham, *"He looked for the city which hath the foundations, whose builder and maker is God"* (Heb. 11:10). As shamefully wicked as the world is today, we should truly long to be delivered into a far better environment.

"The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee

peace" (Num. 6:25-26). In a familiar song concerning heaven, one stanza truly thrills our hearts:

*This land of sweet rest awaits us,
Someday it will break on our view;
'Tis promised by Christ the Redeemer
To His followers faithful and true.*

Whatever comes our way, the Lord Jesus Christ will always stand by us, and the Scriptures will guide us on to higher ground. Yes, it takes fortitude and courage to live for Jesus, but it is certainly rewarding.

TOUGH QUESTIONS FOR UNBELIEVERS

Dalton Key

1. Assuming for argument's sake the validity of the "Big Bang" theory concerning the origin of the universe, and assuming also that the Big Bang occurred by natural, uncaused means in the absence of a God which you contend does not exist, **from whence came the energy and matter necessary for the Big Bang's occurrence?**
2. **How many times, and under what circumstances, has science observed and documented the phenomenon of nothing, given enough time, becoming something?**
3. If life began accidentally, without the aid of any higher intelligence, and then evolved into the many and varied forms of life now in existence, **why are we**, supposedly occupying the highest rung on the evolutionary ladder, **still unable to create life? Why are we unable to duplicate through human intelligence that which you attribute to mindless chance?**
4. **Which would seem a safer world for you, your children, and your grandchildren: a world where God's existence and presumed influence are acknowledged, or one in which God's existence is categorically denied?**
5. If God does not exist, and if we thus have no moral code issuing forth from Him, **what is your basis for determining murder to be wrong?** Many animals eat their young, kill for food, for mating rights, or for territory, and think nothing of it. They are not censured by each other or even by humans for following their "natural instinct". If we are only a marginally higher form of life than they, **upon what basis do you hold yourself—and others—to a significantly higher moral standard? On what basis are good and evil determined?**

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SUFFERINGS OF THE CHRIST

Kevin Cauley

BY NOW, NO DOUBT, you have heard of the movie, "**The Passion of the Christ**" directed by Mel Gibson. The subject of the film is, more or less, the last twelve hours of the life of Jesus. I saw the movie this past week. It accurately, vividly, and gruesomely portrays what the physical experiences of Christ must have been when He was delivered up by the Jews to the Romans for crucifixion.

I have heard in the media, and even from some professing Christians, negative reactions to the consideration of Jesus' excruciating trial and death. In this regard, one is prompted to ask, *why should we consider the sufferings of the Christ?* Is it not merely a form of self-inflicted torture, an attempt at penance through mental flagellation? We would answer a resounding, "No!"

First, we should consider the sufferings of the Christ *because Jesus was God in the flesh.*

Without the doctrine of the *deity* of Christ, the *sufferings* of Christ would be loveless. When we consider that Jesus was God Himself and took on the form of man to redeem sinful man from the clutches of Satan, we recognize the true love of God. Through sin, man became God's enemy, but through Christ, man can be God's friend once again. Jesus said, "*And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*" (John 3:14-16). Paul wrote, "*But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*" (Romans 5:8). It was on account of God's love for His creation that Jesus died on the cross. The sufferings of the Christ cause us to *consider God's love for us.*

Second, we should consider the sufferings of the Christ *because Jesus was the Son of God.*

Without the *doctrine of the sonship* of Jesus, the *sufferings* of the Christ would be unnecessary. When we consider that Jesus was the Son of God, we think that He came from the Father Himself. And when we think that the Father sent Jesus into this world, we must understand that the sufferings of Christ were necessary to

accomplish what God, the Father, wanted to accomplish for the salvation of man. We read in John 8:28,29, *"Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things. And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him."* Jesus loved His Father and so He obeyed and suffered. The sufferings cause us *to consider Jesus, the obedient Son of God.*

Third, we should consider the sufferings of the Christ *because Jesus lived a sinless life and did not deserve what He went through.*

Without the doctrine of the *purity* of Christ, the *sufferings* of Christ would be worthless. When we consider the sinlessness of Christ, we recognize that the sufferings of Christ had true value. Counterfactually, if Jesus had sinned, then He may have merited what He received. However, since He was indeed sinless, we know that those sufferings are worth far more than the most precious of substances on this earth. They were made valuable by His sinless life. Peter wrote, *"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot"* (1 Peter 1:18,19). The sinless life of Jesus makes His blood precious. The sufferings of the Christ cause us *to consider His innocence and worth.*

Fourth, we should consider the sufferings of the Christ *because it was for our sins that Jesus suffered.*

Without the doctrine of the *atonement* of Christ, the *sufferings* of Christ would be purposeless. When we consider that Jesus died for our sins, we recognize that His death was on our behalf. We are the ones who merited, on account of our sins, that suffering and death. But Jesus took our place and atoned for our sins so that we could be reconciled to God. In 2 Corinthians 5:21 we read, *"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."* We read further in Romans 5:10,11 *"For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement."* The sufferings of the Christ cause us *to consider our worthlessness, guilt, and need for redemption.*

Fifth, we should consider the sufferings of the Christ *because*

that will lead us to His resurrection.

Without the *resurrection* of the Christ, the *sufferings* of the Christ would be powerless. When we consider that Jesus, after having suffered and died, was resurrected from the tomb, we recognize that this is where God's power truly lies. This is God's power of salvation for man today, the message of the cross, the gospel (Romans 1:16). Paul writes in Philippians 3:10,11 *"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead."* We also read in 1 Corinthians 1:18 *"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God."* The sufferings of the Christ cause us *to consider the power of His gospel.*

Finally, we should consider the sufferings of the Christ *because that will motivate us to live more faithfully to God.*

Without the doctrine of the *perseverance* of the Christ through His *sufferings*, we would have no foundation upon which to place our faith. We go back to our prior question: Is seeing such a picture as "The Passion" not simply a form of self-inflicted torture, an attempt at penance through mental flagellation? Admittedly, one cannot experience such a portrayal of our Lord's sufferings without being emotionally moved to great depths. But far more is involved than simple emotions. When we consider the fact that Jesus endured the cross:

It *motivates* us to endure the pressures which come into our lives as well.

It *motivates* us to live a better life.

It *motivates* us to study God's word more.

It *motivates* us to worship God, as God wants us to worship Him.

It *motivates* us to help the poor.

Jesus endured this life and the death that is associated with this life. Through Him, we can endure, too! The writer of the book of Hebrews exhorts us to look *"...unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds."* The sufferings of Christ cause us *to consider our own faithfulness to Him.*

So we don't see "The Passion of Christ" merely to gape at a

tragic and gruesome spectacle. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:16, "Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more." For the Christian, the sufferings of Christ mean so much more than merely the physical travesties that He endured. We consider the sufferings of Christ today in light of the doctrines that were taught by Him. Jesus Himself said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you" (John 6:53). His flesh is the bread of life. That bread is His teaching. "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me" (John 6:45). Ultimately, it is the belief of Christ's doctrine in association with His sufferings that will bring one to salvation and move those who are saved toward greater service in the kingdom of Christ today.

The High Cost Of Pharaoh's Pride

Royce Frederick

MOSES TOLD PHARAOH, "Thus says the Lord God of Israel: Let My people go, that they may hold a feast to Me in the wilderness" (Exodus 5:1). This first demand was certainly reasonable. But Pharaoh was on the throne. He would not let the God of those slaves give him orders! Pharaoh arrogantly replied, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, nor will I let Israel go" (Exodus 5:1).

Through devastating plagues, the Lord broke Pharaoh's stubborn pride—but only after terrible misery and loss. Pharaoh and his people paid a very high cost before he finally acknowledged the Lord's right to rule.

When sin is on the throne of your heart, it keeps you from obeying the Lord. By your actions, if not by words, your heart says, "Who does the Lord think He is, telling me what to do? It is *my* life, and I will live it as I please." Yes, it is your life. But it is not merely your life. Your decisions and actions help or hurt many other lives. And the lives you affect the most are usually those you love the most.

The Lord does not immediately punish every sin. He delays punishment to give us time to repent (2 Peter 3:9). He would much rather bless than punish. Those plagues in Exodus 5-12 are examples to teach us the high cost of sin (1 Corinthians 10:11; Galatians 6:7,8; Romans 3:23; 6:23). A wise person learns from

the mistakes of others. There is no sense in following the example of Pharaoh.

The day of opportunity will eventually be replaced by the day of reckoning (2 Peter 3:10-13). Whether we like it or not, every knee will bow to the Lord, and every tongue will confess that He is God (Romans 14:10-12). Will you and others who followed your example pay a high price for your delay? How much better it is for you and those you love to obey the Lord now!

Biblical Teaching About Salvation

W. Douglass Harris

REDEMPTION, OR SALVATION FROM SIN, is the theme that provides continuity to all the books of the Bible. As soon as man sinned in Eden, God headed straight for Calvary. The first Gospel pronouncement in the Bible is Genesis 3:15—the promised seed of the woman would be man's Savior. This scheme is developed throughout the rest of the Bible (see Galatians 3:8).

A Salvation Based on Grace

Salvation by grace means that God gave sinful man what he needs rather than what he deserves, but it does not mean that it is salvation without any response on the part of man (Ephesians 2:8,9). God's grace gave the city of Jericho to Joshua and the Israelites (Joshua 6:2), but a certain response of obedience by the Israelites was stipulated by God (Joshua 6:3-5). Grace simply means that God did for sinful man what he could not do for himself. The greatest demonstration of God's grace was in the giving of His Son (John 3:16).

The Motive in God's Actions

God's love for mankind, who was created in His divine image, was the motive for this salvation (John 3:16; 2 Peter 3:9; Romans 5:8). But this love must be requited by obeying certain conditions that God has stipulated (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38). Obedience to these conditions does not *earn* salvation, but *appropriates the benefits* of God's grace and love.

The Means of Salvation

"Apart from the shedding of blood there is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22). Animal blood, as was offered in the Old Testament period of time, however, could not take away sins (Hebrews 10:4).

The means of salvation is the blood of Christ (Ephesians 1:7; Revelation 1:5). Holy Writ is very specific about where and how this blood is applied to the soul. Christ shed His blood in His death (John 19:34), but this does not automatically save anyone from sin. Baptism, upon the proper prerequisites, brings one into *contact* with that blood, and *brings salvation* (Romans 6:3,5). By continuing to walk in the light of God's Word, contact is *maintained* with His blood (1 John 1:7). "What can wash away my sins? Nothing but the blood of Jesus" (Robert Lowery).

The Agent in Salvation

It was through the agency of the Holy Spirit that the means of salvation was revealed and confirmed through inspired men in the first century (Hebrews 2:1-4; Mark 16:19; 1 Corinthians 2:6-13). The Holy Spirit operates now through the Spirit-revealed, inspired, and confirmed Word (Ephesians 6:17, 3:1-6). Even the miraculous gifts of the Spirit to confirm the Word were only temporary in nature (1 Corinthians 13:10). Since "perfect" in the original is neuter gender, it could not refer to a person, but to completed revelation.

The Power to Effect This Salvation

One of the clearest and most unambiguous affirmations ever made by the apostle Paul was that the Gospel is God's power to save (Romans 1:16). This Gospel, or *good news*, is the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:1-3), which is God's drawing power to salvation (John 12:32).

Location of This Salvation

When sinners become such as should be saved, by obedience of the Gospel, God adds them to His church (Acts 2:47). Christ is the Savior of the body—His church (Ephesians 5:25; Colossians 1:18). Christ established only one church, and He is Savior of *only one spiritual body—His* (Matthew 16:18).

TOTAL HEREDITARY DEPRAVITY

Ron Deaton

WE NEED TO DEFINE THE terms of the title according to Webster.

Total means "*comprising or constituting a whole: entire.*"

Hereditary means "*characteristic of or fostered by one's predecessors; inheritance.*"

Depravity means "*marked by corruption or evil; to make bad;*

corrupt; to corrupt morally; perverted."

So, "total hereditary depravity" means that man's entire being—body, soul and spirit—is evil and corrupt, and that all of us, **from the day of our birth**, inherited our depraved state from father Adam.

This is a Calvinist doctrine which Webster defines as, "a state of corruption due to original sin held in Calvinism to infect every part of man's nature and make the natural man unable to know or obey God." This doctrine is false to the core! It is not taught in the Bible. It is but an attempt by man to blame God for His problems, just as Adam tried to blame God for his sin in Genesis 3:12.

We shall look at some of the verses which the Calvinist uses to try to prove the doctrine of "total hereditary depravity". Then we will look at the Bible in order to see the truth of this matter.

Read Ephesians 2:1-4. Those who teach this false doctrine use specifically verse 3, "...*were by nature children of wrath.*" Therefore, their explanation of "*by nature*" means that *we inherited sin*. "Nature" is translated from the Greek word meaning, "figuratively, native disposition, constitution or usage." Look at Romans 2:14,15, where Paul wrote that the "*Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things of the law.*" It was by the influence of their *surroundings or environment*, coupled with their inherent *consciousness* of "right" and "wrong"—one of the characteristics given to man when he was "made in God's image"—that they did the things of the law *by nature*.

In 1 Corinthians 11:14 Paul teaches that "by nature" a man having long hair was a dishonor to him. Why? "By nature" means his environment or his surroundings taught him this fact. So, in Ephesians 2:3, "by nature" means that the Ephesians had imitated their environment, therefore, they became the "children of wrath" but *not* by inheritance.

Read Romans 5:12-14. The Calvinist states that all died in Adam, so we are all **born in sin and with sin**. Yes, we all die physically because of the sin of Adam (the consequences of his sin). 1 Corinthians 15:22, "*For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.*" The context of this verse deals with physical death and the resurrection. It was Adam who brought about physical death and it is through Christ that we are made alive. Ezekiel 18:20, "***The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son.***"

Why do all sin if sin is not inherited? 1 John 5:19, "*...the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.*" Romans 3:10, "*There is none righteous, no not one.*" Verse 12, "*There is none who does good, no, not one.*" According to those who teach Calvinism, these

verses prove that we inherit sin. The truth is that all become sinners as Adam did—**by sinning!** 1 John 3:4, *“Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness.”* Did God create Adam depraved? Genesis 1:31 says that everything was “very good”. If babies are born sinners, then babies are lost, yet, we know from the Bible that this is not so. In 2 Samuel 12:23 David’s son had died, but David stated, *“I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.”* Where did David want to go to be with his son? His son was not in hell but he was with God, therefore, David desired to be with him there. Read Matthew 18:1-4; 19:14. Ezekiel 28:15, *“You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, TILL iniquity was found in you.”*

Finally, the Calvinist will quote Job 25:4, *“how can he [man] be pure who is born of a woman?”* Therefore, they conclude, babies are not spiritually clean. First, neither God nor Job made this statement; Bildad said it, and he had been wrong in a number of the statements he made to Job. Second, Christ was born of woman (Mary). Galatians 4:4, *“But when the fulness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the law.”* Was Christ depraved? Absolutely not! He had no sin.

Those who teach “total hereditary depravity” paint themselves into a corner and cannot get out. This is false doctrine that the Devil has used to deceive man from the beginning. We must continue to fight against error such as this. None of us were **born sinners**, but we were **born into a world of sin**. We **become sinners when we commit sin**. We need to study in order to refute this doctrine of the devil.

IT’S GOOD TO BE SURE

Jimmy Jividen

THERE ARE MANY THINGS we do not know. Some things we do not know because we have never investigated—like the average life span of a kangaroo. Some things we do not know because they are beyond the scope of our limited experience on Planet Earth—like the number of galaxies in the Universe. Some things we do not know because they are beyond our limited capacity to know as created beings—the secret things belong to God. We need only to trust Him who does know. That’s faith.

God has revealed His will for man in the Scriptures. They are trustworthy, absolute, and objective. They reveal all we need to know

for "life" and "godliness": "Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue" (2 Peter 1:2,3).

We accept the Scriptures at face value. They answer all the big questions about life. We can be sure of the answers because they come from the God we trust.

One who doubts the Scriptures must be miserable. His questions remain unanswered. His doubts make him like "a wave driven by the winds and tossed" (James 1:6). Isn't it good to be sure?

Did Man Come From The Sea? Is It His Destiny To Return To The Sea?

Winford Claiborne

DURING THE CEREMONIES CELEBRATING the life of John F. Kennedy, Jr., a film was shown of his father, President Kennedy, making these observations: "We all came from the sea. We are tied to the ocean. And when we go back to the sea—whether it is to sail or to watch it—we are going back from whence we came" (President John F. Kennedy, 1962).

Many people who have not studied the theory of evolution may not know what President Kennedy was saying. Even he, himself, might not have realized the import of his statements. But *he was affirming his acceptance of Darwin's theory of evolution*: that microscopic creatures in the sea gradually began to develop into more complicated creatures until they eventually became human beings. The fact that no such development has ever been seen seems not to affect those who accept materialistic evolution. There is no fossil evidence which sustains evolution. No experiments can demonstrate one phase of evolution. It is a theory based on the wishes, hopes and imagination of those who prefer to live without God.

John F. Kennedy, Jr.'s body was cremated and then his ashes were scattered over the ocean very close to the place where he had died, as though he was being returned to the water from which he had originated. But no human being came from the sea. And the final destiny of man is not the sea. All the bodies which are in the ocean and in the earth are going to be raised for the final judgment:

"And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is

the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works" (Revelation 20:12,13).

How foolish to speak of our coming from the sea and returning to it!

Long before Darwin invented his godless theory and long before John Kennedy was born, the word of God had given man the only reliable information about his origin and destiny: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (Genesis 1:27). The Son of God completely endorsed the Genesis account of creation (Matthew 19:4). The book of Ecclesiastes tells us that man's body returns to the earth; but "the spirit shall return to God who gave it." Jesus promised His followers: "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.... That where I am there you may be also" (John 14:2,3).

Is any theory more degrading to human beings than one that teaches that we came from microscopic creatures in the sea and that our ultimate destiny is to return to our watery source? If we convince our children and young people that they are nothing more than slime from the ocean, how can we expect them to act with the dignity and responsibility of creatures made in the image of Almighty God?

SALVATION BY GRACE

Albert Gardner

IF ANYONE IS EVER SAVED, it will be by the grace of God. "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23). One will receive either the gift or wages.

That means **we can never work enough, do enough, or be good enough to deserve salvation!** If we could earn salvation, the death of Christ was unnecessary.

Many passages teach salvation by grace. "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast" (Ephesians 2:8,9).

"Through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Romans 5:2).

"For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age" (Titus 2:11,12).

"But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone" (Hebrews 2:9).

"So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified" (Acts 20:32).

Seeing we are saved by grace, some have mistakenly concluded we are saved **wholly** by grace. They mean that there is nothing the sinner can do in accepting the grace of God.

In 1829, George Wilson and James Porter were convicted of robbing the U.S. mails, and were sentenced to death by hanging. Three weeks before the time set for Wilson's execution, he was pardoned by President Jackson.

Strangely enough, Wilson refused the pardon. The case went to the Supreme Court, which handed down this decision: "A pardon is a deed, the validity of which delivery is not complete without acceptance. It may be rejected by the person to whom it is tendered, and if rejected, we have discovered no power in this court to force it upon him!"

Salvation is by grace. There is no way to earn salvation, for it is the gift of God. But **it is a pardon which must be received**. Just as Wilson refused his pardon, many today refuse salvation simply by not accepting it. The grace of God has appeared to all men, but this does not mean that all men will be saved. It means there are conditions that we must meet in accepting the pardon.

Our Lord taught clearly that some will be saved and some will be lost. *"And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life" (Matthew 25:46)*. The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to **all men**, but **not all will be saved**. Those who accept the pardon will be saved eternally.

Grace has been extended to all, yet some will be lost. We must conclude that there are conditions that must be met in accepting grace; otherwise, everybody would be saved. We can examine the examples of those saved by grace in the book of Acts, to see what they did in accepting grace. In each case they heard the Gospel and believed it. Believers in Acts 2:38 were told, *"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."*



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