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EDITORIAL

What Does The Bible Teach?

"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world."

The word standard means: something set up and established by authority as a rule for the measure of quantity, weight, extent, value or quality. Worldwide we have a set standard by which we can know the exact quantity, weight, extent, value or quality of something. Two plus two is four everywhere. In the world what a chaos it would be if there were no standard. I can take a yard stick or a measuring tape anywhere on earth and it will tell me the same thing whenever I use it at any place, provided it has not been tampered.

Christ, after His death, burial and resurrection, and just before His Ascension into heaven, made this statement before His apostles: "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth." (Matthew 28:18). Therefore, we must accept the fact that Christ has all the authority in religious matters. Whatever, we should know or want to know regarding religious or spiritual matters, we must always check with Christ or go to His New Testament book of the Bible to know whether He has authorised a certain thing, or what has He taught about it? This is the only sure way we can make a test. The Scripture cited above is from

1 John 4:1, and this is exactly what it means. Spirits or prophets are preachers who are everywhere in the world. They may be preaching or teaching individually or publicly in meetings, through the means of radio or television or literature. But as it was in the days of John, the apostle, the same is true also today. There were false teachers then, and there are false teachers today. In fact, it has been true from the beginning. We remember, how God had told Adam and Eve, in the beginning, that in the day they would eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil they would surely die. But not long after, the preacher devil came to Eve and preached to her, saying, "you will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." (Genesis 2:17; 3:4 & 5). And we know the rest of the story. Eve and Adam both believed the false prophet, without checking with God, (God spoke to them personally during that time, as He does with us through His written word today), and they did what the false preacher had told them to do, thus rejecting the will of God! Is not the same true also today?

There are preachers who have been setting different dates for the second coming of Christ, and many people believe them. Yet, Christ Himself taught, at Mark 13:32, "But of that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." Hear Him again, "But of that day and hour no one knows, no, not even the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be . . . Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming." (Matthew 24:36-39 & 42). Also, there are preachers today who are telling people that Christ is going to come on this earth and will live on this earth reigning for one thousand years! And, gullible people believe them, without checking with the written revelation of God. Listen to the Holy Spirit inspired Peter, he said, "But the heavens and the earth WHICH NOW EXIST are kept in store by the same word, reserved for fire UNTIL THE DAY OF JUDGMENT? and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, do not forget this one

thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is long suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; **BOTH THE EARTH AND THE WORKS THAT ARE IN IT WILL BE BURNED UP.**" (2 Peter 3:7-10). According to 1 Thessalonians 4:16 & 17, at the second coming of Christ, the Lord will appear in the clouds up in the air, where His living and resurrected, immortally changed into glorious bodies saints, (1 Corinthians 15:52,53), will meet Him. He is definitely not going to come on this earth again, which now exists, reserved for fire until the day of judgment. When the Lord Jesus Christ will come the second time that will be the day of judgment, according to 2 Thessalonians 1:3-10. On the day of judgment, both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. When the earth and everything on it is going to be burned up, at the coming of the Lord, then certainly He is not going to come to live and reign on a burned up earth! And, why should He come to reign on earth for 1000 years? Is He not reigning now? Is He not the King of kings and the Lord of lords now? Does He not have all authority on earth and in heaven? In fact the Bible teaches that He is reigning now, and He must continue to reign till He has put all enemies under His feet, the last enemy is death, which after the resurrection of the dead, at His coming, will be no more in existence. At that point He will deliver the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power; and Himself too will also be subject to the Father, who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all. (1 Corinthians 15:23-28).

Then, there are preachers today who are teaching that one is saved in Christ, without being member of the church; in essence, they are teaching that the church is not important, that one can be saved outside of the church; Christ is the one who matters, not the church, they say. But, look, what the Bible says! "I will build My church," said Christ, at Matthew 16:18. And Acts 2:47 teaches, The Lord adds to the church daily those who are being saved! According to Acts 20:28, He has purchased the church with His own blood! The church, according to Ephesians

1:22, 23, is His body; and He is the Saviour of the body, says Ephesians 5:23. Now, dear reader, ponder! See what the Bible teaches. Christ is the Saviour of the body, and the body is the church! Who is He going to save then? The church, of course. Where are the saved ones? In the church! What did Christ purchase with His blood? The Church! Why did He shed His blood? For the remission of sins. Test the spirits! The Bible is the testing standard. The Bible teaches that the church to the Lord Christ is so much important that He shed His blood and purchased His church with His blood; He adds all the saved ones to His church; which is His body, and finally, He will save the body. So don't believe every spirit, who says the church is not important enough to be in it to be saved.

Likewise, do not believe every preacher who says, one can be saved from sin by faith alone and there is no need to be baptized to be saved. Because the Bible teaches very emphatically that just as believing in Christ is necessary to be saved, so is baptism. Christ, the Saviour, Himself said, at Mark 16:16 that one who believes and is baptized will be saved. Then, Acts 2:38 teaches that everyone must repent and must be baptized for the forgiveness of sins. Led by the Holy Spirit of God, the preacher Paul said, "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." (Galatians 3:27). By putting on Christ, they got into Christ, "in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins." (Colossians 1:14). But how did they put on Christ? By being baptized into Christ. Again, we read at Romans 6:3-4: "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." Walking in newness of life, or in the new life, comes after baptism! One must be baptized for the remission of sins or to be saved. This is what the Bible teaches. Is baptism necessary for salvation? Not according to the false teacher, but, certainly yes, according to the Bible.

"Beloved," remember, "do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world."

Have You Read Your Bible Lately ?

J.C. CHOATE

The Bible is God's inspired word; it is the truth; it will never pass away. (2 Timothy 3:16, 17; John 8:32; Matthew 24:35). In other words, God has spoken (Hebrews 1:1, 2), revealing his will to man (Matthew 7:21), and we are to be doers of that word. (James 1:22). It is called the perfect law of Liberty (James 1:25), containing the commands of God (Revelation 22:14), and gives to us all things that pertain to life and godliness. (2 Peter 1:3). It gives light (Psalm 119:105), purifies our souls in obeying the truth (1 Peter 1:22), and will finally judge us. (John 12:48). There is no end to all of the other things that could be said about the Lord's word, his will, and his teaching. But be assured that God has spoken the truth, he never lies, nor will he ever mislead us, or deceive us. His word has always been the same, even from the beginning, and will ever remain so. We are even warned not to add to it or subtract from it lest we suffer dire consequences. (Revelation 22:18, 19).

It is sad, but true, that there have always been those who were unwilling to accept God's word as it was. Actually, this has always been true of the vast majority. The results of this has been all of those who taught other gospels, established the many denominational churches, worshipped in numerous ways, and taught a multiplicity of things contrary to God's word. It is wishful thinking to conclude that the Lord will eventually overlook all of this and out of grace and mercy save all of the people who have supported these false teachings.

Even in the church there are those who attempt to reason away clear and simple teaching when it comes to their pet sins, bad habits, false teaching on marriage, divorce, and remarriage, the kind of music God wants in worship, and women leadership in the church. Isn't this sad? Do we think that God has changed his word to suit our own personal situations? Do we think for a minute we can go on and do as we please but still be acceptable to God? If so, we are going to be in for a shock one day. It is true that we can go on and believe what we want to believe, do what

we want to do, and teach what we want to teach, but that does not make it right. Woe be to those who will have to face the Lord one day after having put their way before God's will.

Where does the Bible say that we can fellowship other churches? those who worship differently? those who are in error? You might counter by asking who can say who is right and wrong? We are not the final judge, that is true, but when we know what the Bible teaches about salvation, the church, worship, and so on (Mark 16:16; Matthew 16:18; John 4:24), and we know that these people have not complied with God's word, then we cannot have fellowship with them. Why? Because they are not Christians, they are not members of the Lord's church, and they are not worshipping as the Bible teaches. It is the Bible, God's word, that has the final say on these matters and all matters.

Where does the Bible say that we can have mechanical music in worship? Have you read any such thing in your Bible? If the Lord has not authorized it then we cannot do it. We must abide by the will of the Lord, and the will of the Lord is that we praise him with the fruit of our lips, that we sing praises to God, that we make the melody in our hearts. (Hebrews 13:15; Ephesians 5:19). Never mind that others are doing it, that we like it, or a hundred other things. If God's word does not authorize it then we cannot use it. That's final.

Where does the Bible say that women can preach, that they can lead singing, lead prayers, and wait on the Lord's Table when the church is assembled? But you might argue that to deny women of doing these things is to advocate a male dominated church. Not so. We do not have the authority to say one way or the other. It is the Lord that has decided these matters and his word conveys that message. Why can't we be happy with what the Lord has given us to do? Why do we always want to step over the line and do the very thing the Lord has forbidden? Surely he had a reason for making a distinction between men and women's responsibilities. How dare we question the Lord's decision on these matters. If each of us will do what he has given us to do then we will have more than enough to do.

Regardless of what we are doing or not doing, where does the Bible teach that? In other words, the Lord has all power and authority in heaven and earth. (Matthew 28:18). It is up to him to say what we are to do or not to do, and he has set that forth

clearly in his word. If we will respect God's word, and abide by his teaching then we will not have any problem in going beyond his will. We'll be simply what he wants us to be without being liberal, fanatical, or whatever. What's wrong with that?

Have you read your Bible lately? Does it read any different to what it did when you first began to read it? Has its teachings changed from what they once taught? Does God save differently today than he did in the years past? Does he have more churches than he had during the days of the Apostles? Does he allow one to worship today in ways that he rejected a few years ago?

Perhaps one of the big problems is that we haven't been reading the Bible lately, or even for a number of years. We have therefore gotten away from God's word and what it teaches. We don't even know any longer what it teaches. We have therefore ended up listening to men instead of listening to God. We have decided to do what we want to do and then expect God to accept that. But be not deceived. That will not work. God is still God and his word is final. We are the ones who must comply with God's will, not that God must accept our way of doing things.

If we want to be saved in this world and in the world to come then we must go back to God's word and read and study it, and continue to do so until we understand what the Lord has said, and we are willing to do what he says. God's word is simple enough so that we can read it, understand it, believe it, and obey it, and be what the Lord wants us to be. Then when we do that, and others do that, we will all believe the same thing and obey the same teaching, be saved the same way, added to the same church, worship the same way, live the same Christian life, and finally go to heaven together. There is nothing hard about that. It is so simple and easy to do. That is God's way, and as it is written in his word.

Look at what was preached in the days of the Apostles, how they were saved, the church they were members of, the way they worshipped, the kind of life they lived, etc. If we have the same word, believe it, and obey it, then will that not make us the same as they were? Certainly so. We still have one Lord and saviour, and he still saves the same way, still adds those that he saves to his church, and likewise with all of his teaching. When we do things the Lord's way, according to his word, then there is no other way. Read your Bible and see for yourself.

What Does It Mean: She Shall Be Saved Through Childbearing?

BETTY BURTON CHOATE

"Nevertheless she shall be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control" (1 Timothy 2:15).

When we look at the context of the above-quoted verse, we are taken back to the transgression of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, as recorded in the third chapter of Genesis. When God pronounced the curse on Eve for what she had done, He said that her sorrow and her conception would be multiplied, and that she would bear children in pain. But He also said that He would put enmity between the woman and the serpent, between the serpent's seed and the woman's Seed: "*He shall bruise your (the serpent's) head, and you shall bruise His (the woman's Seed) heel*" (Genesis 3:15). This is counted as the first prophetic statement of the coming of the Savior, Who would be born of woman. Thus, through woman, who had brought sin and death into the world by her disobedience, would also come the remedy for sin when Jesus Christ would one day be born of the virgin Mary. In this way, the bearing of children would become the means of salvation for the obedient of mankind.

But, in addition, there are two other senses in which women shall be saved through childbearing, if they continue in faithfulness to God.

- While God gave to Adam, and thus to the male creation, the work of providing for the physical needs of the family, He gave to woman the responsibility of caring for the home and the children. In 1 Timothy 5:14, women were instructed to "*marry, bear children, manage the house . . .*" In Titus 2:4,5, older Christian were told to teach "*the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste,*

homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands . . ."

It is in carrying out, in faithfulness, this God-given work that women can be approved of God. *Obedience* to His commands to care for the home and the children is *not a matter of choice*; it is a part of the plan of redemption for woman. Thus, the woman shall be saved through childbearing, if she continues in faithfulness . . .

- Another sense in which a woman shall be saved through childbearing is that she will experience many occasions of distraction and hindrance in her individual spiritual growth during the years of caring for infants. A woman who takes her small children with her to worship is continually mindful of their needs, of their cries, their wriggling, their noises, their hunger. She cannot worship without interruption. She may go through several years of faithfully assembling with the Saints for worship and yet hardly being able to enter into a frame of mind to worship because of her children.

God knew what the helplessness and the needs of infants and small children would be. He especially equipped women to deal with those needs, giving gentleness, patience, a tender heart, a perceptive spirit, and tenacious love in full measure to his creation of woman. This is the *nature* of woman, to a degree not typical of the nature of a man. And as a mother does her "mothering" from day to day, she should grow in her God-given abilities, becoming ever more loving and patient and wise in dealing with her children. Thus her own life is enriched and made more godly through developing in the work God has given her to do.

But she must be *faithful* throughout those trying times. In spite of finding few opportunities to worship without distraction, in spite of the shortage of time to study and to satisfy her own spiritual hunger for God's word, in spite of the fact that most of her emphasis during those years will be the sharing of spiritual thought and concepts on the level of a two-year-old or may be a five-year-old, she must be diligent in holding onto her own personal relationship with God. As she faces the challenges of motherhood, she must learn a deeper faith in God, a greater

dependence on His care, a more consuming love for Him, a greater degree of holiness, and certainly there will be ample opportunity to practice the discipline of self-control!

Why must she practice these attributes? Because she cannot pass on to her children a living faith in God unless her own relationship with Him has become—in spite of all the challenges—the most important part of her life. But as she struggles with her own growth, while providing spiritual guidance for her children, she will mature into the kind of strong spiritual person who can then weather all the challenges of life, in faith and dedication to God.

“Nevertheless, she will be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith, in love, and holiness, with self-control.”

God Is!

GARY C. HAMPTON

“No one has seen God at any time” (John 1:18). Neither has anyone tasted, touched or smelled him. Some in the Old Testament heard him, but none of us has. We cannot isolate God in a test tube or examine him under a microscope. We must use some other means to show God is.

The greatest evidence of God's existence is found in his creation. “The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork” (Psalm 19:1). Creation exhibits a design that must be the work of a designer. Most have no trouble understanding that any house, or other structure, had a designer, or architect, who drew up a plan for its construction. In the same way, the world around us displays a design that denies an origin of mere chance. Bert Thompson and Wayne Jackson, in their book *A Study Course in Christian Evidences*, on page 25, wrote:

Did you realize, for example, that the human body is composed of multiplied trillions of cells? In the nucleus [sic] of each cell, hundreds of thousands of genes are present. Each gene consists of a complex chemical called

deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA). DNA has a complicated code for the mapping out of the entire development of the individual. If the coded instructions of a single human cell were put into English, "they would fill a 1,000 volume encyclopedia" (R. Platt, *Reader's Digest*, October, 1962, p. 148).

One writer observed, "For every house is build by someone, but He who built all things is God" (Hebrews 3:4). The form and function of all the things God created teaches us there is a God (Job 12:7-10).

The cosmological argument seems to go hand in hand with the argument from design. This argument says the cosmos, including the world in which we live, obviously exists. It goes further to say that nothing comes from nothing. Therefore, there is a prime cause behind the cosmos, or God. The second law of thermodynamics, also known as entropy, says there is an ongoing flow from heat to cold, or what we might describe as a winding down process. Such an obvious process lets us know the universe is not eternal. Something had to be behind its existence.

Man's moral nature tells us there must be a Moral Governor. People the world over condemned Adolph Hitler's attempt to destroy the Jews. Why? Because man's innate "sense of right" told them it was wrong. The animals do not display such a sense. Anyone who has ever seen a documentary on any of a number of animals has likely been impressed with their total lack of conscience. They can kill and eat another innocent creature without any pangs of conscience. For that reason, we do not bring an ox who gores a man up on charges of murder. Instead, we place ox inside a fence and post warnings of the danger. In contrast, a man who kills is considered a criminal and will be tried for murder because he ought to know better. Thompson and Jackson ask, "If one does not acknowledge an eternal Mind with which intrinsic goodness is coexistent, how is 'morality' to be explained?" (p. 28).

Even in our age of skepticism and doubt, man seems to seek something to worship. Thus, we have what has been termed the new age movement. Individuals pursuing this concept believe in "karma" and "soul mates." Ancient Indians worshipped

the "Great Spirit." The men of Athens erected altars to all types of gods, including one inscribed, "To the Unknown God" (Acts 17:22-23). Augustine believed this universal desire of man to worship, which he called "intuition," was clear evidence there is a God. Batsell Barrett Baxter, in his book *"I Believe Because . . ."*, explained this argument for God's existence by describing a first time visitor to Washington, D.C. seeing the 550' Washington Monument. He said when they stood before the monument, they would instinctively look up all the way to its top. The same type of instinct causes man to look up to heaven for the Almighty God.

Baxter also explained Anselm's ontological argument, by first telling his readers that ontology is the branch of philosophy devoted to the nature or existence of God. "Anselm began with a definition, 'God is that than which nothing greater can be conceived!' Then he argued that man is able to conceive in his mind of the idea that than which there is no greater." He then went on to say he could think of something even greater than "that than which nothing greater can be conceived." What was it? The existence of that being greater than anything which man could conceive. Baxter went on to point to Psalm 14:1, which says, "The fool has said in his heart, There is no God." Then, Baxter wrote, "In order for the fool to say 'God,' he had to have a concept of God in his mind. To start out to deny God is a kind of implication that God exists."

"Thou Shalt Have No Other Gods Before Me"

W.A. HOLLEY

We sincerely suggest that Exodus 20:1-17 be read. These verses condemn idolatry in all its forms. For some reason, man has always resisted God's will. (Romans 1:18-32). These verses describe the condition of the Gentile nations without God. Read them and weep!

God commanded the Israelites, when they entered Canaan,

to stamp out all traces of idolatry: "Then ye shall drive out all the inhabitants of the lands from before you, and destroy all their pictures" ("Their figured stones"—Albright), "and destroy all their molten images, and quite pluck down their high places" (Numbers 33:52).

Although such was God's command, it was not many years until Israel was engaged in idol worship. One has but to read the Old Testament to learn these facts. Many kings were instrumental in leading Israel to worship idols.

For example, many Hebrews worshiped "other gods:" Ashera, the goddess of the high places; Baal, the goddess of fertility; and Molock, the goddess of sacrifice, where children were burned. There were many others.

The Greeks also had their gods: Bachus, the god of wine; Apollo, the god of sunlight, music and poetry; and Venus, the goddess of natural productivity, and latter, the goddess of love and beauty. Many other gods could be mentioned, but these will suffice.

We raise a question: Are we as far removed from idols as we might think? We think not. We should remember that idols are very corrupting, because one tends to become like the object which he worships.

What are some of the gods of our modern age? Well, there is the god of technology. Countless thousands seem to think that the modern computer, and modern science, can solve all our modern problems. But such can never be the case. Why? Because man has a spirit and a conscience, and thus he has a sin problem. No computer can solve this problem. The gospel is God's power to solve this problem (Romans 1:16; Mark 16:15-16). If one gains the world and loses his soul, he has lost everything (Matthew 16:26).

The god of materialism is everywhere apparent. Thousands upon thousand worship their material possessions: Cars, houses, money, stocks and bonds, and expensive clothing and jewelry, and the like. "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24). "Mammon" is a word which refers to material riches. A man's life does not consist in the abundance of wealth he may possess (Luke 12:13-21). Money is valuable, but cannot

purchase everything (Ecclesiastes 8:8; I Timothy 6:6-18). Hence, "the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil."

The god of self is another idol worshiped by many. Do not fall in love with self. It is good to think well of yourself, but do not carry it to an extreme (Romans 12:1-3). Man needs to know that he is totally helpless without God. Jesus Christ, the Lord's church, and the Bible (John 15:1-7). A Greek fable tells of Narcissus, who fell in love with his image as reflects in a fountain. For shame! No man is truly free, until he recognizes his dependence upon his Maker (John 8:32; Romans 1:18 ff).

Not only so, but there is a sex-cult in our nation today. In fact, sex has become "big business" to millions of people. In magazines, on TV, in the newspapers, on billboards, sex is paraded and extolled at terrific price to the general public. To some there is nothing but sex! The god of sex is being worshiped each day. Special lifestyles promote sex, whether it is contrary to Biblical teaching or not (Genesis 2:24-26; Matthew 19:3-9). Efforts are being made to expose as much of the human body as possible. In fact, we are not very far from rank, stark nudity!! (I Timothy 2:9-15). Both male and female bodies are being used to sell beer, wine, automobiles, houses and land. We have lost all sense of shame; Homosexual and lesbian relationships are being accepted as "normal" relationships today; but God's word strongly condemns all such (Genesis 19:5; Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Deuteronomy 23:17; Romans 1:26-27; I Corinthians 6:9-11).

The god of sports is another idol worshiped by the millions. Some church members do not mind missing the Lord's assembly, often traveling hundreds of miles and spending hundreds of rupees, to attend sports events. Is there no priority? Does the Lord say nothing about putting his kingdom first? (Matthew 6:33). My brethren, these things ought not so to be!! Heaven is far more important than any sports event!! Do not lead others astray (I Corinthians 10:31-33).

Others worship the god of power. Their aim is to control men at almost any cost. Some will lie, steal, and misrepresent truth, using any deceptive method to gain power over others. This is one reason we have so much fraud in our elections. The object is to win—no matter what the cost, even if one has to crucify others in the process! In the New Testament Diotrefes

was such a man (III John 9:11). Read this passage and see.

The Devil is another idol whom many worship. Jesus rejected Satan's overtures, refusing to worship him. Satan showed Jesus "all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them." Satan urged Jesus to fall down and worship him; but Jesus refused, saying. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Matthew 4:1-11). Satan has his own churches (Revelation 2:9; 3:9), his own doctrines (I Timothy 4:1-3), and his own ministers (preachers) II Corinthians 11: 13-15).

Who/What Is A "Christian"

YARBROUGH LEIGH

Many and varied are the answers which men give to this question. Even among learned men, and leaders in the various religious communions, it would be impossible to find a unanimous view as to the correct answer. All of this points up the unique, irreplaceable function of the Holy Scriptures; namely: to give an authoritative, infallible answer to matters pertaining to the faith of Jesus Christ. The Bible is the only source of a correct answer to the question: "Who/What Is A Christian." Let us look at just a few examples in the New Testament which will help in finding the answer.

A Christian Is A "Disciple"

In giving the "Great Commission," Jesus said to his disciples, "Go ye therefore and teach (KJV) or "make disciples of" (ASV) "all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost (Matthew 28:19). From this, we know that a Christian is one who has been led by the gospel message to become a follower, or a disciple of the Lord; and, in consequence of this conviction, has committed himself to that discipleship in being baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit in obedience to our Lord's instruction.

We read in Acts 11:26 that "the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch." These passages are sufficient to demonstrate that the terms "Christian" and "disciple" are synonymous. One who is not a "disciple" of Christ cannot be a "Christian" in that non-disciple state.

What, If Any, Are The Terms Of Discipleship?

We find some light on this question in John 8:31-32, 34-36, as follows: "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then ye are my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free . . . Verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house forever; but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." From this we learn that a "true," or a "genuine," or one who is "indeed," (i.e.: "who is in fact") a disciple, is one who not only hears and begins to follow Jesus, but one who "continues in his word." And, it is this kind of discipleship that leads the Lord to "set us free from bondage to sin." Only the Son can set us free from sin; and he frees from sin those who are his "disciples indeed"—those who keep on following him. This sheds light on the question: "Who/What. Is A Christian."

Although Jesus was speaking within the framework of the especially dangerous times of his highly controversial personal ministry; nonetheless, his words recorded by Luke in his account of the Gospel give further light on the answer to our question: "And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple . . . So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:27, 33). Read the context in which these two verses are found (Luke 14:25-33) to get a more full view of what it means to "bear one's cross and follow Jesus!" You will see that the cost of 'discipleship' can be very high, indeed; even to forsaking the approval and companionship of closest and dearest among family and friends!

Many additional passages could be cited pertaining to "discipleship," but these will suffice to show that a "disciple" is one who obeys and follows the leadership and example of Jesus, no matter what it costs in material things, and even in the

bonds that we have cherished which tie us to family and loved ones.

A Christian Is One Who Has Been Cleansed By The Blood Of Christ

Speaking of the 'cup' in the Lord's Supper, Jesus said, "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:28). Again, Paul wrote, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace" (Ephesians 1:7); and many other passages, as well. Also, after becoming Christians, it is this blood of Christ which keeps us clean; as we note: "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (I John 1:7). Therefore, a "Christian" is one who has been cleansed, and keeps on being cleansed, by the blood of Jesus shed on the cross for our redemption—the purchase price for our souls (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 1:14; I Corinthians 6:20).

But, what is necessary on our part to receive that cleansing? This very question was raised on Pentecost by men who had been convinced of their error in calling for the crucifixion of Jesus (Acts 2:37), as they asked of Peter and the other apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" To these men, who had already become convinced that "God hath made that same Jesus," whom they in a sense had crucified, "both Lord and Christ;" the apostles answered: "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 Spirit" (Acts 2:38). And, in response, Peter was answering precisely according to the instruction he had received pertaining to the "remission of sins." Luke recorded our Lord's instruction on that point, in these words: "Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:46-47). On that Pentecost, in Jerusalem, the Spirit came upon the apostles in keeping with the Lord's promise. Peter preached from the prophets that it had been written that Christ "must suffer, and be raised the third day" (Acts 2:14-36). When men believed his

The scriptures teach that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Since "the wages of sin is death" spoken of as reference to eternal separation from God, in

Man Sinned

The most important question in the world is the question, "What must I do to be saved?" How one answer this question will determine whether he spends eternity in heaven, or in hell. Our Lord Jesus Christ very clearly, plainly and simply answered this crucial question for us in the final commission given to his disciples before his Ascension back to heaven. Let us turn our attention to the three passages where the Great Commission of our Lord is located so that we may learn from him what we must do to have eternal life.

A Vital Question

ROD RUTHERFORD

Salvation And The Great Commission

A Christian is one who has received with unquestioning faith the good news of redemption provided by divine grace by the sacrificial death of Christ and his resurrection the third day, has confessed that faith, and has committed himself to Christ in obeying his command of baptism in his name for the remission of sins; one who has become a "disciple indeed," continuing in his word; and, denying self, has taken up his cross and is following Jesus, having repented of all rebellion against God.

Summarizing

message, and wanted to know what they must do, he answered, still using the language of the Lord: "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 Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

hell, the eternal fire (Matthew 25:41, 46), the "second death" (Revelation 21:8), then all who have sinned, ought by the demands of justice to be confined eternally to hell.

God's Grace

God, however, loves man in spite of man's rebellion (sin). He desires to save man from the punishment he deserves. Therefore, God devised the plan of salvation through which he could still be just, but at the same time, show mercy. "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 3:16). God initiated his plan solely on his own grace and goodness, not because man deserved it. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (I John 4:10). Romans 5:6-8 also expresses the same thought, as do many other verses. In the light of this, we can say with the inspired apostle Paul in Ephesians 2:8-10 "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. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." If the above verses teach anything at all, they teach that man could never have merited God's saving him; that he could not have (in any way) ever atoned for his sins by his own goodness; that without the gracious intervention of God on his behalf, he would be doomed to suffer the just punishment for his sins in the hell created for the devil and his angels; and that man could never earn, merit, or deserve his salvation. Works of human righteousness (of man's devising) are completely out of the picture as pertains to man's salvation (cf. Titus 3:4-7).

Death of Christ

Man's salvation was made possible when Jesus died on the cross in his place as sin-bearer, and sin offering (II Corinthians 5:19-21). The death of Christ for our sins, his burial, and his resurrection from the dead on the third day constitute the foundation of the gospel of Christ (I Corinthians 15:1-4), and man's only hope for salvation. Christ, then, is the only Savior;

man's only way to God and to eternal life (John 8:24; 14:6; Hebrews 5:8, 9; Acts 4:11-12). This is why it is imperative that the gospel be preached to every nation, every creature, the whole world (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 15:15-16; Luke 24:44-47).

Sinners Must Hear

The question next arises as to how man may receive the salvation from his sins with the resulting promise of eternal life which God, by his grace, has made possible. The Bible is clear, plain, and simple. (One would hardly expect it to be otherwise on such an important and vital issue). After his death, burial and resurrection, our Lord gave marching orders to his disciples. We have a clear, concise account of this in Matthew 28:19-20. Jesus, our Lord, having stated that "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth," next commanded, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world, Amen."

Must Learn And Be Baptized

Now, please note that the Gospel was to be taught to all nations. Christianity is a "taught religion," unlike Judaism, wherein one was born into a covenant relationship with God by physical birth and then had to be taught God's will. One must hear the Gospel and understand it in order to have faith in it (Romans 10:17). Also, please observe that those who were taught the Gospel were to be baptized.

Mark 16:15-16

Let us now turn our attention to the second account of our Lord's commission. It is found in Mark 16:15-16: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

Believe And Be Baptized

Please notice that the command once again is to go with the gospel. It must be preached in order for men to hear it. Those who hear it must then believe and be baptized in order to be saved.

What Jesus Did Not Say

The Lord did not say, "He that believes is saved, and shall be baptized"—as many modern folk actually believe and teach. They thereby imply that one is saved by belief alone without baptism; but the Lord clearly placed both belief and baptism before salvation from one's sins.

Sometimes those unwilling to accept the simple statement of our Lord insist that, "He didn't say, He that believeth not, and is baptized not, shall be condemned." But this would make the Lord redundant; for, if one does not believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, he is lost already (John 3:18, 36), and the matter of baptism is completely irrelevant to him!

Luke 24:46-47

Let us now turn our attention to the account of the commission of our Lord Jesus Christ as recorded in Luke 24:45-47: "Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, and he said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

Repentance And Remission

Here we have the foundation facts of the gospel: Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures and arose from the dead the third day (cf. I Corinthians 15:1-4). Based on this, "repentance" and "remission," or forgiveness of sins, should be preached in his name to all nations. Here we see the gospel must be preached; and those who respond in repentance are promised remission of sins.

We must not do as the Jehovah's Witnesses (so-called) and

other cults do, and take only part of what the Bible teaches on a subject. Nor dare we do (as so many cults do) and attempt to array one scripture against another. But we will endeavor to see the whole picture presented by God in his word pertaining to man's salvation. Therefore, when we place these three accounts side by side, we will see the following elements:

1. Christ's disciples are to take the gospel to every creature in the whole world.
2. The gospel and only the gospel (Galatians 1:6-9) must be preached.
3. Those who hear the gospel will respond by: (a) Believing, (b) Repenting of sins, (c) Being baptized.
4. The result to those who respond in this way is that they are **SAVED**, or have their sins remitted (forgiven).

"By Grace Through Faith"

The fact that our Lord has required, that we must believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, repent on our sins, and be baptized in order to be saved, does not in any way nullify the grace of God. God has provided man's salvation as a gift (Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:8); but man must reach out and receive God's gracious gift. He does this by responding in the manner described in the accounts of the Great Commission of our Lord as discussed above.

Sinners Move

Dear reader, are you saved? Do you have eternal life? Salvation from your past sins and the promise of eternal life with God in Heaven can be yours!

Jesus has made it possible by his death, burial and resurrection. You must, however, comply with the simple terms laid down by him in his Great Commission. Will you not do so without delay?

Why The Church Of Christ Does Not Observe Christmas As Christ's Birthday

KEN TYLER

Many people think that we are strange and weird because we do not observe this "holy day" each year. The fact of the matter is that the Bible does not tell anyone to observe December 25 (or any other day) as Christ's birthday. When we read the history of Christmas, we find some important facts. Please listen to this quote from The World Book Encyclopedia, volume III, page 416, "The exact date of Christ birth is not known. The early Christians did not celebrate His birth because they considered the celebration of anyone's birth to be a pagan custom. The first mention of the observance of Christ's birthday appears about A.D. 200." This quote within itself should settle the matter: Christmas is not Biblical. The first century Christians did not set aside a holy day for Christ's birth. The observance of Christ's birthday did not originate from God, but man started it in about 200 A.D.

The fifth grade Social Studies book that our son, Todd, is studying this year has something interesting to say about the Pilgrims and the matter of Christmas. When they settled at Plymouth and December 25 came around, they did not observe Christmas as Christ's birthday because they said it was not mentioned in the Bible. If you will study your Bible you will see that the Pilgrims were right.

This matter is serious because it involved Biblical authority. If we can do one thing in religion (Christmas) that the Bible does not mention, why can't we do other things that the Bible does not mention? This is the very problem in the religious world today. People have made up their own religion. This is the reason we see so many things being done by churches that are not in the Bible.

Listen: we must not add religious practices that are not found in the word of God. The Bible from beginning to end tells us that we must not add to or take away from God's word (Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; Proverbs 30:6; Revelation 22:18-19). Is not observing Christmas as Christ's birthday adding to God's word?

“In The Land Of Fadeless Day ...”

TIM ORBISON

In the Revelation, John recorded great words of hope for eternity. The new Christians were facing tremendous persecution by the civil government toward the end of the first century and they desperately needed hope! Their very lives were threatened and they needed assurance that their reward was worth the effort.

What John described in Revelation 21 is a beautiful city where God will live with the saints. There was never any place like it before nor will there be again. A more beautiful place than what is described in verses 10-25 could hardly be: a city made of gold, garnished with jewels, with gates of pearl and lit by the presence of God! Such a home for eternity would be worth any price, wouldn't it?

Yet the beauty of the city is made even more of an attraction to me by what is missing. John said there will be no more death. There will be no more pain. There will be no more sorrow or crying for “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”

How many times as a father have I held a tender, sobbing body close to my own while pain or sorrow pushed out hot tears from tiny red-rimmed eyes! How often have I longed for the ability to wipe them away so that they would never come again! But they come. As long as we are in this world we must face pain, sorrow and death.

If as weak and human parents we can yearn to ease the pain of our own children, imagine the boundless love and compassion borne for us by the Father of Lights! Yes, Heaven must be a beautiful place! May God grant to us a safe journey to his eternal home.