

# THE BIBLE TEACHER

*Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity*

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## EDITORIAL

### *"Going To Church"*

Why do people say, "We are going to church" or "We are coming from the church"? Because most people believe and think that church is a meeting place or a meeting house. They believe, the building where they go to is the place of God, His temple, where God is. Many therefore go inside the building thinking that they have entered a holy place. Going to church, as they say, occasionally or once in a week, or on a certain religious festival means to them that they have fulfilled their religious duty. What is the church in reality? What does the Bible teach about the church? Is the church important? How important is the church? How can one become a member of the church? Is one church as good as another? Should one be a member of the church to go to heaven? Will you take a few minutes to study with me this most important, yet highly misunderstood, subject? Lets find out what does the Bible teach.

The word church, as is used in English Bible, is actually derived from the Greek word Ekklesia, which means a body, or assembly, or community, of people. Never, nowhere in the Bible the church is spoken of as a material building. We read, at Matthew 16:18 that Christ had promised to build or establish His church. Christ never built any building; and neither did His apostles anywhere. The first mention of the church of Christ as in existence is found in chapter two of the book of Acts, where we find people who had believed in Christ and had repented of their sins and were baptized for the remission of sins, were added to the

number of the apostles, which constituted the church in the beginning. (Acts 2:41). The last verse of this chapter identifies that number of saved people as the church, and says, "the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved." Thus all the saved ones are in the church. And, notice, according to the Bible, the Lord, Christ, Himself adds the saved ones to His church—the church. There is no such mention in the Bible as people joining the church of their own choice. The church which Christ built, which is His, cannot be joined. The Lord Himself adds to His church those who are saved by obeying His commands.

The Bible speaks of church as coming together for worship. (1 Corinthians 11:17, 18; Acts 20:7). At Jerusalem. "So great fear came upon all the church." (Acts 5:11). Christ taught that if your brother, fellow Christian, sins against you then go and talk to him personally, but if he doesn't hear you then take with you one or two others to talk to him; still if he doesn't hear them too, then "tell it to the church". But if he refuses even "to hear the church", let him be to you as a heathen and a tax collector." (Matthew 18:17). From all of these we learn that the church is a body of living people, who come together; with whom one can talk, who listen, speak and work. A material building is a dead thing. However beautiful, fancy, great and magnificent a building might be, it is still a building, made of bricks and mortar, it is definitely not the church.

Since Christ has built the church and since He adds to the church all those who are saved to go to heaven, then the church must be quite important. The Bible talks about the church of God or the church of Christ, which is the same thing. At Acts 20:28 we read, "the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." If Christ purchased the church with His own blood, then the church must be very, very, important, indeed! In what sense did the Lord purchase the church with His own blood? The church is made up of people for whom Christ had died on the cross and shed His blood for their redemption from sin. As people believe in Christ's propitiatory death, repent of their sins, confess Him the Son of God and are baptized in water, into Christ, into His death, (Romans 6:3); Christ forgives them their sins and adds them to His church. We read, also, that Christ is the head of the church and He is the Saviour of the body, His church. (Ephesians 1:22, 23 & 5:23). Again, Ephesians 5:25 says that Christ loved the church so much that He gave Himself for it. Is there anything else more to see to convince us about the great importance of the church?

From what we have learned through the Bible about the church, we conclude: that the church of Christ is not a material building, but it is

the body of the saved people on earth. Once one is saved, the Lord adds him or her to the church. Then there are no saved people outside of the church of Christ. Since the saved alone will go to heaven, therefore one must be a member of the church of Christ. Why I say, church of Christ? Because Christ had said, "I will build my church." (Matthew 16:18). We are saved by the blood of Christ, according to Ephesians 1:7 & Colossians 1:14. Does this mean we can be saved by any blood? Blood of animals? Blood of any human being? Does blood make any difference? Yes, it does, in the sight of God. Because God has set forth Christ, according to Romans 3:25, to be a propitiation by His blood. There are many bloods, but not all bloods are the blood of Christ. That blood was important because it came out of the body of Christ—it was His blood, the blood of Christ. Similarly, the church that Christ promised to build, His church, is important, above all others, because it originates with Him. His church is His saved people on earth; who come together to worship and exalt Him every Sunday, first day of the week; who live daily by His will, in the hope of living with Him forever in heaven. Have you been added by the Lord to His church? The Lord adds daily those who are being saved, only to His church. Remember!

## ***The Autonomy Of The Church***

**J.C. CHOATE**

The word autonomy means that a body, a state, or organization is self-governing, independent, and free of outside interference. We often hear of certain sections or groups of people in a particular country that have been declared to be autonomous regions. That means that they have been given the authority to run their own affairs.

In the religious world almost all churches have an earthly organization and look to some city where its headquarters and head are located. All of the churches or congregations of that particular organization are bound together and take direction from the headquarters. This means that if the president or head makes a law, ruling, or gives some special instruction, all of the congregations must obey. If the law is contrary to the teaching of God's word, then it means that all are submitting to error.

Of course we know that according to the teaching of God's word, this type of organization itself is unscriptural. The Bible does not teach a multiplicity of different churches and neither does it authorize earthly headquarters with some man setting himself up as the head over the organization or church.

The Bible teaches that Christ promised to build his church (Matthew 16:18, 19) and that he built only one church. (Ephesians 4:4). That church is clearly identified in the scriptures and may be reproduced anywhere in the world where people will follow the pattern or blue-prints for the church as outlined in God's book. We are told that it began in Jerusalem around A. D. 33 (Acts 2), that Christ died for it, purchasing it with His own blood. (Ephesians 5:25; Acts 20:28). We also read that Christ is the foundation of the church (1 Corinthians 3:11), that He is the head of it (Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:22, 23), that it wears His name as a church (Romans 16:16; Ephesians 3:15), and its members wear the name Christian. (1 Peter 4:16). Finally, we read that Christ is the saviour of the church (Ephesians 5:23) and that He will come back one day to receive it to Himself. (Ephesians 5:17).

The Lord's church, the church of Christ, which we read about in the scriptures also lives in the world today. As a matter of fact, it exists all over the world. It has no earthly head and therefore it does not have any earthly headquarters. It is made up of thousands and thousands of congregations and all recognize Christ as their one and only head. All are governed solely by the Lord's word, as given in the pages of the New Testament of the Bible. Each congregation is made up of two or more members and many of them have over one hundred members. Some have several thousand members. Each group that is large enough and old enough to have qualified men (1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1) are to have elders and deacons to give leadership in following the teaching of the scriptures. Each one is also to have its own preachers and teachers. If congregations don't have men qualified to serve as elders and deacons, they must rely on the male members to give leadership until they do have scripturally qualified men to serve in those offices. In other words, each congregation is to be autonomous, independent, self-governing, self-supporting, and doing its own work.

In the organization of the church, the highest office a man can hold is to be one of the elders of the local congregation. There must be two or more men qualified in order for a congregation to appoint an eldership; and those men are shepherds or leaders only over that one congregation. There is no scripture to authorize one man alone to serve as an elder over a group of the Lord's people, and even where two or

more men are serving as elders, it is not scriptural for one of them to become the reigning elder, a dictator over that group of people. Neither does the scripture allow an elder or a group of elders to rule over more than one congregation. It is contrary to the scripture, also, for a preacher to take on himself the authority and the work of the eldership.

While each congregation is to be autonomous, that does not mean that two or more congregations in an area cannot have fellowship and cooperate in the Lord's work. One group may even send money to another congregation to help with the preaching of the gospel or to do some other good work. In such cases each congregation is still autonomous and independent, making its own decisions. One congregation cannot force another congregation to send financial help or to cooperate with it in some other capacity.

The problem in the church, especially mission fields where congregations are small and are receiving financial support from foreign sources, is that often they are so independent that they want to isolate themselves from other brethren, not attending one another's meetings, or working together to spread the Lord's cause in the area. It is as though they feel that since they are not conducting the campaign, or not printing the literature, or not putting on the radio programs, or whatever the work may be, then those things are not important for the welfare of all and can therefore be ignored. Or the preacher may be on foreign support, and he may not work with other preachers in the area, keeping the congregation for which he is preaching separate from other brethren lest he lose his position. This is bad and wrong. We need to be working together, helping each other, encouraging one another, so we can go forth as the Lord's army from victory to victory over the forces of evil. That will not keep us from being autonomous, but it will give us strength to accomplish more if we are united and working together. Just as in a local congregation each member is free and independent from the others, but still they must come together, be united, and work and worship together to be able to accomplish the Lord's purposes in the city, village, or wherever they happen to be. Congregations must be willing to work together for the greater good in the same way.

Finally, with each congregation, being autonomous it means that even if one congregation become unfaithful to the Lord, unscriptural in its teaching and practices, neighboring congregations can still remain true to the Lord. If all of these groups were tied together by an earthly head, and if there was no autonomy, all could be led into error by the wrong decision or teaching. Truly, the Lord's way is the best way, the only way.

So, let us understand what it means for the church of Christ to be autonomous. When we follow the scriptures each congregation will be complete and sufficient within itself and can remain faithful to the Lord regardless of what the others do. But still as autonomous congregations we are all united, one church, the Lord's church. With Christ as our head; and, as such, we are to have fellowship with each other, to cooperate in good works, to help and encourage one another, and to work together in the Lord's vineyard to his honor and glory. Let us therefore use our autonomy to further the cause of Christ, not to isolate, weaken, and destroy one another.

## ***The Bible Speaks How Important is The Lord's Church?***

**BILL BROWN**

It is said by many, "one church is just as good as another". Or, "go to the Church of your choice". What about the Lord's choice? Did he believe that the church, for which he died, was so important to man's salvation, that he purchased it with His own blood? (Acts 20:28).

Isaiah prophesied about the "house of God" the church, was to be established, and the apostle Paul wrote about it. (Isa. 2:2-3; I Tim. 3:15). During Christ's personal ministry, he said unto his disciples, "Upon this Rock, I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys to the kingdom of heaven. . ." (Matt. 16:18-19). Since Christ chose the Church to be a part of man's salvation to the extent that he gave his life, yea, his life's blood for it, should it not be every persons choice also?

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." (Eph. 5:25). Jesus is the Savior of the church. "For the husband is head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the *saviour of the body*". (Eph. 5:23). "There is but one body. . ." (Eph. 4:4). "Christ is head of the body, the church. . ." (Col. 1:18). Therefore we are reconciled to God in the one body, the Church. "That he might reconcile both (Jew and Gentile) to God in one body". (Eph. 2:16). When a person obeys the gospel from the heart, one is added to the church. (Rom. 6:16-18; 6:3-6; Acts 2:47).

Since the "church is the "body" and Christ is the "saviour of the body" how can men be saved and not be members of the church? And again: Since Christ "purchased the church" with his own blood, how can people be saved and not be members of the blood purchased institution?

What church was the Lord's choice? Every persons choice should be the same as the Lord's, and must be if one hopes to be saved. The choice is a matter of life and death.

## **Total Control Of The Future**

**JIM FAUGHN**

It was one of those "mega-mergers." Some smaller companies pooled their assets and became a huge, multi-faceted corporate giant.

A few days ago I was listening to an interview with a couple of the men who will run this enormous and powerful company. One of the men was discussing his reasons for entering into the agreement and the advantages it would have for everybody involved in the venture. He discussed how the decisions which had already been made and the decisions he anticipated being made were those which would allow him and his partners to have "total control of the future." (Yes, those are his words.)

When I heard those words, I almost expected to hear a voice from an unseen source commenting most unfavorably on his statement. I remembered a story told by our Lord about a man who apparently thought he had "total control of the future." He heard such a voice and it was the voice of God saying "... Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" (Luke 12:20).

The statement I heard served as a "wake-up call" for me to re-read James 4:13-16: "Go to now, ye that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that. But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil."

We sometimes sing a song entitled "God Holds the Future in His Hands." We would all do well to remember that.

## ***Did Jesus Christ Die in Vain?***

**CLEM THURMAN**

"That these dead will not have died in vain." The concern thus expressed is that the death of a loved one is not wasted. Many are the lives we have lost in wars, even in our lifetimes. The revolutionary war cost much, but those dead did not die in vain, for they gave us a new nation and the freedom we still enjoy. Others have paid with their lives to accomplish, or try to accomplish, various things. Jesus Christ died on the cross of Calvary, and the question needs to be asked of that death: *"Did Christ die in vain?"*

The apostle Peter wrote, *"Knowing that ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers; but with precious bloods, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, even the blood of Christ: who was foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world, but was manifested at the end of the times for your sake. . . Seeing ye have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth. . . And this is the word of the gospel which was preached unto you"* (1 Pet. 1:18-25). His death was no accident, but was purposed of God *"according to his eternal purpose"* (Eph. 3:11). The apostle Peter wrote again, *"Christ also suffered for you. . . Who his own self bore our sins in his body upon the tree, that we, having died unto sins, might live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed"* (1 Pet. 2:21-24). Because His death was to save us from sins, if we are not saved, He *"died in vain"* so far as we are concerned. As the apostle wrote, if we fail to accept Christ, the *"Christ is dead in vain"* (Gal. 2:21). Let us, then, ask the question for ourselves: *"Did Christ die in vain?"*

### **HIS DEATH WAS A SUBSTITUTE FOR OURS**

When man sinned in Eden, God drove him out from His presence (Gen. 3). The reason is plainly stated in Isa. 59:1-2, *"Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your*



*God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear".* The principle is still true today, sin separates us from God (Eph. 2:12). The penalty for sin is also clearly stated, *"The soul that sinneth, it shall die. . . The wages of sin is death"* (Ezek. 18:20; Rom. 6:23). But we are not just talking about "other folk." We are talking about you and me: *"For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God. . . If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves"* (Rom. 3:23; 1 John. 1:8). But, if we all sin and the wages of sin is death (and that is true), then how can we be saved from death?

Hundreds of years before Jesus was born in Bethlehem, the prophet foretold His sacrifice for us: *"He was bruised for our iniquities. . . with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray. . . The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all"* (Isa. 53:5-6). He died for us, paying our penalty, so that we would not have to die for our own sins: *"That he by the grace of God should taste of death for every man"* (Heb. 2:9). We are cleansed by the blood of His cross (Col. 1:20; 1 Pet. 1:18; Heb. 9:22; 10:4), but He did not die and shed His blood so that we would continue to sin: *"And he died for all, that they that live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him who for their sakes died and rose again"* (2 Cor. 5:15). If we continue to live in sin, then, for us, *"Christ died in vain."*

## WE MUST COME TO HIM TO BE SAVED

Jesus extended an invitation for all men when He said, *"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest"* (Matt. 11:28). He came to man to offer salvation (1 Tim. 1:15), now man must come to the Lord to receive that salvation. Our first step in coming to the Lord is given by Him in Jno. 6:45, *"They shall all be taught of God. Every one that hath heard from the Father, and hath learned, cometh unto me."* His gospel is to be preached *"to every creature"* (MK. 16:15) because it is *"the power of God unto salvation"* (Rom 1:16). Jesus calls the lost to come to Him, and the mean He uses to call them is the gospel (2 Thes. 2:14).

When one is called of God, he must respond by faith (Eph. 2:8-9). Jesus said, *"Except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins"* (Jno. 8:24): No one can come to Jesus without faith (Heb. 11:6). In fact, the gospel is God's power to save *"them that believe"* (Rom. 1:16). There is no power given to save the unbeliever. But believe does not mean just accepting the truth of something, it means changing the way we live because of faith. The Lord states plainly that *"faith without works*

is dead" (Jas. 2:17), and saving faith is always obedient faith: *"By faith Abel offered unto God. . . By Faith Noah, prepared an ark. . . By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed"* (Heb. 11:4-8). When one responds to the call of God to come to Christ, it is with obedient faith.

If one is to come to Christ, it must be with the attitude, *"Speak, Lord, thy servant heareth"* (1 Sam. 3:10). As noted before, *"He died for all that they that live should not live unto themselves, but unto him"* (2 Cor. 5:15). Unless we are willing to do what He says, *"He died in vain"* so far as we are concerned. When the gospel first was preached after the death of Jesus, the people asked, *"What shall we do?"* The Lord revealed His plan by which they could come to him and receive remission of sins: *"Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto remission of your sins"* (Acts 2:37-38). That simply echoed what Jesus had taught earlier, *"Except ye repent, ye shall all in like manner perish. . . He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved"* (Lk. 13:3; Mk. 16:16). The apostle Paul wrote of the necessity of the death of Jesus (Rom. 5:8-10), then added a few verses later: *"Are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?"* (Rom. 6:3). Did Christ die in vain? Unless we come to him, in the way He teaches, then *"Christ died in vain."*

### WE MUST BE WILLING TO LIVE FOR HIM

Faith should naturally lead us to live for Jesus Christ: *"They that live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him who for their sakes died and rose again"* (2 Cor. 5:15). Because we believe that He died to save us from sin, there should be new direction to our lives: *"If any man come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me"* (Matt. 16:24). As long as we insist on our own way, *"Christ died in vain."* We must be able to say, as Paul did, *"I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me"* (Gal. 2:20). When He is on the throne of our heart, there will be a dedication of life to His purpose for us. It will then be no more, *"What do I want?"* Instead, our new motto will be as He prayed in Gethsemane, *"Father, not my will, but thine, be done"* (Lk. 22:42).

Jesus pointed out to His disciples *"the broad way"* and *"the narrow way"* (Matt. 7:13-14). And he stated that few would be saved, many would be lost. He died for all, but not all will be saved; why? Just as our souls are purified by obedience (1 Pet. 1:22), so do we *"work out our own salvation"* (Phil. 2:12) by continuing to obey. To come to Christ, receive salvation, then go back into a life of selfishness and sin is

unthinkable! We must live for Him who died for us. That is the reason for the warning, *"Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall"* (1 Cor. 10:12). Just as we are *"saved by grace"* (Eph. 2:8), so we can *"fall away from grace"* (Gal. 5:4) by turning back to the world (Heb. 6:4-6). When and if that happens, then *"Christ died in vain."*

The Lord gave an example, *"That ye should follow his steps"* (1 Pet. 2:21). He *"went about doing good"* (Acts 10:38) as He cared for the sick, the hungry, the bereaved (Mk. 1:32-34; 6:35-44; Jno. 11:33-35). The apostle Paul wrote that we are to live *"soberly, righteously, godly in this present world"* (Titus 2:12). Jesus cared for other people, so must we. He used His opportunities to do good to others, so must we (Gal. 6:10). And most of all, He cared for the lost, for saving the lost was His mission on earth: *"The Son of man came to seek and to save the lost"* (Lk. 19:10). His passion was to save souls—that is why He came to earth, that is why He lived as He did, that is why He died as He died. Christians 1900 years ago had that same passion to save the lost: *"They ceased not to preach and teach Jesus as the Christ. . . They went everywhere preaching the word. . . I believed, therefore did I speak"* (Acts 5:42; 8:4; 2 Cor. 4:13). That same love for the lost must be ours, or *"Christ died in vain."* We must be willing to speak to the lost, *"to warn him of his way"* (Ezek. 33:8-9). We should be happy to share with those who are in despair because of their sins that there is *"good news"* in Christ and His death for us. Let us not allow the death of Christ to be *"in vain"* for those who live about us in ignorance of His salvation.

There is no greater blessing we can receive than the salvation which Jesus died to give us. That sacrifice on His part demands from us the very best: the best morals, the best devotion to Him, the best direction in life. Let us resolve that *"Christ shall not have died in vain"*. With true dedication and purpose, let us give up ourselves and enthrone Him as the real Lord in our lives. His cross requires no less.

## ***The Courage of Daniel***

**JOHNNY RAMSEY**

In a passage of exquisite beauty, we can ascertain the spiritual power and practical nature of the faith of Daniel: *"Fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand and to humble thyself before God, thy words were heard and I am come for thy*

words" (Dan. 10:12). Not many men of valor come along the road of life, but Daniel was surely one of them. His penetrating insight into the value of lost souls and the fulfillment of the promises of God can be clearly seen in the final chapter of the book that bears his name. Just as Prov. 11:30 informs us that winning souls is wise, so Daniel compliments those who turn men to righteousness. Such folk will shine as the stars of heaven in the panoply of glory.

There are those who believe that the phrase in Dan. 12:2 that speaks of those *"who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake"* refers to people who are *"dead in trespasses and sins"* (Eph. 2:1) who awaken to righteousness (Rom. 6:11), rather than pertaining to bodies that are raised from the tomb at the final resurrection (Jno. 5:28-29). From Matthew we learn that when Jesus arose from the dead (Matt. 27:51), some bodies of those that slept arose and walked in the city to prove that Christ had triumphed over death and the grave! One of these days, when the last curtain falls and we stand before the Judge of all the earth (Heb. 12:23), we shall praise God for the victory we have in Christ over the grave (1 Cor. 15:54-57).

Daniel foretold the great salvation in Christ (1 Pet. 1:10-12), and we are indebted to him for the beauty and pathos of his noble work. May we, too, with purpose of heart, cleave to the Lord, enjoy the blessings of Pentecost, trust in the providence and sovereignty of God, utilize the privilege and power of prayer and exultingly join the anthem of praise which Daniel so well expressed: *"God rules in the kingdom of men. . . There is a God in heaven. . . Our God is able to deliver us."* Let us gladly and determinedly stand up for Jehovah in a world that desperately needs more valiant men like Daniel.

## ***What Makes the Church of Christ Different?***

**BILLY MOORE**

The church of Christ is different from the Protestant denominations in several points.

(1) We have no organization larger than the local church. This in itself sets us apart from most Protestant churches, who have district, state, national and international organizations. In the New Testament

there was no organization larger than the local church, with bishops, deacons, and saints (Philippians 1:1).

(2) We have no creed but Christ and His word—the New Testament. There is no manual, discipline, catechism, etc. as is found in Protestant Churches. The early disciples were taught not to add to or take from the inspired scriptures (Revelation 22:18-19), or teach any other gospel (Galatians 1:6-9). We still follow this charge and have no other creed.

(3) The name that we wear makes us different. Look at the Protestant Churches and see what they call themselves. They wear names that give honor to the men who started them, or to some particular practice. By what names were the early disciples called? They were called Christians (Acts 11:26), and were not to be ashamed to suffer as Christians (1 Peter 4:16). That is the name we use today. As a collectivity, the early disciples were called the church (group of people), "church of God" (group of people that belongs to God). There was no specific name for the local church. Today we refer to the church in the same manner. We do not wear names that give honor to men or practices.

(4) The worship we render to God is different. We eat the Lord's Supper "upon the first day of the week" (Acts 20:7), which necessarily infers a weekly observance. Most Protestant churches do not have the Lord's Supper weekly. Our music in worship is acapella, just as it was in the New Testament (Colossians 3:16, Ephesians 5:19). Most Protestant churches use instrumental music in worship.

(5) We teach the plan of salvation just as the apostles taught it; belief in Christ as the Son of God, repentance of sins, and baptism for remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 8:36, 37; Mark 16:16). Most Protestant churches teach that one is saved by faith only, before and without being baptized.

(6) The concept we have of the church makes us different, for we believe that the church consists of those souls who have been saved (Acts 2:47; Ephesians 1:22, 23). Protestant churches teach that the church consists of all Protestant churches, and that each is a part (denomination) of the body of Christ.

There are some things that make us different from Protestant churches. The differences have to do with faith in Christ Jesus. We plead for "speaking where the Bible speaks and being silent where the Bible is silent" The church of Christ of the New Testament was not a Protestant denomination. You do have a choice. You can be just a

## ***Because of Love***

**LOUIS MAHAFFEY**

In a small classroom sat a teacher and a dozen students. The teacher's name was Joyce Berry. We had no class textbooks, only our Bibles. Together we read about the crucifixion of our Lord. Mrs. Berry had to stop many times to wipe her tears. As we continued reading each student had eyes beginning to water. We classmates found it uncomfortable at the foot of the cross. No one had ever taken us there before. Years have passed, but no one can compare with my sixth grade Bible Class teacher.

The churches of Christ are now facing an "academic frenzy." Bachelor degrees, masters and doctorates are the rule of the day. Please understand, it is great that so many are pursuing greater academic learning (I am myself), but the problem is too many are in search of a little piece of paper, the degree, and not knowledge. The result is childish vanity in an individual who doesn't know his left hand from his right.

Many will never attempt to teach a Bible class, because they feel too limited in knowledge. Many preachers will never publicly defend the faith, since they don't have the appropriate degrees. The fact is most NEVER reach this so-called "golden" level of knowledge needed to teach, and thus never teach. Many preachers receive their higher degrees and then cease to perform evangelism.

It is true that to teach you need knowledge, especially knowledge of the Bible. However, you could know the Bible from cover to cover, and without love, you would be a terrible teacher. There would be too much bragging in your lessons. You would be unable to step aside and let Jesus Christ take centre stage. We need teachers with the Word in their minds, and love in their hearts. Perhaps no one will congratulate you on your mind-boggling lesson. May be someone else in the congregation will be known as the "seat of all knowledge." No, not a word will be spoken about your lessons until years later—when a young preacher will sit at his desk and remember how you took a group of children to the cross of our Lord—because of love.

# ***The Virgin Birth***

**STEPHEN WIGGINS**

By the phrase "virgin birth," I refer to the miraculous manner in which Jesus Christ came into the world as a human. The virgin Mary conceived the promised child, not by the ordinary procreative power of a human, but by the miraculous agency of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:34-35). Thus, the expression "virgin birth" is an adequate designation with reference to this profound and prominent teaching of the Bible.

The beginning chapters of Matthew and Luke are the two accounts of Christ's birth within the Bible. Luke records the angel Gabriel's appearance to Mary announcing her conception. Matthew relates how an angel presented himself to Joseph in a dream to quieten his confused anxieties concerning Mary's pregnancy. Both of these Biblical narratives relate the purpose of the approaching birth and are in complete harmony with one another.

The Old Testament had foretold the virgin birth some 700 years before its fulfillment. When rebellious Ahaz, king of Judah, refused to ask a sign of the Lord concerning his enemies, Isaiah announced that the Lord himself would give a sign to the house of David. Read it: *"Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel"* (Isaiah 7:14).

The Holy Spirit then later guided the hand of Matthew as he wrote that this Old Testament prediction was fulfilled in the virgin birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. *"Now all this is come to pass, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel; which is, being interpreted, God with us"* (Matthew 1:22-23).

As faithful Christians we accept without hesitancy the virgin birth of Christ as fact and truth. This is why: To deny or belittle this basic teaching of the Bible in any way whatsoever is to sacrifice the integrity of the Gospel authors. The virgin birth is a part of the New Testament scriptures. It is a part of God's inspired and authoritative word. Two inspired writers give crystal clear accounts of the record.

Thus, to reject the virgin birth is to repudiate and discard God's word, the Bible. The authority of God's word is involved here. One

cannot consistently accept the Bible as God's inspired word and at the same time reject its revelations to be false and spurious. Those who accept the scriptures as the authoritative word of God will in no way disclaim any of its teaching, the virgin birth included.

The deity of Christ is also involved in the virgin birth. Here's how. Be it remembered that Jesus was not just a mere man. He was not solely and only a human as you and I are only humans. Jesus was both God and man. He was God in the flesh. *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth"* (John 1:1, 14). The apostle Paul expresses the incarnation like this: *"God was manifest in the flesh"* (I Timothy 3:16). And again, *"But when the fulness of time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law"* (Galatians 4:4).

If Jesus was not virgin born by miraculous conception of the Holy Spirit as the Bible affirms, then he must have had a human father. But if he had a human father then he was not divine. Thus, his deity is excluded and Jesus is reduced to the level of an ordinary man. And no man can save himself from sin, much less anyone else. This should make it clear to the average reader that to deny the virgin birth not only is a denial and rejection of God's word as being an inspired and true account, but such veto also robs Jesus of his divinity, reduces him to the level of an ordinary man, and implies he can no longer be the Savior of the world. In essence, to deny the virgin birth is to flat out deny Christ. All should know that for one to downplay or repudiate this fundamental doctrine of the Bible is to surely make a serious, soul-damning mistake.

## *Starving To Death*

We are told that a bird can go nine days without food, a dog 20 days, a turtle 500 days, a snake 800 days, a fish 1,000 days and some insects 12,000 days. For man however, two weeks is about the limit. Sooner or later nourishment is necessary for all God's creatures.

Have you ever noticed that we are not asked to "read" the Word of God? Rather we are urged to "study" it, "meditate" upon it and "compare" spiritual things with spiritual. In other words, the Bible is too



holy and sacred to "toy with." God wants us to put in some real consecrated effort when we approach the Scriptures, for in this way we will more readily assimilate its sweet nourishment and good doctrine.

But the sad fact is that many Christians are starving to death, not because food is unavailable but simply because they will not eat of it. What home does not have a Bible or opportunity to attend the services of worship? A Bible on the shelf is of no more value than food in the refrigerator. Don't starve your soul! Feed on the Word of God and grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior.

## *Jesus—The Hope of the World*

**ELWOOD HOLT**

The land of Palestine is the land where our Savior once lived. All his life was spent in this small country. His disciples lived there. Our Lord never traveled extensively, though he was always on the move. He was out of the land perhaps only once, and, that when but a mere babe. His parents fled into Egypt with him that he might be spared the wrath of a wicked king.

It has been the desire of many gospel preachers to tour this land where so many wonderful things took place; some are fortunate enough to be able to go and walk where Jesus walked. They can see Jerusalem, the Jordan River, the Dead Sea, the Mount of Olives, and many other places that leave them feeling in their hearts that they have truly stood upon holy ground. And yet the land of the Jews today is a land of disbelief in the Christ who once walked there.

They firmly believe that the man who came nearly two thousand years ago was an imposter and a fraud. They are looking for the advent of the true Messiah. It is strange and sad that an entire nation would deny One who failed to fit the mold they had prepared for him. He had his own teachings and, because what he taught did not comport with what they wanted the Messiah to teach, they renounced him, crucified him, and even cried, "Let his blood be upon us and upon our children." Should he come again as he did the first time, what assurance do we have that people would not do with him as they did the first time?

In his first coming, he came as the result of PROPHECY. He fulfilled the words of the prophets in the most minute details. Prophets told where he would be born and when. They spake of his life, and where he should live. They talked of his miracles his teachings, his death and resurrection; his going away "into a far country that is, heaven to receive a kingdom,) and how he would come again. All of these prophecies, with the exception of the ones relating to his second coming, have been fulfilled. **AND IT WILL BE FULFILLED IN TIME.** God is not slack concerning his promises, and he has promised us that His Son will come one day on clouds of Glory, to receive his own, to reward the diligent, and to punish the disobedient.

How can anyone read, even casually, these prophecies and their fulfillments, and continue to disbelieve in the man called Christ, the SON of GOD! Prophecy and its fulfillment give us undeniable proof of the integrity of the Bible. If the man we call "Lord" is not truly God's Son, then not only is our New Testament null and void, the OLD is, too.

When the Jews of Christ's days denied Him, he lovingly referred them to their great prophets—to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and others. He said, "They spake of me." And they did. Moses said, "A Prophet shall the Lord God raise up from among thy brethren like unto me..." (Deuteronomy 18:18). In Acts 3:22, Peter, under the new dispensation, quoted these very words and applied them to the man he knew as Christ. And Peter came to know him well during his association with him. Peter, in the same passage, said that men should "hearken to him in whatsoever he shall say unto you." This is our work in this life: to persuade men and women, boys and girls, to hearken to this Savior.

He is revealed in the New Testament. He came in fulfillment of the prophecies of the Old Testament. The hope of the world, unbelieving Palestine included, is this Lord and Master. He said, "Unless you believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins, and where I am ye cannot come." But faith is a process of action. It demands obedience, and if obedience is not forthcoming then the faith is not genuine. It is our plea that the will of God be obeyed from the heart, without ADDITIONS or SUBTRACTIONS. Let us help you if we can in coming to a better understanding of God's will in your life. Remember John 8:32, in which Jesus said "**AND YE SHALL KNOW THE TRUTH, AND THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE**".

# ***A Matter Of Taste***

**CHARLES T. ABERNATHY**

The apostle Peter writes, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby; if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious! (1 Peter 2:2, 3). In describing that sincere milk of the word, Jesus said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4).

The Word of God is spiritual food. The man in Psalm one, verse 2 finds it delightful. We often teach and admonish one another with spiritual songs like, "Sweeter than All," and "Sweeter as the Years Go By." But perhaps the sweetest taste of all is found in this statement of God's gracious gift. "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57). Read that entire chapter a time or two, and answer this question: "Can you think of anything sweeter than that victory?"

The New Testament helps us understand what one taste means by describing its opposite. Note what Luke 22:61 & 62 says about bitterness, "And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out and wept bitterly." Peter knew he had disappointed the Lord, and it left a bitter taste.

Peter saw bitterness in Acts 8:21 thru 23. He told Simon, "Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter; for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." We see from that account that Simon the sorcerer was in opposition to God's gracious plan of salvation. A complete reading of that account shows that fear was a part of Simon's bitterness. And, as we know from Hebrews 10:27 the end result of willful sin without repentance is "a certain fearful looking of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." Can you think of anything more bitter than finding yourself in opposition to God on judgment day?

In conclusion, there is no better advice on matters of taste than this: "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby; if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious."

# Three Important Questions To Ask Regarding Present-Day "Tongue Speaking"

GLENN COLLEY

Many religionist today practice and teach "speaking in tongues" during their public assemblies and private devotions. In the church of Christ we do not, and this often raises questions from our friends and associates. Occasionally one of our members is made to feel less than "spiritual" because he or she has never spoken in "tongues." Questions like, "You mean you've never spoken in tongues? How sad. What kind of church do you go to?" or, "I can't imagine Christianity without miracles. I speak in tongues all the time. Don't you think that Christians who don't are quenching the Spirit?"

However, we must understand that in the final analysis, the "proof" offered for present-day tongue speaking is wholly *subjective*, and never *objective*. By "subjective" I mean the arguments defending present-day tongue speaking are based on what the speakers feel in their hearts. They "know" this is the Spirit's work, because they "feel" it is the Spirit's work. By "objective," I mean the arguments truly from proper examination of the Word of God. Since this tongue speaking is either from God, or from the fertile imagination of men, it becomes very important that we approach this with an objective attitude.

Any time we engage in a religious discussion to determine God's will, and one participant starts basing his arguments on how he "feels in his heart," the productive discussion is squelched. No one can dispute how another person feels, and feelings are not our standard! We must determine right from wrong by carefully examining God's word (II Timothy 2:15).

Consider three important questions for present-day tongue speakers:

## 1. "THROUGH WHAT MEANS DID YOU OBTAIN THIS ABILITY?"

There were two ways—ONLY two ways—by which people obtained the miraculous gift of tongue speaking in the New Testament: The baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4), and through the laying on

the Apostles' hands (Acts 8:17-20). People today who have this miraculous ability, have to get it through one of these two ways. Unfortunately, neither of these are available today.

It's easy enough to deduce that since all the apostles died long ago, no one can hope to receive the miraculous gift through their hands. Those old bones have long since been reduced to dust.

Most who practice "Tongue-speaking" today, and who are concerned with Biblical authority, claim to have this gift from the baptism of the Holy Spirit. "Baptism" simply means immersion, thus, to be directly immersed with the power from the Holy Spirit. In the New Testament there are two obvious occurrences of this baptism, and an implied occurrence (Acts 2:1-6, Acts 10:44-48, II Corinthians 11:5).

Notice please however, that today there is only ONE baptism! There is a glaring inconsistency among most tongue-speakers today because they believe in TWO baptisms: the baptism in water, *and* the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 4:4, 5 says,

"There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism. . ."

That means one of the two baptisms has ceased! Since we know that water baptism is for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38), and water baptism puts us in contact with Christ's death (Romans 6:1-5), we know that water baptism must continue. However, there is not one single mention of Holy Spirit baptism after Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:5 that there is "ONE baptism."

There was a time and purpose for miraculous gifts like tongue-speaking which sometimes required the baptism of the Holy Spirit. That time and purpose are gone.

## 2. "WHAT KIND OF TONGUE IS THAT?"

The word "tongue" or "tongues" is found fifty-five times in the English New Testament. Forty-seven of those times it comes from the Greek word "Glossa." "Glossa" simply means, "Tongue, the little member in the mouth." However, it is almost always (90%) used in it's figurative sense meaning "spoken language." In all of these cases, it refers to a spoken, intelligible, human language and never anything else.

Only twenty-five of the times the word is used does it refer to a gift of speaking a language by a miracle.

Do not be misled by the phrase, "unknown tongue" in the King James translation. I Corinthians 14:4 for example says, "He that speaketh in an *unknown tongue edifieth himself...*" The word "unknown" is in italics in each of the six times it is used beside tongue. The italics mean that it was inserted by translators to make the text more readable. It is not in the original Greek text. Occasionally it conveys a wrong idea. These were not tongues unknown to all people, but rather unknown to those who were speaking them. THAT was the miracle!

Do not underestimate the weight of this point in the discussion. Present-day tongue speakers ALWAYS speak in gibberish, NEVER in true languages which they have not studied. If the tongues in the New Testament were true languages, and they were, then what is practiced today has nothing to do with the Holy Spirit, or Jesus Christ, or the church of the New Testament.

### 3. "WHAT KIND OF EFFECT DOES THIS EXHIBITION HAVE ON UNBELIEVERS?"

I Corinthians 14:22 says, "Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not..." This gift was to impress NON-CHRISTIANS, not Christians. What reaction do you think comes from unbelievers today when they hear the gibberish pouring from the mouth of emotionally-driven charismatics? They mock! They laugh! Children through the years have "snuck in" to these services to be entertained by the crys and gibberish and gyrations of these religionists. No miracle of God would ever cause such a thing! Spiritual gifts, including the ability to speak in other languages, were designed to build faith in God and His word, not to make men mock.

Contrast these current practices with Acts 2:4-6: "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marveled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? And how hear we every man in our

own tongue, wherein we were born?..." That day about 3000 were baptized into Christ for the remission of their sins (vs. 38-41).

Garland M. Robinson, in discussing I Corinthians 14 writes "The whole context completely refutes their supposed doctrine. The problem in Corinth was their abuse of spiritual gifts, especially "speaking in tongues." For some reason they coveted this gift above all others and loved to exercise it in the assembly. Paul's writing of chapter 12-14 was to correct their misuses and explain the true purpose of such miraculous gifts. When Paul said their tongue speaking was "not unto men, but unto God," he simply was indicating that it was not understood by those present, not that it was not intended to be understood. His point is clear: that if any spoke in tongues, there must also be one to interpret what was spoken (v. 5), else, none would be able to profit from it. He said such utterances were useless. They were just spoken "into the air" (vs. 9). Even the one speaking in the "tongue" (language) does not benefit from it since no one interprets what he said (vs. 14). Tongue speaking under such circumstances would be understood by no one but God, so wherein is the benefit to men? It would defeat the whole purpose of speaking in a foreign language since its goal was to communicate the will of God for the purpose of producing faith in the unbeliever!"

In conclusion, let us always speak the truth in love. People who practice their limited form of miracles often are wholly convinced of the validity and reality of the miracles, including tongue-speaking. Because concerns of the miraculous sometimes dominates their religion, realizing that Bible miracles have ceased leaves a large hole in their faith. Be always compassionate.

## ***The Importance Of Friendliness***

**G.F. RAINES**

When the Canadian Manufacturers Association conducted a survey in many corporations to learn what happens to a customer when he quits buying from a company, they found that out of every 100 lost customers 68 quit because of the indifference of the employees of the company.

I am convinced that many persons who attend one church service never return because of indifference and lack of interest manifested by the members.

People usually come again and again only to places where they know they are wanted.

"A cold church is like cold butter: it doesn't spread very well."

"One man said he visited a certain church and found it so cold that the neighbors of the members brought their jello over to get it set."

"Many people are cold, and some are worse off than that—they are frozen. The same is true of many congregations."

It is said that after a preacher had preached an interesting sermon concerning recognition of friends in heaven someone put this note in the suggestion box: "Sir, please preach a sermon on recognition of friends on earth. I have attended your services for six months, and nobody has ever taken notice of me."

Once when Robert Burns, the national poet of Scotland, attended the services of a sophisticated church in strange city, and received no word of welcome, he wrote the following bit of poetry on the flyleaf of a hymn book:

"A cauld a wind as ever blew; A caulder kirk, and in't but few:

As cauld a minister's e'er spak;

Ye'll all be hot ere I come back."